



Le Raconteur

ISSUE / NUMÉRO 19-3

FALL / L'AUTOMNE 2016



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President's Message/ Mot de la présidente

Selina Eisenberg



Greetings Everyone!

It gives me great pleasure to applaud Marylyn Peringer, Laurie Malabar and Lynn Torrie on what I know is going to be another great issue of Le Raconteur Magazine. Kudos to you the contributors for writing the articles and to the team for masterfully putting it all together complete with fabulous photos. I thoroughly enjoyed reading the Summer edition and I look forward to reading this next one too.

Happy Reading,
Selina Eisenberg

Bonjour à tous!

C'est mon plaisir d'applaudir au travail de Marylyn Peringer, Laurie Malabar et Lynn Torrie qui ont fait sortir un autre numéro de notre revue, Le Raconteur. Bravo aussi aux auteurs des articles et à l'équipe responsable de trouver des photos bien assorties et de mettre le tout ensemble. Je me suis bien amusée à lire Le Raconteur d'été et je m'attends à la lecture de ce numéro-ci.

Bonne lecture!

Selina Eisenberg

A Visit to Grimm Land

Ruth Danzinger

If you ever get the chance to follow the fairy tale road in and around Kassel, Germany, I recommend you do it. These pictures are from my recent trip to the area where the Grimm Brothers lived and worked and where many of the stories they collected are said to have taken place. And it is the area where Dorothea Viehmann, a storyteller who contributed many stories to their collection lived. I had the marvelous opportunity to explore her neighbourhood, the Inn where she grew up and the house where she lived as an adult. What a magical journey of discovery! Dorothea is a fascinating character who made a great impression on the Brothers Grimm both as a storyteller and as a person. Daughter of innkeepers, mother of six, she is said to have had a deep sense of the value of storytelling and of her role as a teller. We rarely hear about her, although she contributed over 40 stories to the Grimm's collection, and her stories are still being shared today.



The River Wieser runs through the area north of Kassel and connects towns like Hamelin, Bremen and others.....



A street in the village of Steinau, Germany, childhood home of the Brothers Grimm



Jacob (1785 - 1863) and Wilhelm (1786 to 1859) Grimm lived in this house for most of their childhood. Apparently they considered it a very happy time in their lives. There is a little museum here where you can see the inside of the house and listen to recordings of the stories told in German. Not so hard to follow once you recognize the story.



Rapunzel's tower! Yes, they say this is it. There are many buildings in the area that would have been old for centuries by the 1800's when the Grimms collected their stories. People began to associate the buildings with all kinds of legends and tales. The castle and village associated with Briar Rose is also nearby.



Many old houses in the villages around Kassel contain inscriptions. This was the first one I saw, and my favourite. Correct me if your Old German is better than mine, but I understand it to say something like: "If you receive something from your ancestors, take pleasure in it, use it, and then pass it on to those who come after you. 1645." The writer probably meant the house, but isn't that a good description of stories and storytelling?



Dorothea Viehmann herself. Or a bust of her, in a square created in the village of Niederzwehren where she lived most of her adult life. The village is part of Kassel now, but its character has been beautifully maintained. Children pass through her square on their way to and from school every day, and people can attend outdoor storytelling events there too. The cobblestones in the square contain several coloured inserts with the names of well-known stories from the Grimm's collection.



The house in Niederzwehren where Dorothea Viehmann lived in the later part of her life. This was also the time, around 1813/14, when she went into Kassel with her eggs and vegetables, stopped by the young Grimms Brothers' flat and told them stories. They were by all accounts thrilled to have met her and extolled her abilities as a storyteller in the preface to their second edition. Apparently she was glad to accept a cup of coffee as she wouldn't usually have been able to afford such a luxury.



The Inn at Rengershausen where Dorothea grew up is still there and has its own well-known brewery, right off the road that connects Kassel with Frankfurt. Clearly Dorothea would have had a chance to hear many stories growing up here, from the travelers, tradespeople, merchants, soldiers and other guests that came through.



The Rengershausen Inn is a relaxed and pleasant place in the present day and still a popular hangout. On the walls are depictions of stories that Dorothea told, including this one of Hans My Hedgehog.

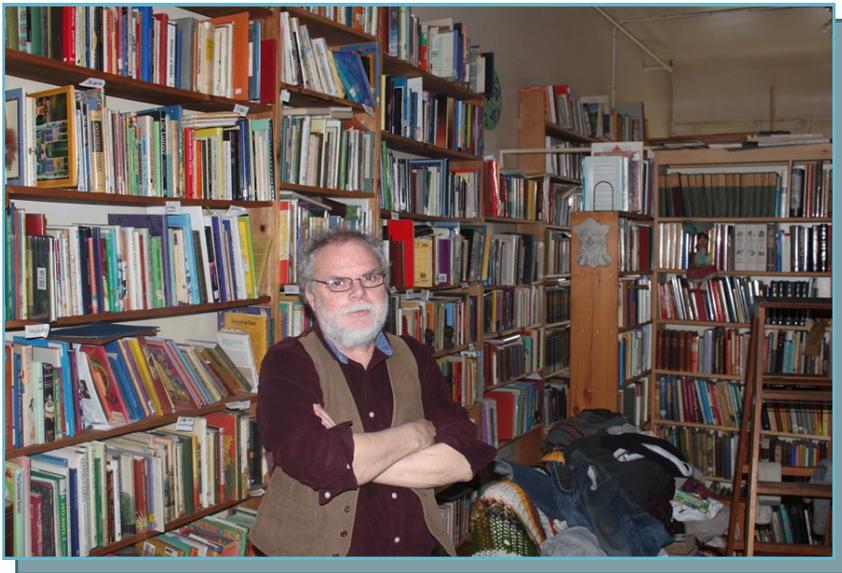


You know who this is. Thanks again to Storytelling Toronto and our wonderful community of storytellers for supporting me to take this journey. It was a wish come true!

The article below originally appeared in a 2014 issue of Pippin, Storytelling Toronto's online magazine. We reprint it here in hopes that you Le Raconteur readers will contact us with contributions, large or small, about your own collection of story books. What makes up your story library? Where is it kept? Is it organized like Norm's, or do you depend on your memory to find a particular book? Are there any volumes which are particularly precious to you? Perhaps you have a favourite local librarian who helps you source your material, or there is a bibliophile in your own group. Let us know! Send a story and/or a photo.

We look forward to sharing your responses in our Spring 2017 issue.

Norman Perrin: Lord of the Four Winds



The recent threat of public library closings in Toronto has made many of us realize how often we take precious resources for granted, whether in the public or the private domain.

In the Toronto storytelling community, other equally precious resources are overlooked, such as the 5,000-volume Four Winds Library owned, operated and lovingly cared for by storyteller Norman Perrin.

At present, the Four Winds (named so in 1990 from the song made popular by Ian and Sylvia) overflows the ceiling-high shelves lining the walls of

Norm's third-floor walk-up apartment in Toronto's Junction district. The books are the result of more than 30 years that Norm has spent at garage sales, second-hand bookstores, and the annual University of Toronto book sales where he still works as a volunteer. Some books are gifts from fellow storytellers; others are public library discards. There are volumes richly bound and beautifully illustrated shelved next to stapled, typewritten manuscripts. Many of the books are duplicates; Norm will offer them for sale at events such as the annual Toronto Festival of Storytelling. Lately he has started using the Internet as a pathway to new acquisitions.

And then there are the books in cartons, still waiting to be unpacked. Norm and his library moved into their present home less than a year ago. Lugging countless boxes of books up to the third floor (Norm did get help from his friends) must be considered a labour of love.

The books are shelved by theme as well as by national origin. World collections, books about storytelling, publishers' series, "minute" stories (very brief tales for special situations), all have their place. Just ask, and you'll get the world tour: folklore of India and China on upper shelves, lore of Ireland and Scotland on shelves below. Over by Norm's statue of Ganesh, the Hindu elephant god, you'll find (rather incongruously) the section on Jewish folklore neighbouring with tales from Korea. Stories from Canada, of course; not only First Nations tales but narratives collected here from the many cultures which make up our country. A section from the Pacific Islands is expanding nicely.

Now come over to the theme shelves. Are you researching stories about trees? tricksters? trumpeters? Norm will help you find what you're looking for.

Norm's love of books has been a constant in his life. As an Ottawa Valley nine-year-old, he hitchhiked 10 miles every week to the library in Pembroke. Years later, after studies at Brock University, he discovered Toronto's 1,001 Friday Nights of Storytelling. It precipitated his move from St. Catharines to Toronto and started his passion for storybook collecting. Norm still attends Friday nights, telling stories, occasionally hosting, and playing his pennywhistle to gather the audience when the tales begin.

The Four Winds Library is more than a private collection of folklore

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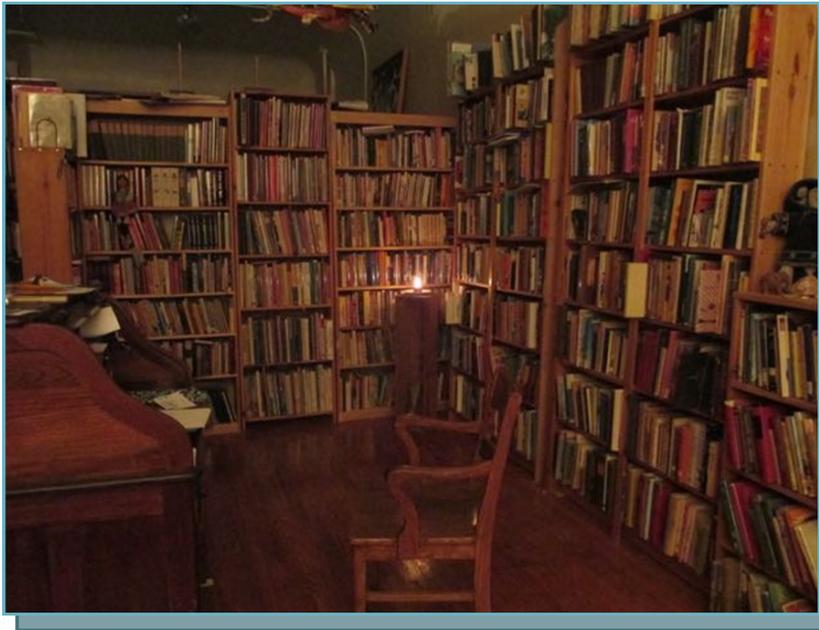
volumes; Norm has always intended it as a lending library for storytellers and story lovers. There are no regular hours; it's open "whenever people phone" and when Norm is available. Most of the books may be borrowed "for as long as needed". Are they always returned? "Usually," says Norm.

On appointment, people may come to browse, read and do research. The library is free, but donations are welcome.

Besides the never-ending goal of more acquisitions, cataloguing the library is one of Norm's major projects. He's also making lists of theme-related tales as an aid to storytellers.

How lucky we are to have a resource such as Norm in our midst!

November 2016 update to the above article: Extensive renovations to his apartment building caused Norm and the Four Winds to vacate the premises in June, 2014. After two years of many challenges, however, both Norm and the Four Winds have returned. Norm is at present setting up shelving and looking forward to a grand re-opening in the near future.



The Truth About True Stories

Laurie Malabar



Laurie Malabar

It's not every day that I'm able to go out "on assignment" with Marylyn Peringer to explore how the storytelling world in Toronto has broadened in scope, but last September that's exactly what we did! I had taken a 10 year leave from the storytelling community, so I was curious to see what had changed.

We decided Raconteur, a monthly themed personal storytelling event staged at the Tranzac club in Toronto, would be our first outing!

<http://raconteurs.ca/about/>

I met Marylyn at the Bathurst subway station on a balmy summer's eve. After grabbing a quick meal we headed off to observe a Raconteur storytelling performance event. After paying our ten dollar entry fee and negotiating our way around tightly placed café tables, we chose chairs front and centre of the stage. The venue quickly filled with people of all ages grabbing a quick drink while catching up with friends. Marylyn and I reminisced about Toronto Storytelling Festival performances staged at this same venue years ago, until Laura-Louise Toubin, one of Raconteur's founders, came on stage to introduce the theme for the evening, "Changing the World". A free standing microphone was placed centre stage with a stationary spotlight fixed on the performer, much like the set-up used for stand-up comedy shows. After a spirited introduction and applause, the room quieted down to enhance the sound quality of the recording that would be uploaded to the Raconteur's website, after the event.

All stories told followed the guidelines set out by Raconteur, they were true stories, well crafted, under 7 minutes in length and told in the first person. The first two stories were funny and well told. David told of his misadventures communicating on SnapChat followed by a remarkable story of camera film found in a second-hand bureau drawer and the lengths Christine, our second teller, took to find the owner. A 15 minute break followed with bartenders jumping into action pouring drinks while the room filled with lively chatter. On cue the lights were lowered and two more tellers took to the stage. Janet

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shared her story of volunteering with both a Ugandan Missionary group distributing bibles and a university sexual health clinic distributing safe sex information. Elaine followed with her story of being on LSD in St Catherine's back in the 70s. Again a break was called, drinks refreshed, and the audience significantly thinned out. Marylyn commented on how hard it was to be a teller assigned to the end of a program as we watched more than half the audience exit. Second to last was Jeremy's story of working in Burkina Faso in 2013 when a political coup occurred and then, much to our delight, Storytellers of Canada member Rico Rodriguez was the last teller up. Rico shared his personal story of founding Queers in Your Ears storytelling collective 20 years ago in Toronto and the challenges he faced in doing so. After our enthusiastic applause, the house lights went up and people prepared to leave. I asked Rico why he liked telling with Raconteur and he replied that writing and performing true stories kept him fresh. Stories had to be short, true and pass an audition. Rico missed seeing the audience due to the glaring spotlight but he loved sharing his true stories with new listeners.

Enjoying the last of the warm summer breezes while walking back to the subway, Marylyn and I agreed our outing was a success. Yes, there were differences between Raconteur and other traditional storytelling events, such as the number of restrictions placed on the storyteller and that Raconteur events took place in a bar. However, we admired these young entrepreneurial artists. Their commitment to sharing true stories confirmed for us that we shared one truth, that telling stories was our common passion!

Grandmother and the Mukluks

Louise Profeit-LeBlanc



Traditionally, the First People of the Yukon have used humour as a way of dealing with difficult situations. My grandmother spoke only in her mother tongue when she was preparing to leave this world. She insisted that my eldest aunt, Rose, hurry home from down south, as her father was waiting for her on the other side. She spoke firmly to my other aunt, Maizie, who sat quietly crying at her bedside, "Don't cry, May, you know I can't swim!"

This was the same grandmother who had laboured for almost two weeks, making a pair of mukluks as a special Christmas gift. Beading the tops and tongues, measuring, cutting, trimming and measuring again, to make sure they were cut and sewn perfectly to fit the footprint given to her by the young man who had ordered them for his girlfriend. It was Christmas and she had many grandchildren and children to sew for, but this sale was important, as money was tight that winter. She wanted to have all the trimmings for the Christmas dinner, including a big turkey, mandarin oranges, nuts, shortbread, eggnog, fruitcake, and ribbon candy. An extra hundred and fifty dollars could go a long way.

She had made sure to invite her best friend over for Christmas Day, as her children wouldn't be arriving until Boxing Day. Her friend had recently been widowed and Gramma knew that being invited to spend



Christmas with her and her family on Christmas Day would lift her spirits. "It's hard to cook turkey just for yourself," she muttered as she got ready to go visit her.

The man who had ordered the mukluks thought it strange that my grandmother asked him to get his girlfriend's footprint. "Just have her put her foot on paper for me!" Observing his look of puzzlement, she took a brown paper bag and a pencil and demonstrated the instructions. "Phone her. Tell her to send it by airmail so I can make it before Christmas."

Gramma worked long into the night and the mukluks were readied a couple of days before Christmas. Her arthritic hands were stiff and swollen. Her eyes were tired and bloodshot from lack of sleep and strain from sewing on the tiny beads, but she had pressed on. Upon completion, she neatly folded them, wrapping the beautifully braided ties of matching colours around the footwear.

Although the price had been discussed beforehand, I overheard the guy telling her that he only had two fifties and a twenty dollar bill. "Can you sell them to me for one hundred and twenty?"

I saw my Grandmother wince, but immediately compose herself to give the dignified response, "This is Christmas time so I guess I can be more giving. That's okay! One hundred twenty is good! Thank you. Hope her feet be warm this winter. Edmonton is a cold place. I know 'cause I was in the hospital there one time. I see outside, people cover their face when they walk in the wind!" She placed the beautifully crafted mukluks into a bag, took the money and gave him the precious gift.

He sniffed the air. "What's that smell? Did you just load the stove?"

She shook her head, and smiling, responded with a chuckle. No, that's how all mukluks smell. That is how we tan that moose skin. We soak it in moose brain and smoke it, for making it brown. That make it soft and it can breathe when you wear it." He left quickly, as his ride was waiting in the driveway, ready to take him to the city where he would fly to his loved one, bringing with him this special northern gift.

After New Year's Day, this same man arrived on Grandmother's doorstep to return the footwear. He looked a bit sheepish, but bluntly told my grandmother that his girlfriend thought they smelled bad-like an Indian. They smelled too smoky and she was embarrassed

to wear them because people might make fun of her. In her noble, mannered way, my grandmother took the mukluks from him and placed them on the table. She beckoned him to come into the little cabin.

"Come in, it is cold out there!" I could see from where I was sitting that my grandmother was digging into her little stash, from the money she had set aside for a trip to the city to see a friend who was very sick. She came back with a stack of twenties, tens and five dollar bills. She counted out one hundred and twenty dollars onto the table.

"Here you go. I hope you can buy her a nice watch or something with that. Let me turn on the light now, so you don't slip on my porch."

My grandmother laughed as she closed the door. "Huh! How he think we gonna smell? We Indians, not Whiteman! That's a good smell, that one!"

To submit articles to Le Raconteur, please email:

scccpublication@gmail.com