Story Wisdom

A Gift of Story
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Compiled and edited by

Julie Moss
and
Cherie Karo Schwartz
We lovingly and humbly dedicate this book to the memory of our StoryMama, Norma Livo.

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We hope that all of you are well and healthy, finding and seeing new stories of hope and endurance and inner strength emerging for yourself and for sharing in this Spring time. We will all have such stories to pass on months and generations after this time of pandemic.

Julie and Cherie
About Norma

Norma, dear Norma, was the Mama of all the Rocky Mountain Storytellers, and indeed a StoryMama to Storytellers worldwide. She was a wondrous nationally and internationally recognized Storyteller (see her favorite: “The Tale of the Strawberry”), a wise teacher and mentor, a superb educator and guide, a prolific writer, and was filled and blessed with ageless wonder and joy. Her impish eyes exuded that joy through Story.

Norma knew the tellers she added to her list of presenters for the Rocky Mountain Storytelling Conferences and included “newbies” who needed an opportunity to shine. Those who knew Norma will also remember “good ole George,” her loving and devoted husband who became a storyteller in his own right.

Facts do not do her justice. She was the Face and Spirit of Story. We will miss her impeccable sense of the Stories that Matter, her guidance with straightforward wisdom, and her constant support of all Storytellers who had the blessing to know her, work with her, create with her, and listen to her spinning tales.

*Julie Moss and Cherie Karo Schwartz*
And finally: here is a brief accounting of Norma’s life, just the facts:

Dr. Norma J. Livo
1929-2019

- Professor Emerita: School of Education at University of Colorado, Denver
- National Storytelling Network member, Board of Directors, winner of the coveted Lifetime Achievement Award
- Author/co-Author of at least 18 books – many award-winning – of Stories, Folktales and Folklore, and on Storytelling
- President of the Colorado Council of the International Reading Association
- Founder of Story Camp (Idaho Springs and other Colorado places)
- Founder of Rocky Mountain Storytelling Conference
- Along with John Stansfield, creator of Storytellers on Tour – bringing storytelling to rural Colorado
- Reviewer of books for the Rocky Mountain News
- Licensed private pilot (!)
- Avid adventurer
- Founding Board of Directors for Spellbinders
- Storytelling Process and Practice (written with Sandra Rietz) is still, after many decades, considered one of the most respected books on the art of Storytelling, and has been used widely as the main source for Storytelling classes and workshops. The invaluable book shows the value of Story; techniques of finding, preparing and presenting Stories; contains resources, essays, working with audiences, and how to create events and curricula. It is a veritable bible and treasure chest of Story Wisdom.
An Overture from a Story Gatherer

Stories are the collective Wisdom of the ages handed down from one generation to the next; always changing to meet the needs of those who are telling and those who are listening. Yet, Story’s universal truths remain intact.

Cherie and I set out on a quest to discover some of that Wisdom. We urged our telling compadres to share what they knew about Story. We fondly remembered the days of Norma Livo. And our collective wisdom came together piece by glorious piece!

Assembled here is the Wisdom of Rocky Mountain story folk, who range from lifelong tellers of tales (not lies, Mom, really) to those who are newer to the craft. Some make their living telling tales, some use telling as a part of their everyday work, some volunteer their telling, and some just tell for the fun of it!

And so, as it often happens with all things Story, the pieces we received fit together just right. May this collective Story Wisdom enfold you with the peace and understanding that is so often Story’s gift.

Julie Moss
Encircling Cyles of Story

Story is the mirror and the memory of our soul. Story makes the world go round and keeps it whole.

And Storytelling is the most glorious of paths, as it allows us to immerse deeply in the wellspring of story. We are the vessels of story, the keepers of the stories, the ones who speak truth through story, the healers through the words of story. Hence: Story Wisdom.

When Julie and I set out on our journey to gather Story Wisdom from our Rocky Mountain Storytelling kin, we did not as much give parameters to Storytellers as much as latitude to offer something that has touched them in the world of Story. Yet, astoundingly and perhaps not at all, each submission shines with its own unique story sparks of light. And, as Julie has suggested, they seem to fit together just right. The puzzle is completed, of course, by having you dear readers add your own Story Wisdom to that which is gathered here.

Come enter the world of story, come ride the magic carpet of story... come into the woods, to the top of the mountain, to the depths of the sea, to the table laden with delectable tales... and enjoy the journey.

Cherie Karo Schwartz
“The stories themselves are best preserved and maintained, paradoxically, by giving them away orally rather than by writing them down in order to ‘save’ them.”

“Stories are like starfish – they live when they are thrown back into the ocean.”

Norma Livo
(Norma wrote this dedication in Cherie’s copy of Process and Practice.)

“We do not own the stories, nor the process by which we make them. We transmit these in order to save them. … We give away what was given to us. We can keep it only by handing it on.”
May we be blessed by the soul of story.

May our uplifted voices give voice to the spirit of story.

May we be guided by the tales we tell

And by the stories which choose us to be their life breath.

May we honor the source of all stories

As we honor the Source of All Being.

May we walk humbly in the ever-present moment of story

Even as we dwell in its timeless age.

May each story shine as an ancient treasure

imbued with a soul that is forever young.

May we always be open to the tales returning to us,

Transformed, from our listeners and ourselves.

May we open untold worlds with our once-told tales,

granting new life even in hundred-told times.

May our words bring laughter, tears, consolation, release, and joy.

And may the stories we share help bring peace of mind, body, and spirit

for ourselves and for each other.
How Norma Livo says “Story” cannot be put into print on a page but will live in my heart forever. Makes me smile just to think about it. “Story” in her voice is warmth and joy and love, mystery and laughter. It immediately connects the listener to the depth of wonder that is story.

Going to my first storytelling conference at the old decommissioned [St. Cajetan’s] church in Denver was balm for my soul. Here was a whole roomful of people as crazy as I was! We listened spellbound, we pushed all the chairs back against the walls and danced to Sandy Reitz’s playstory – “First the farmer takes a stand, then he looks out on the land...” We played crack the whip. We pushed the chairs back and listened some more. I couldn’t leave at the end of the day. I hung on until the few remaining went out to dinner, and I tagged along. I didn’t have much money with me and ordered from the right-hand side of the menu and split it with another tag-along who had no money. I soaked in conversation all dinner long, and at the end of dinner Norma picked up the tab for everyone.

I was back at the Storytelling Conference the year after that and the year after that (repeat for many years) with summer camp at Idaho Springs in between. I read everything I could find about storytelling (which wasn’t that much back then - 1979?) I learned to tell and even performed breakout sessions at the Conference. Which was pretty amazing, considering who was beginning their careers back then, and who are now marvelous veterans of 40 years at least.

John Stansfield at summer camp “Not ready for prime time” telling a story about two Russian soldiers with his presence of welcoming and spreading-of-peace totally intact right from the start. Opalanga Pugh just back from working on the Alaskan pipeline, wondering if she could tell stories and giving us “The People Could Fly”, and we were stunned. Cherie Karo Schwartz with her bright, unbreachable gusto and Yiddish stories and riddles. Susan Marie-Frontzak of unbelievable memory and grace, with utter
concentration and exact emotional detail reciting “The Pied Piper.” Brad Bowles always on top of everything with an insight and a quip, demonstrating the difference between a told story and an acted story. Heather McNeil and her mother, Bonnie, together reciting The Death of King Arthur which now belongs to them forever. And each of them solo. Greg Denman with a poem in his pocket, and making sure everyone in the room sighed when Robert Frost’s name was mentioned. Joe Hayes with the first bilingual stories I ever heard, and rattlesnakes! Tons of rattlesnakes. Bonnie Phipps, effervescent and faery, autoharper extraordinaire, taking us all along with “Lucy Lum Chew That Bubble Gum.” Mike Gilbert the story-maker, drawing out a place, a character and a problem from the audience and spinning an outrageous tale from the words they throw in. Mitch Pingle greeting everyone with music. Glenn McGlathery, who could just stand up on stage and people would start laughing. He who could sell storyteller motorcycle jackets whether you wanted to buy one or not. Pam Faro, powerfully being the woman who chooses in the Arthurian story of Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady. Julie Moss putting everyone on the edge of their seat telling “Be Brave, Be Brave, But Not Too Brave.” Pat Mendoza, the Mexican Leprechaun, incredible tenor and Viet Nam war vet who walked into Norma’s office, and she told him he is a storyteller.

And many others. John Beach, Nora Strandberg Matteo, Kay Negash, Kate Lutz. Bill who sat on stage with his broken leg in a cast, propped up on a chair and told “The Fiddler of High Lonesome.” And more. If I have forgotten to mention you please accept my heartfelt apologies.

To belong to such a community has filled my spirit with wisdom, courage strength and beauty.
“Storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it.”

Hannah Arendt

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**Storytelling**

*Liz Twomey*

One day on a busy city street, with my head full of things I had to get done, I drove past a church sign with those changeable block letters. It said, “Give us a try. We’re not all that organized.”

I laughed out loud and thought about that sign all the way home - and obviously still do. Why? In nine words, that sign acknowledged and plugged into the story that many people tell themselves about religion, and also revealed that church’s accepting philosophy. Now that’s a story!

For me, the greatest reward of hearing, telling, and loving the folk art of oral storytelling, in both its traditional folktale and modern spoken word forms, is that you start to feel the world in story. You find yourself consciously seeking the story behind your own and other’s words and actions. I say consciously, because research is finding that the sensory information we receive is turned into story before it even reaches our consciousness. Storytelling taps into that unconscious power, and it is the kind of power that liberates, the kind of power that can heal.

To reap those benefits while being entertained and surrounded by people also enjoying themselves is pretty much pure joy. Rocky Mountain Storytelling is an organization which promotes the events where that can happen. “Give us a try. We’re not all that organized.”
Like a long-buried spring garden, storytelling — humankind’s oldest form of communication— is emerging from under the ‘snow’ of modern technological communication. Could this re-emergence be reflective of the growing need for the warmth of person-to-person communication? In oral storytelling, where the story is co-created by the teller and listener, a profound and moving magic is stirred. And just as we now hunger for the magic of colorful blossoms arising from tiny brown seeds, the world is hungry for the wonder that comes from our oral storytelling traditions.

There has never been a more critical time for oral storytelling than today. Hearing a story internalizes the story and an internalized story builds hope, confidence and courage in the face of adversity. It is a treasure that nothing and no one can ever take away. All children need such stories… and adults need them as well.

Enter the Spellbinders, which began as one group of Elders sharing stories with children, in 1988. Germaine Dietsch was the founder and director, Denver Public Schools was the supporter, and Cherie Karo Schwartz was the first official Storytelling workshop leader. Spellbinders mission is “to create connections between generations through the art of storytelling in order to pass on the wisdom, values, humor and sense of community embodied in stories of all cultures and times.” The more Spellbinders there are to tell encouraging stories, creating a sense of community and harmony, the more positive will be the outlook and character development of children in their communities. Spellbinders can be proud that they are helping spread storytelling’s magic to hundreds of thousands of children. Story seeds have been planted everywhere, in Spellbinders chapters in North America and even abroad. Spellbinders has grown into a very big garden!
Padraic Colum, a Shanachie (traditional Irish storyteller), describes a visit to a now-dilapidated house from his childhood.

“As part of my ramble, I will go back to the house where I heard stories told when I was a youngster. It was in the middle of Ireland. There were fields and green knolls around it, and in those days its thatch was of fresh straw and its walls were brightly whitewashed. The hearthstone then had its fire: it was of peat that glowed and blazed. The light was dim at night for there was only candlelight. ‘And what about the storytelling?’ readers may ask. Well, from time to time an old man would come in, and, seating himself by the hearth with the people of the house across from him, would tell a story as it used to be told in times when the storyteller himself was a listener.

I remembered the stories, and, to more purpose than that, I remembered the storyteller. ... it is the storyteller who is important in this piece of reminiscence. What he told us was worthwhile then and there; but the way he told it was, to me, worthwhile ever since.”
A Re-telling for NOW

Eve Ilsen
26 April, 2020

...although it first happened a very long time ago*.

Once upon a time, somewhere in Eastern Europe, in a small, poor village like the one where my great-great-grandparents were born and grew up – and maybe yours too – there was a rebbe*. He was one of many rebbes in that place and time, most of them as poor as everybody else. This rebbe was one of the special ones.

Whenever something serious, dangerous, terrible, tragic was poised to fall – whether upon an individual, upon the whole community, upon the town or the whole country, it was known that this rebbe would bend all of his energies to avert it. He would go to a special place in the woods, and prepare the place and himself in a special way. There, he would build a special fire, and perform a ceremony, intoning special prayers meant only for such drastic circumstances. And the impending catastrophe would be averted.

After the holy rebbe died, one of his closest students remembered the special fire and the ceremony, though he did not know the special place in the forest. When danger threatened, he took what he knew of the fire, entered the woods, and performed the ceremony; and catastrophe was turned away.

This rebbe’s son knew neither the place nor the ceremony, but in time of danger to the community, he took fire into a hidden glade in the wood, and prayed with all his heart; and the danger was turned away.

Now, the descendants of the rebbe are centuries away from their special, holy ancestor--oceans and continents and many thousands of miles away from that forest. Still there are times when terrible and tragic dangers may be poised to befall our community
other communities
our country
other countries
perhaps our whole world.
No one remembers the special place in the woods – only that there once was such a place. No-one knows how to make the special fire – only that there once was such a fire. No one knows the special prayer that the rebbe intoned – only that he pleaded with the Creator on behalf of the community with his whole heart.

No one alive today remembers a time of such wild danger, not of our own making, that could kill, G-d forbid, every human being living on this earth.

But we remember that there was once such a place, and there was once such a fire, and there was once a prayer of such power, uttered with such one-pointed intensity by one who believed with his whole heart that Someone listens and cares to save our poor, faltering, imperfect species.

And perhaps if we give over our whole hearts to the truth that is the very heart of this story and open our own hearts to invoke miracles for those we know and those we don’t know and will never meet this catastrophe poised to befall so many will also be turned away In the time of the Coronavirus pandemic.

*A rebbe is a rabbi who is also recognized as a teacher in the deepest sense of counselor or spiritual director.

*I first heard this story from my late husband, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi. The story was originally told about The Baal Shem Tov, the “Master of the Good Name” (18th century), who was also known to be a skilled practitioner of folk medicine.
Extra Benefits

Priscilla Queen

The benefits of storytelling are too numerous to list, but my favorites are related to literacy and language and activation of imagination. I am drawn to traditional folktales for their presentations of common human cares in age-old settings. One such tale, Cap O’Rushes, is found in many folktale compilations, and was collected by Joseph Jacobs. The story begins with a father asking his daughters how much they loved him. It was one of the first for me to learn and tell and I’ve told it in programs of love stories, clever-girl-type tales, British-themed story programs, and many more.

In the early days of my storytelling I used my children as practice audiences. They were kind, but honest about how they thought their peers would react to any story I was trying out. Cap O’Rushes was one I told them many times, and so they also learned it quite well.

More than twenty years ago my daughter, Tessa, was in high school, enrolled in an AP English class which focused much of the semester on Shakespeare. She mostly was a very conscientious student, but one day she had not done the required reading for the current classroom discussion which was about King Lear. The sharing of thoughts about the assigned reading went around the circle and it came to Tessa’s turn to speak. She was at a loss for what to say, but then she remembered the story of Cap O’Rushes. Instead of trying to fake an answer, she decided to attempt a diversion and asked the teacher, “Mrs. Henry, isn’t it interesting that Shakespeare used some folktale themes in his plays? For instance, King Lear has the same beginning as Cap O’Rushes, where the father asks his daughters how much they love him.”

Luckily for Tessa, Mrs. Henry was diverted and had much to say about those connections between folktales and literature. She never knew that Tessa had not done her homework.

Now this has become a family story in which we extoll the many benefits (sometimes even unintended) of stories and storytelling.
I Am A Storyteller

Wynn Montgomery
2016

I tell stories; that’s what I do.
If you like, I’ll share one with you.

There won’t be a movie, no TV screen;
No tablet, no iPod, not any machine.

The only pictures will be those you create.
It will take us both; we must collaborate.

Just lend me your ears; hear what I say.
Then “see” my story in your own way.

Some of my stories are older than old—
My own version of what others have told.

Others are brand new, fresh from my head,
Based on something I thought, heard, or read.

All are stories told from the heart—
Never finished, ever changing oral works of art.

Once heard, these tales belong to you.
I’m a storyteller; that’s what I do.
Griot

Lois Burrell

In this age when media is everywhere, good storytelling prompts one to use the imagination and form one's own pictures, which is so critical to learning skills. It means a lot to me if I can encourage children to read through my stories. Reading is the key to a good education.

Storytelling keeps culture and history alive. Story entertains, educates, sparks creativity, and takes people to places they haven't been before by giving them new experiences. Dull subjects can spring to life through story.

Every storyteller brings her or his talents and life experiences to each story told, and the collective result is the vibrant, living folk art of Storytelling.

Although I tell stories from cultures around the world, I feel a special responsibility to share ones from the African and African-American heritage - my own culture.

In early Africa, there was no reading or writing. A storyteller, or Griot, was responsible for retaining the information about the tribe and passing the culture and history on to future generations through story. Animals were frequently the main characters in the stories, often with morals which were used to guide the behavior of the children - and the adults!

When African slaves were brought to America, they were not allowed to practice their culture. They could not use their own names, speak their language, worship in their religion, or even play their native musical instruments. They were allowed to tell their stories though, because they could be used to entertain the slave owner's children. However, slaves would talk in code to each other through their stories, even giving information to runaway slaves such as walking through a river rather than on land because then the slave owner's dogs could not follow their scent.

I have a responsibility as a Griot to continue sharing the centuries of stories that have been passed down to me from my culture. Whenever a child tells me that she or he has been inspired to read stories, or tell them, or create their own, I know that I will be able to rest in peace as my work has truly been done.
Stories are what bring people to life.

Hundreds of pages of genealogy compiled by two of my wonderful aunts list names, dates, places, and relationships that connect me to those who have gone before. Two of those people are Josephine Reed Pearl and Otto Edward Wilhelm Thorvald Christensen. It wasn't until I learned some stories from their lives that they became not just a name on a page, but real people in my mind and heart.

Josephine Reed's journey began in Evening Shade, Arkansas, where she was born in 1873. Her family moved to the San Luis Valley in Colorado. When Josie was eight, her mother, who was a midwife, sent her to a neighbor's home to help a woman who was awaiting the birth of a baby. It was late at night when the woman told Josie the baby was coming and she would have to help with the delivery. Josie nervously followed the woman's every instruction about making a bed on the floor in front of the fireplace, heating water, fetching clean cloths, and scorching a string to tie the baby's umbilical cord. The next morning when Josie's mother arrived, Josie was in tears, worrying that she hadn't done things right. Her mother said, “You can do anything you put your mind to.” Josie did that. She met and married mining engineer, Lane Pearl, who died in the flu epidemic of 1918. After that, Josie ran boarding houses and mined in the hills of Nevada, living there in a tarpaper shack with a diamond ring on her finger and making trips to San Francisco to see the sights. “Elegant” was one of her favorite words. She lived to the age of 90.

Born in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1841, Otto Edward Wilhelm Thorvald Christensen traveled by ship from Copenhagen to New York when he was twelve with no family accompanying him. His traveling companion was a missionary from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, who then helped the young boy to cross most of the United States by wagon and by walking, to
settle in Utah. He worked and waited there for other members of his family to make the journey from Denmark. Later in life he had a large family and helped to settle Manassa, a small town in the southern part of the San Luis Valley in Colorado.

When one of my children or grandchildren hesitates to do something because it might be hard to do or because they don’t exactly know how to do it, I’ve been known to tell them the story of Josie or Otto Edward Wilhelm Thorvald Christensen (It’s just fun to say all those names!). Family and personal stories, which often include lies and rumors, build connections that we crave. Connections with those long gone, as well as connections with those we know and love in our lives today. “My life isn’t very interesting” is a frequent statement by those procrastinating about writing their personal stories. Wrong. Each of us has interesting stories, whether of a little girl who wanted to be a sheep herder, a boy who was tied to the clothesline because he was always running away to “have some fun,” or a man who ran out of the house late at night in his underwear to chase away some pesky boys, only to find that the pesky teenagers were girls. Your life is, and will continue to be, interesting to your family and others.

Tell your personal and family stories. Preserve them by writing or recording them. Don’t be afraid to share those Lies, Rumors, & Family Stories.
Storytelling Allows Me to Be a Kid Again!
LaRene Wolfe
Jeffco Spellbinder

There are times in life that are truly rough, and an escape into a good story can help pull both the teller and the listener through.

During the testing days in public school when the children and the teachers are tense, the arrival of their monthly Spellbinder storyteller provides them a half hour to relax, to breathe, to imagine, and to rejuvenate. You can feel it in the air and see it on their faces.

For the storyteller themselves, it is an escape from the cares of everyday life. Your mind becomes focused on delivering the story to your audience and it benefits the teller as well as the listeners. Many of my storytelling friends have been caregivers or have experienced the maladies that beset us later in life. When you are surrounded by a group with eager ears, you forget everything but the tale you are delivering and you forget, for a brief time, the aches, pains and even sorrows that are plaguing you.

Storyland is an escape back to the more carefree days of childhood. Thanks to all the storytellers who inspire me, exchange tales with me and transport me to a time and place where greed and evil are overcome by kindness and generosity. ‘Once upon a time’ can end in ‘Happily ever after.’
The Fishy Song

Origin Unknown, Learned at Camp

Julie Moss

Did you ever see a fishy on a hot summer's day?
Did you ever see a fishy go swimming in the bay?
With his hands in his pockets,
And his pockets in his pants.
Did you ever see a fishy do the hoochy-koochy dance?

You never did! (Clap, clap)
You never will! (Clap)

Did you ever see a fishy on a cold winter's day?
Did you ever see a fishy all frozen in the bay?
With his hands in his pockets,
And his pockets in his pants.
Did you ever see a fishy do the hoochy-koochy dance?

You never did! (Clap, clap)
You never will! (Clap)

La Canción de la Trucha

Translated by Julie Moss

Mira una trucha
En verano caliente.
Mira una trucha
Nadando en el mar.
Con los manos en los bolsillos
Y los bolsos en pantalones.
Mira una trucha hoochy-koochy bailar!

No, no, no nunca! (Clap, clap)
No, no, no nunca! (Clap)

Mira una trucha
En invierno muy frio.
Mira una trucha
Elado en el mar.
Con los manos en los bolsillos
Y los bolsos en pantalones.
Mira una trucha hoochy-koochy bailar!

No, no, no nunca! (Clap, clap)
No, no, no nunca! (Clap)
Boom Boom It’s So Great to Tell Stories

Vanita Moore

Boom Boom it’s so great to tell stories
Boom Boom it’s so great to tell stories
Happy ones
Serious ones
Silly ones too
Boom Boom it’s so great to tell stories

Way down south where bananas grow
A grasshopper stepped on an elephant’s toe
The elephant said with tears in his eyes
Why don’t you pick on somebody your own size?

Boom Boom it’s so great to tell stories
Boom Boom it’s so great to tell stories
Happy ones
Serious ones
Silly ones too
Boom Boom it’s so great to tell stories

A flea and a fly were in a flue
They both were stuck, what could they do?
Said the flea let us fly
Said the fly let us flea
So they flew through the flaw in the flue

Boom Boom it’s so great to tell stories
Boom Boom it’s so great to tell stories
Happy ones
Serious ones
Silly ones too
Boom Boom it’s so great to tell stories

Notes for
Booem Boom It’s So Great
to Tell Stories

The tune is “Boom Boom Ain’t It Great to Be Crazy?”. Of course, you can use any gestures, however, these have worked for me. The kids copy the gestures. I’ve found they just automatically join in but, you may need a head nod to encourage them.

**Boom Boom** – clap on each Boom

**it’s so great to tell stories** – Smile, head straight, arms out to sides about 45 degrees, elbows bent with palms facing up

**Happy ones** - head cocked to right, arms out to sides about 45 degrees, elbows bent with right palm facing up and left palm hanging down

**Serious ones** - head cocked to the left, arms out to sides about 45 degrees, elbows bent with right palm still facing up and left palm facing up

**Silly ones too** - Big silly smile, head goes right (silly), left (ones), right (too), arms out to sides about 45 degrees, elbows bent with palms facing up
At end of storytelling time use this verse with chorus before and after.

Vanita Moore

Now I have some stories I’ve shared with you
They’re not all lies, but they’re not all true
But you can tell ‘em
If you want to
‘Cause they come from my heart from me to you!
The teachers were thrilled – honestly! – to have a storyteller come to their school. It was the early 1990s, I’d been storytelling professionally maybe 2-3 years by then, and the elementary school in Commerce City, CO, had received a grant to bring a storyteller to their school for an entire day, to perform for each of the grade levels in turn.

First was 2nd grade – All four classes of them came into the library where I was set up and waiting. The kids all sat on the rug, the teachers stood against the walls, listening. We all had a grand time with the mix of multicultural and participatory folktales and songs I shared with them.

“This is so GREAT!” said the teachers to me.
“Thank you! The kids are wonderful!”
“Will you be here all day?”
“Yes!”
“Will you see all of the grade levels?”
“Yes!”
“Even…” (pregnant pause, and with some incredulity in their voices) “…the - 4th - graders????!!?”
“Y-y-y-e-s-s-s-s…?!” ??!??

...And so, the 2nd grade teachers and their students left the library.

Then came the kindergartners, with much the same delightful experience together…and then the same portentous conversation with teachers:

“This is so GREAT!”
“Thank you! The kids are wonderful!”
“Will you be here all day?”
“Yes!”
“Will you see all of the grade levels?”
“Yes!”
“Even…the - 4th - graders????!!?”
“Y-y-y-e-s-s-s-s-s-?!” ??!??
And then the 5th grade, and then 1st – with the same exact conversation with the teachers, ending with the same incredulous question from them and increasingly-frightened affirmative response from me – and then it was lunch break.

Munching on my sandwich I thought furiously, casting my mind through my repertoire to find just the right story(ies) to offer the notorious 4th graders when they should arrive. I hit on it: “Pizzeria!” It’s an original story of mine built around a silly-fun song about pizza – I play guitar, it’s highly participatory, highly silly and fun, highly energetic, kids of all ages always just loved that story…that would be it!

So I was back in the library, all ready, when…there was a far-off rumble…the floor began to shake…the walls began to tremble, the books on the shelves began to shift and dance, the rumble grew into a growl, then a cacophony, then a deafening roar….and…IN burst: the 4th graders!!!!

And they were everything the apprehensive teachers had communicated and warned me of all morning with their question full of dread and their eyes full of pity!!

And I thought to myself, “Good heavens, if I try to tell ‘Pizzeria’ with all of its energy and noise to this group, we’re going to blow the roof off of this library!” I knew I could not tell “Pizzeria” to the 4th graders. It would be a cacophonous disaster. My mind raced…

And as the 4th grade teachers did their level best, bless ‘em, to corral the 4th graders and manage to get them seated somewhere on the library floor so that the storyteller, bless ‘er, could tell them a nice story…I had an idea (Divine inspiration? Miraculous intervention? Dumb luck? ...Or maybe, just maybe, a storyteller’s intuition that I had begun to develop?...). I reached into my gig bag and drew out my soprano recorder and began to play a tune.

Not a lively, rhythmic tune, or a singalong – but a wistful, soulful melody...and the roar lessened, and their attention was somehow caught a bit...and I played through the entire plaintive tune, removed the instrument from my lips and began in a “faraway” voice: “Long, lo-o-o-ng ago, in the far-off Andes Mountains, there was a palace, and the Inca who lived in that palace was deathly ill...” And proceeded to tell the Ecuadorean tale of how the girl Sucre went on a quest to find the magical Lake at the End of the World in order to retrieve its healing waters, cure the Inca, and save her family.

The story was 40 minutes long. And you could hear a pin drop in that library.
And the 4th grade teachers had to pick their jaws up off of the floor and put their eyes back in their heads, because they couldn’t believe what they were witnessing. The 4th graders were captivated, engaged, and listening.

Such is the power of story.

Now, that was a pretty extreme experience, and I won’t be disingenuous: of course a teller’s ability, choice of story, and likely other factors in any given situation all combine to create the power of any storytelling experience...

But there’s no denying the power of a good story well-told. There just isn’t.

And I expect those 4th grade teachers have never forgotten, and so hopefully have told a few stories themselves by now!
Rememberizing

John Stansfield

Long, long ago (but not THAT long) and far, far away at an elementary school library in Plano, Texas, I was taking questions at the end of a storytelling session with first graders. A boy in the front row raised his hand and asked, “How do you rememberize your stories.” ‘Rememberize’ took me aback for a few seconds, then I provided a simple explanation about learning stories by repetition. After the class left, it hit me. Rememberizing. The composite of remembering and memorizing is a perfect nutshell description for the process of making stories our own. That day returns to my mind frequently and I thank that little Texan for his word fusion.

Like many unlucky folks, I do not have a “photographic” memory to foster easy memorization of anything. I save the arduous task of committing to memory for poetry and literary fiction, stories that demand near exact recitation. That feat means a load of heavy mental lifting to get the job done. And if you are lazy like me... well, you get the picture. Rememberizing, aka remembering well, makes story acquisition easier.

Rememberizing is the process of frequently visiting different perspectives on a story or event:

1. Most time consuming may be digging to find a version or versions you like while building understanding of the tale’s cultural and historical context.
2. Read or listen to the selected version or your creatively modified version;
3. Practice the tale off-book, out loud, alone, then share it with others for feedback and presentation polish.

You probably have settled on your own process for acquiring tellable tales. Good. Name it whatever appeals to you. It is our inheritance as the storytelling animal to retain a sequence of events, a skeleton, to embody it with language, flesh and blood, and bring our stories to life.

Through the years in laboratories (known as beginning storytelling workshops,) I have seen living proof of the power of rememberizing or “whateveryoumaycallit.” Partners are given a copy of a very short folktale or non-fiction anecdote. Each set of partners receives a different story. After partners read the stories silently and swap, first, a quick sequence of events and then a skeletal retelling, each partner has five minutes to retell the tale in their own words. Finding new partners, the novice storytellers swap stories. Almost invariably, they begin to creatively embellish their stories and the tellings take on the personality of the teller. And the eternal power of rememberizing is evidenced anew.
Story Wisdom

Katy Little
March 14, 2020

STORY! I am energized in my storytelling as I plant a seed through sharing stories from my memories and life experiences. I have realized that my mission and passion as a storyteller is helping others share their stories. I feel it is very important for me to watch my audience to see their reactions to leave time for those people listening to find their “story voice” to share a similar tale with others.

At a Summer Reading Program a young boy consistently raised his hand during my storytelling. The woman sitting with him kept bringing his arm down. I realized I needed to cut my program short and not tell my last story to allow this boy to have his voice heard. I asked the boy his name and did he have a question. He said, “My name is Josh and I have a story to tell.” I took a deep breath and said, “OK Josh, please come up and tell your story.” I could see the adults in the audience become very antsy and some even looked annoyed. Josh came up and told his story. It so happens that Josh told the story I was saving for my last story and not only that, he told it with so much passion. The woman sitting with Josh came up to me after the program and said, “Thank you for letting Josh tell his story. He has been with our group for 2 weeks and does not talk.” I drove home crying all the way and thankful that I had let Josh share his voice.

Let your life take flight through stories.
Long, long ago, in a far away time, I thought tales ended “happily ever after.” I lived in a city with straight streets, lights glowing at night and sweet smelling flower gardens. A white picket fence, a pay check and health care were protection enough. I was watchful and my children flourished like flowers.

One day the ground began to shake. Heavy footsteps stomped the flowers, casted shadows on the lights and the streets seemed to bend. Slowly a monster giant emerged, turned and stared at me. I saw an expressionless face plastered white, like a kabuki performer. The eyes seared through me. I grabbed a picket from the white fence, ready to do battle. Ignoring me, Monster Giant swooped up my daughter, threw her over a shoulder and walked into the unknown, never to be seen again. How could the impossible be true? Monster Giants aren’t real. Strong young women flourish, don’t die.

Only with story could I understand my daughter’s death. Through the rhythm of story, impossible truths are clarified, sorted, and build a new reality. Endings become new beginnings. Through story I could see that the streets were still straight, the night lights still glowed, and flowers still smelled sweet. And I understood that a white picket fence is pretty but not protective. I needed story to rebuild my life.

Today, we all need STORY to live in this impossible time. The villain is not a stomping monster giant we could slay but an insidious microscopic virus seeping like water and leaving no corner untouched. We named it coronavirus not in honor of a popular beer but because it’s studded with brilliant crowns. Beautiful under the microscope. In real life – destructive. Coronavirus is moving like a biblical flood. History is filled with epic flood stories. Often they are tales of truth and re-creation. We are in the midst of this story, experiencing the fear. STORY tells us life moves forward. Something different is coming. Right now it is a story of destruction. It might become a story of worldwide unity.

Everywhere stories brighten a puzzling world.
Story

by Julie Moss ©2019

Our minds hunger
And Story feeds us.

Our hearts hunger
And Story feeds us.

Our imaginations hunger
And Story feeds us.

Our very souls hunger
And Story feeds us.

Story is the sustenance
Of our Being!

Stories Feed the Soul
This story originated from writings of my Grandmother Eileen Weldon.
The time the story starts is 1868 in Ireland.
Colleen Jayne

The Doll

I am Susan; everyone calls me “Suey”. I have only a few playthings. For several years my only dolls were jointed wooden ones with painted faces. But on my seventh birthday my godmother sent a beautiful wax doll with blue eyes and golden curls. It was thought much too costly a gift to be played with every day. The smartly dressed lady was put into a tall vase and set on a shelf in the parlor out of harm's way. I was allowed to play with her only on special occasions, with my mother close at hand. I would often tip toe into the room to admire this treasure.

One day my parents had to go into town. I was to be left home with my sister Maggie, who was two years older. I wanted to go and cried so bitterly that my mother said I might have the lovely doll.

All went well until Maggie decided that she wanted to hold dolly too. I was most unwilling but Maggie was bigger and stronger. In a fit of temper, Maggie snatched the doll from me and ran off with it.

When our parents returned both Maggie and I were in tears. The doll was found almost buried in the mud and water at the edge of a little ditch, which ran through our farm. The fragile wax face was sunken in and the clothes were soiled beyond repair. Maggie repented of her jealous impulse and cried as much as I did over the loss of the doll.

This was not the first time Maggie and I had trouble.

Four years earlier when I was three, Maggie had become so provoked with me that she announced she was going to throw me into the water to drown. Maggie thought the best way to do this was to remove my clothing. I tell you I screamed and my older brother, Stephen came to the rescue. In spite of these two incidents, I knew that Maggie dearly loved me. As we grew up Maggie was the model of propriety and reliability. I on the other hand have a harum sacrum way and I am always getting into mischief.

I felt my sister's love and forgave her for jealous actions. Maggie had many things to teach me and help me with through the years. Maggie and I were tied together with love and forgiveness as sisters often are.
“You should be a storyteller,” they said.

“You will love it,” they said.

“You are a natural,” they said.

“After training, you’re on your own,” they said.

“Here is the storyteller,” the teacher said.

“You look like my nana,” the children said.

“Make me come alive,” my stories said.

“Were the story characters real?” my nervous mind said.

“We will remember these stories,” their eyes & smiles said.

“I do love sharing stories,” my heart said.
Some Story Wisdom

Colleen Jyane

All stories are true

and some even happened that way.

In order to tell a story

you need a least one listener.
“True stories” have their roots embedded in the time, culture, history, environment and place of your life experiences. They may not actually have happened, but they tell your truth about that which could or should be. True stories seem to exist and have a life of their own, growing, resonating, vibrant. Because true story is more meaningful, it is often easier to create and tell.

True stories seldom come on command; they just happen. They often spring forth ‘full-blown’. You may wake up in the middle of the night with the whole story. It rarely requires much work or polishing. Like all stories, they tend to grow and change and drift with retelling, but they stay true to the original much more easily because of their entirety at birth. The point is to live life observantly: being aware of the stories that are out there, being open to the underlying truths of living.

In order to catch the stories that are snagged like tufts of cotton on twigs all around us, all the time, we have to have our eyes and ears and hearts open. We have to be ‘story-hearers’ long before we can become ‘storytellers’. Adjust your thinking to become aware of the stories around you every day ... a forward-looking exercise rather than a backward-looking one.

Reading gives us the building blocks of storytelling. We are all plagiarizers from the day we copy our first word from Mama! Our job is to find new ways to mix the ingredients.

Share a story with your audience. As you visualize the unfolding, in some mystical manner your listeners are caught up and experience it with you. This intimacy makes even a ‘bombed’ story a shared – and potentially hilarious – moment!
“Memory Is a Universe That Can Never Be Fully Travelled.”

Pam Burrell

Thirty years ago, while volunteering at a battered women’s shelter in Virginia, I took a group of children to hear stories at a local library. The teller was Jackie Torrence.

From that moment on, I became an avid story listener and story lover. I loved that story was a way to explore humanity’s collective memory. Over the years, I told my own stories through songwriting but never shared a spoken story until thirty years after seeing Jackie Torrence.

Then one day I attended my first evening at the Denver Moth Story Slam, where they announced that the next month’s theme was “Betrayal.” I immediately thought of a story, a memory, that needed to be heard and I had to be the one to tell it. I was not happy about that. I had never needed to tell a story before.

But I did tell it. After a month of stage fright, insecurity, heart palpitations, and hyperventilating, I told my story, from ninth grade, of a school administrator’s betrayal that stunned me and broke my heart. It was also a month of memories, and I got to experience first-hand the healing power that story has over personal memory as well. I won the Slam. My prize was telling a new story a few months later at the Grand Slam, which gave me more time to suffer.

Again I did it and again I won, on the theme “Fish Out of Water.” I am a woman, black, fat, gay - and a postal worker. The theme was such a slam-dunk that it made me laugh out loud. But once more the memories and fright tore me up before the telling began to heal me.

Yes, I love and am grateful for the healing power of story and hope I will be surrounded by story always. But I never plan to tell another story!
I sing the enduring, supportive Strength
of Story!
I bless the bountiful abundant Beauty of
Story
That sweeps up the straw of our lives
And spins it into the brilliant gold of
Story:
Spinning, Spinning,
Turning, transforming
Into the wondrous Web of Story
Strong enough to bind the Threads of
Story;
Becoming, as it spins and turns,
The threads joining into rope, becoming
The Ladder of Story, on the Rungs of
Story,
Reaching from this rich green loam of
Earth
Into the high blue sphere of Heavenly
balance
And low
And high again
And again
And again
Returning
So that in our Dream Sleep
We can freely float

Up and down that Ladder
Between Earth and Heaven
‘Til at last they
Blend in sweet
Harmony of Story.
So that deep in our Dream Sleep
We are cradled
In the swinging, swaying,
Sanctity of Story.
We float soul-fully
on the Sea of Story.
And when at last we Wake
From the Trance of Tales
We are Up-Lifted,
Transformed,
Re-Born
Sentient, Safe,
Re-Soundingly
In
Story.

And here we are: floating soul-fully on the
sea of story, safely supported even in its
highest, harshest waves. It is all part of
the story....
The Fortunate Storyteller

Kathy Santopietro Weddel
February 28, 2020

How fortunate the storyteller who can nourish the ancient art of creating images without written words, pictures, photos, screens, devices or media!

How fortunate the storyteller who creates opportunity for sacred listening and meaningful imagination!

How fortunate I am to have made storytelling my life’s work and to have known listeners of all ages and in all kinds of settings. Audiences have offered these words to me and now I gift them to my extraordinary Rocky Mountain Storytelling cohorts and mentors. You know exactly what these gracious listeners mean and their words belong to you.

A 40 year-old church retreat attendee wrote, “The simplicity and richness of the story hasn’t left my mind all week long.”

An 86 year-old senior center audience member wrote, “She drew me inside. I forgot I could love like that.”

A 12 year-old student in a classroom wrote, “That guy in the story reminds me of my dad and I will miss your voice over the summer.”

A 101 year-old at a memory care center said, “Your lies take me home.”

A 28 year-old woman in a homeless shelter said, “I’ll sleep better.”

A 16 year-old in the classroom wrote, “You rock my mind pictures.”

A 60 year-old CEO wrote, “Who would ever guess how an old Scottish folk tale could fit inside a workshop on teamwork?”

A 6 year-old in a library audience said, “I am a king!”

A hospice nurse said, “She hasn’t smiled like that in days.”

An audience member at the Botanical Gardens said, “So glad she got to tell next to the roses. Such a lovely voice for them to share.”
Finding Connections

Priscilla Queen

Recently, my local library planned a day for families to learn about cultures around the world. They wanted all ages to experience a wide variety of music, dance and dress from Zimbabwe and Japan. The library staff chose to celebrate these places in the world this year because they found authentic folk groups from each country to perform music and dance, but no one to tell stories. I was invited to be the storyteller and to share traditional stories specifically from Zimbabwe and Japan. Folktales from around the world are stories I always love to hear and tell, but I do have concerns (even worries) about honoring cultures other than mine and whether I might seem insensitive about cultural appropriation.

With that in mind, I proceeded to research and find stories that fit the audience and time frame, hoping the stories were true to culture and that I could incorporate even just a word or two of the language. Japanese and Shona (the most prevalent language in Zimbabwe) were not hard to find online. One marvel of the internet is finding spoken words from many languages and so I felt confident of correct pronunciation. All practiced and ready I arrived on the day of the event.

The library was filled with music, colorful native costumes and people everywhere watching the lively dances and listening to the joyful music. I was early for the storytelling program and, still doubtful about my credibility, squeezed into the room filled with the resounding marimbas and drums played by the Zimbabwean group. The audience was enraptured, adults tapped their feet and young children couldn’t help but bounce and dance to the rhythms. As their session ended, I approached one of the marimba players to ask about my story from Zimbabwe. Was it one she knew of? Was I saying the introductory word correctly? Her husband and son joined our conversation and they all confirmed the turtle story was familiar and especially that “Nyaya” meant
“Story” – or more exactly, “Come hear a story!” to be announced loudly with arms outstretched. Before I could thank them, they thanked me - for telling a story from their country. It was truly a gift.

Still with time before my story program was to begin, I found the Japanese ladies who had just finished their demonstration of traditional dance. Dressed in brightly magnificent kimonos they were gathered in a close group. The first lady I asked if I could ask a question, did not speak English, but called to another to speak with me. The story I had chosen was The Magic Mice in which there is a dango, a small, round dumpling. I asked about the pronunciation and with a big smile, she said, “Yes, dango!” My last question was about the word “mukashi.” I wondered if that meant “story.” “Oh,” she replied. “That really means something more, like “once upon a time.” To me, that was simply a perfect answer. To make it even better, she also thanked me for telling a story from her country. Now, every time I tell those tales it is with heartfelt gratitude to her and to the Zimbabwean family for so graciously sharing the connections we have through stories.
I was at the 1992 National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough when I heard Kathryn Windham describe how she had once told stories in a prison. She recalled that one of the prisoners confided to her, “No one ever told me stories before.”

In Windham’s mind the correlation was obvious. “If someone had told the men stories as youngsters, their lives might have been different.” Telling someone a story is a way of saying, “I love you.”

Her comments inspired me. And in the coming months, I dedicated myself to telling stories to the troubled youth of Boulder County. I contacted agencies that housed abused, runaway, and heavy drug-and-alcohol-using young people, as well as youngsters who had committed serious crimes. I told the administrators what I wanted to do, and within weeks I was being screened and interviewed.

I then invited two other tellers to join me, Karen Auvenin and Duane Green. Together we applied for and received partial funding from the Scientific Facilities District, a Boulder County tax revenue. Soon we were actually telling stories inside the various facilities.

My own first visit to the jail went smoothly. As I was leaving, one boy asked, “Are you coming back next week? If you are I hope I’ll still be here.” Then, a few days later, I got bittersweet letters from some of the children. One wrote: “Your stories ... brought a smile to my face. It was very caring for you to come. It showed me that you were willing to give us kids in here a chance, because a lot of people wouldn’t want to come here.”

From then on I was hooked. I quickly learned the best approach was to be caring and
nonjudgmental. I believe storytelling works in these situations because nothing is asked of the youngsters except their quiet presence. They are in control of how they hear and interpret the stories.

When narrative is right, the results are immeasurable. You can see tense, wound-up children slowly unwind into a state of quiet, relaxed intimacy. We learned to expect the unexpected.

At the end of two long stories one evening, the group wanted one more story. I began to tell a Native American legend about the birth of first coyote. At the point when baby coyote is left on earth by his mother, Moon, I lifted my head and said, “He looked up at his mother and cried the longest, loneliest howl ever heard on earth.” One boy told me, “Do It!” I gave a long, lonely coyote howl and was immediately joined by a number of the youngsters. I closed the story with, “Now all coyotes gather together in the dark, and, like first coyote, lift their faces and howl for their mothers’ return.”

Everyone spontaneously howled together again, and the evening ended with laughter. As we left, the children were still curled on the couches with their pillows and blankets. One boy asked, “Next time you come, will you bring us milk and cookies?” We promised we would.
Folk tales have deep meanings that are revealed and re-revealed each time we visit them. Recently I was thinking about “Jack and the Beanstalk.” Always, up till now, I thought the first part of the story was just a preamble to the real thing, which was the excitement of climbing the stalk and taking out the giant. Now I realize the first part is the story’s spiritual knowledge of how the Universe really works.

Jack and his mother are starving and the cow has stopped giving milk. It is a survival situation. What does survival knowledge tell you to do? Sell the cow. That gets things started. But then Jack doesn’t follow survival knowledge, supposedly because his is “simple.” But he is really following the promptings of the Universe. He makes what our mind tells us are progressively worse and worse trades. Our mind tells us he is trading down for less and less worthy things. We pity him for not knowing their real value. But he ends up with a bag of magic beans. The Universe leads us to magic. The ultimate solution. His mother doesn’t believe they are magic beans and slaps them out of his hand. So, even rationality plays a part in the Universe’s direction. Because Jack wouldn’t have known to plant them by the light of the full moon, they get planted for him, in spite of himself and his mother. That is how Spirit works. It is always working for us, turning each situation into the best possible outcome it can manage.

Watch for serendipity!

Sending every teller and story my utmost love.
Magic Can Be Real

Julie Moss

I was visiting my youngest sister. It was a kind of mini-family reunion – all three sisters were there. During the visit, my sister’s youngest granddaughter (age 4 ½) was stung by a bumble bee. OWIE! That hurt big time! After the crying and fussing and settling on the couch with a dish of ice, her mother said, “Aunt Julie, tell us a story, please.”

So I told to my audience of a bumble bee stung youngster, her brother and sister, my niece, and my two sisters one of my favorite stories from my childhood – “Millions of Cats” – because there are so many opportunities for audience participation including the cat fight. And two things happened, one was magical and one was an epiphany for me.

Magic first, of course! As the story ended my great-niece wriggled from her mother’s arms and ran over to me. Looking me directly in the eye she stated firmly, “That was magic! It doesn’t hurt anymore!” Then she gave me a big hug. Yes, stories are more magical than we sometimes know.

My epiphany came during the cat fight. Usually I have rules for the cat fight and everyone abides by them, or at least that’s the way it had always been until this day. As soon as I said, “And the cats began to fight among themselves,” my younger sister let out the loudest cat fight noises I’d ever heard, including all the actual cat fights I’ve been privileged to hear during my life. Everyone jumped! And I realized she was jealous of the rapt attention being focused on me. So when the story and hugs were over and another story requested, I told a story I’d made up to go with the song, “There Was an Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly.” Before beginning the story, I told the listeners, “After the story we’ll sing the song and Auntie Carolyn will lead the singing since she has such a lovely singing voice.” Thus attention would be focused on my sister as well as me. And maybe a part of the sibling rivalry we’d always had would be put to rest. (It was.)
Everyone Has A Story
Laura Metz-Velasquez

Once there was a woman who was the daughter of a storyteller. As a child, her world was alive and colorful. Every day she listened to magical fairy tales as her imagination grew powerful. The mystery of the world was her inspiration to practice tolerance and creativity. Inevitably, she became an adult, and it was during this time that she discovered the world was really full of lies and deceit. Happy endings were not normal and all she could hear were sad stories. This made her bitter towards the things she couldn’t explain with reason, and her heart became heavy.

Time passed and she became a mother herself. Her heart was filled with gratitude. Time had lifted the weight of the world, and the lightness she once knew returned. The stories she had believed long ago became real again in the eyes of her own child. It was this sweet innocence that softened her heart and calmed her mind. She appreciated the little things and enjoyed each moment as a story. In the end, the storyteller’s daughter did not live “happily ever after.” Instead she knew peace simply by listening to stories.
We Tell Our Story

by Cherie Karo Schwartz © 2019

We tell our story
from our generations: from ghetto, city, medina, and town
come photos, recipes, candlesticks, coins,
memories, images, names, sacred books:
echoes within us, transcending guides.

We tell our story
from our names: languages, old names and new,
ancestors, family names, nicknames;
names we grow into, change, discard
and names we give ourselves.

We tell our story
from our ways: in our seeing ourselves and each other,
in our creativity and compassion,
in our most human behavior,
our good deeds and our giving.

We tell our story
from our homes: in our arts and our symbols,
the books upon our shelves,
family recipes, garden growings,,
our welcome mat at the door.

We tell our story
from our days: feast days and fast days,
holidays, memorable times,
births, love, marriage, and death--
beginnings, endings; cycles and years.

We tell our story
from our tradition: We proclaim it from the mountain
We fiddle it from the rooftops,
We inscribe it on our houses
And we tell it to our children.
We tell our story
from our sacred tales: We read, reveal, revel, redefine
in laughter, in tears, in living the tales;
opening ourselves each minute and day
to our story’s unfolding eternity.

We tell our story
from our lives: And if we listen, really listen
in the moment of living our tales
then our stories come within us:
telling us now; telling the generations.

We tell our story
from our very soul: We read it, speak it, sign it, sing it,
We dance it, draw it, drum it, dream it
from our overflowing hearts
and out into the soul of the world.
Tell!

Julie Moss ©2019

Storytellers tell our lives
Through words and images.

Storytellers know the
Old ways and the new.

Storytellers spread the
News of all that happens.

Storytellers keep our
Collective histories alive.

Storytellers hold the
Collective wisdom of the ages.

Storytellers gift to all:
Laughter, Hope, Wisdom.
Story Wisdom Contributors

We would like to thank each of our contributors for generously sharing their Story Wisdom with Rocky Mountain Storytellers. Knowing that Storytellers have their own unique personalities, we have placed their biographies in reverse alphabetical order. Instead of standard business style, these include tidbits about the contributors themselves. Some have included their contact information. A huge thank you goes out to Karen Wollscheid for her glorious graphics and design that add so much to the look of this book. Heartfelt thanks from both Cherie and myself for your help in making this project a reality!

Bonnie Yockstick
A variety of stories and original movements, “wiggles,” are Bonnie’s style as she tells stories to kindergarteners. Each story is an adventure with many wonders to explore through the eyes of the characters and those wide eyed children. I am humbled and proud to be a part of the oral storytelling tradition.

LaRene Wolfe
LaRene enchanted her students with folktales and fairy tales during her teaching years and told animal stories to workshop participants at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. She writes and tells stories of family food and fun to audiences of all ages including senior church groups, family reunions, neighborhood parties, and ladies’ tea parties. Volunteers in classrooms so she can still “be a kid.”
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Liz Twomey
Liz Twomey’s world cracked open when she heard her first live storyteller in America’s outback in 1988 and she’s never fully recovered, thank goodness.
bessietwomey@yahoo.com

Cherie Karo Schwartz
Cherie Karo Schwartz is Storyteller, Author, and Educator for 48 years. She shares spirit-filled stories with everyone from passengers on a small ship in Turkey, to business mavens at Brown Palace Hotel, to Jewish students, and even teens. She loves researching, creating, and writing tales, and coaching tellers.
schwartstory@earthlink.net
Kathy Santopietro
Storytelling happened to Kathy Santopietro during her career as an adult educator and has stuck around for the last 25+ years. She tells only a few “selfies” (personal stories) and prefers sharing folk tales, classics and literary stories with adult/teen audiences in a variety of venues.
ksantowed@outlook.com

Priscilla Queen
In a tree house or a library, atop a boulder or in a classroom, Priscilla has sought to share the marvels of stories and the charms of language for more than 30 years. You may find her telling of a new treasure while ambling along an old trail, or at
plqueen4065@gmail.com

Kay Negash
Of all the different settings in which I have enjoyed telling stories over the years, (Star stories in planetariums; ESL classes to adult immigrants; my son’s Chinese high school students in China), I believe that telling to incarcerated youth in the metro Denver area has been my favorite memory.
kay77negash@gmail.com

Julie Moss
Julie has told all kinds of stories to “faceless” audiences even in times without a pandemic. Working on the radio is a bit like making a studio CD – hers is some of the stories she collected in China. She does tell all kinds of stories to live audiences when they are available. She’s been telling ever since she told stories to her imaginary brother.
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Vanita Moore
Vanita has entertained audiences of children and adults since 1985 as a professional, traditional, oral storyteller with a background in theater, public speaking, education, and the corporate world. Her broad repertoire ranges from selected poems of James Whitcomb Riley to the story of her mother, a W.W. II Flight Nurse.
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Wynn Montgomery
Wynn tells stories regularly in elementary schools and senior care facilities as a Spellbinders’ volunteer. He specializes in humorous Southern stories that honor “Pop,” his storytelling grandfather, as well as classic folk tales, myths, and historical stories. He loves tales with a “twist.” For sample stories: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLy7Gkc5oln2RkBfKfF1a
wynnmill@comcast.net

Laura Metz-Velasquez
Laura lives in the southern San Juan Mountains with her husband, daughter and dog. She is a healer and “story-listener.”

Kate Lutz
Kate envied her storytelling friends who remembered family evenings sharing folktales. Not her family. They sat around drinking and gossiping. Later, she realized, ah the tales. Kate’s told stories from the Arctic Circle to Africa’s southern tip. She is RMS’s past-president and was a National Storytelling Network board member.
k8lutz@gmail.com 303-941-1749

Katy Little
Katy has shared stories on the radio, around campfires, in grocery stores and on the street. Her stories pass on the legacy of family members and people who have touched her life. Her greatest joy is assisting others to discover their storytelling “voice” to share their own stories.
katy@katystales.com 970-599-0969

Judy Lehmkuhl
“Wait—what? Who-me? I was just talking. I’m not ‘telling stories’. I am not exaggerating. It DID look that big! Honest! I’m not ‘telling stories’....” Judy, age 5
jblstories@prodigy.net

Colleen Jayne
Colleen has told stories most of her life. She tells stories where she is. She recently did an interview with National Storytelling Network about telling stories in the psychiatric setting.
colleensjayne@gmail.com 303-442-7085
Eve Ilsen
Eve Ilsen is a psychotherapist, rabbinic pastor, singer-storyteller, cartoonist and writer. She has lived on the East Coast, West Coast, Denmark, rural Alaska and Israel. She is currently distracted by email while trying to shape one of several books that live in her head.
shesings@indra.com

Germaine Dietsch
Germaine is the Founding Director Emeritus of the Spellbinders. In the 1980s, she received a Master's in Seniors Theater, with a certificate in Gerontology. Using her training, she created a group of Seniors to share stories with children at risk, who expanded their scope to Storytelling for all children in many schools. At its height, there were 18 Chapters of Spellbinders volunteer Senior storytellers across the country, and in Canada, England, and Israel.

Karen Culver
Karen has been telling traditional tales with students in primary grades for 20 years as a volunteer with Jeffco Spellbinders. Her favorite trickster tales are Indonesian stories of Mousedeer and her favorite magic tales usually involve dragons.
karen_culver@msn.com

Frankie Colton
Frankie has loved stories and books since childhood. She has told stories at schools, museums, libraries, festivals, and to her family. As a founder of Alacrity House Publishing Company LLC (alacrityhousepublishing.com), she loves everything about books and stories – writing, editing, binding, and of course reading.
frankiecolton@gmail.com

Lois Burrell
Lois Burrell became a storyteller because she wanted children to become excited about words. She wanted them to hear her words and then want to read the words for themselves. Lois feels she is sharing a true blessing when she shares such a story.

Pam Burrell
Pam survived her two storytelling experiences and has retired to her guitar.