

# Storytelling News '04

The daily newspaper of the Storytelling Weekend in Washington DC April 16-18, 2004

---

**Sunday April 18, 2004 Conference Day Three**

*Thank you to everyone who participated this weekend in the Storytelling Weekend Conference and social events!*



For more information: [www.stevedenning.com/Smithsonian04.html](http://www.stevedenning.com/Smithsonian04.html)

---

## **MORNING, DAY TWO: FOUND OBJECTS AND ALLEGORIES**

Dynamic duo Seth Kahan and Madelyn Blair opened Saturday's all-day session: Seth by delving into the talking-stick ritual and its roots in native American culture—specifically a Cherokee medicine woman who conferred a ministry of found objects upon a woman who went into a long depression after her son died. Madelyn invited four selected storytellers up to the stage, and each spoke about how they use storytelling in their work:

1) Sally Strackbein spoke of how she created an acupuncture website that included personable and vulnerable stories by clients—in place of the standard bloodless clinical information of most sites. 2) Lynn Miller spoke about making an eighteen-inch journey from head to heart as he paved his way from unhappiness at a government job to new fulfillment as an ordained Unity minister in a pioneering community operating right out of his home. Storytelling permeates his new vocation, whether in his sermons or in his Bible readings, in collecting material from numerous on-line sources, or in listening attentively to his congregation. 3) Steven Hobbs spoke about his experience in a graduate law program—how at its worst, it seemed to eradicate all individuality and soul, but at its best, still reminds him of the majesty of the law. He now incorporates storytelling and creativity into the law classes he teaches in Alabama. Workshops he has done with Noa Baum include movement, voice, ice-breaking games, and sculpting stories in clay. 4) Karen Dietz recalled her uphill battle twenty years ago in getting people to understand that her scholarship in folklore did not mean she read nursery stories to children. She is heartened by the fact that, as director of the National Storytelling Network, there's been a sea change in folklore scholarship and storytelling that's allowed her to "come out" in both fields. This session ended with a range of audience comments as mikes were passed through the audience.

Screenwriter Dan Decker completed the morning session—first with a humorous rendering of Hamlet's dilemma, then with a description of his arduous journey to the Smithsonian in the face of Metro closures that morning. He then mined this story for its value in illustrating a narrative model. All story is allegorical, Decker said, and involves a social contract between audience and teller. Further, humans are distinguished from other animals by having not only stimulus response but also mental constructs. We all make connections among various images or word evocations—he used the example of three separate moments from a vaudeville melodrama scenario, or of the single-line story, "My girlfriend dumped me because of crossword puzzles." It's human nature, he suggested, to fill in the gaps, to embroider, to supply the missing elements and round out the picture.

"Don't use the law to suck the creativity out of your enterprise." – Steven Hobbs

"Feed the storyteller – not your need for information."

## **SEEKING**

I am working on a TV series project to profile new heroes: volunteers, activists, philanthropists, non-profit, and government workers who are contributing to making the world better. I am hoping to find collaborators, resource people, and recommendations of potential "profilees." Contact me, Patty Rose, at 917.623.8509 or [pattyroses@msn.com](mailto:pattyroses@msn.com) Thank you!



Visit the Golden Fleece web site at [www.storyatwork.com](http://www.storyatwork.com). The participant directory will be available beginning next week.

# Storytelling News '04

The daily newspaper of the Storytelling Weekend in Washington DC April 16-18, 2004

Sunday April 18, 2004 Conference Day Three

## AFTERNOON, DAY TWO: STAR WARS AND SPIDERS

After a strict one-hour break for lunch on another gorgeous spring day we reconvened in our basement-laboratory auditorium. Shielded from the sun in the underground Steve Barnes took us on a power-tour that began with deep breathing and launched us into a map of the Hero's Journey ala Joe Campbell. Illustrated in depth with Star Wars he unpacked each stage of the myth. Steve went on to draw correspondences between the ancient, hindu chakra system and Maslow's hierarchy, explaining how survival, sex and power are motivators that reach a wider audience than the upper spheres of heart, expression, intellect and spirit. Steve told us, "Stories are devised to make the internal world visible."

Beginning with stories told from the master's lips, Doug Lipman gave a thorough discourse on the difference between concepts and stories. He led us through an experiential session of some of his most profound techniques for remembering and telling. First was BRIO: Brief Reminder of Image Order. For this we created simple image flows to remind us of a story from the biblical David and his encounter with G-d and spiders. He encouraged us to find out what the story was about for the teller. And once found, let it guide our creation as a prime mover. He called this the MIT: Most Important Thing. Doug voiced, "Let the story let you show though."

The day ended with another powerful group discussion facilitated by Madelyn Blair and Seth Kahan. Together we pondered the end of the Smithsonian portion of our weekend with multiple perspectives converging in a group conversation.

## SATURDAY NIGHT: STORYTELLING THEATER EVENT

Michelle James and Joe Mancini led this Saturday night event at George Mason. They both individually use improvisation in their consulting work with organizations but worked together for the first time tonight. The participants made strange sounds and motions to get out of the head and into the body. We created group narratives, directed and finished each other's stories.

Twice groups of 10 or so created a "work machine," and both times the contraptions ranged from very scary to violent. Each time Joe and Michelle told the groups to morph into spirit. We saw harshness transforming to grace and beauty. What does this say about what our group thinks about "work" settings? Finally a group of 10 created the end to a story and the other three groups had to create the beginning AND see it through to the predetermined end. The exercise reinforced that there are many paths to a result.

Joe and Michelle were great at each point in drawing out the learning from these exercises and the possible application in working with organizations and teams. They urged audience members to seize opportunities and be courageous as they scavenge for knowledge solutions. We laughed over and over. Sometimes silly, the evening was moment-to-moment fun and energizing.

"100% of mental construct is story. 'I am' is the first story ever told. We see things happening around us all day and don't think a thing until we can hook them together in a narrative." - Dan Decker

"Teaching starts when the teacher knows the student's story and the student knows the teacher's story" -Joan Girardi

## OVERHEARD

**Michele Seymour**, here from London, England, felt today's workshops gave her structure and authority to work with story. **Barrie Zucal** and **Nancy Pomerleau** connected with each other during the workshops. Together they planned how to incorporate story into their work. Nancy thought the workshops attracted a passionate, creative, and entrepreneurial group, and Barrie thought the speakers were "top-notch."

**Margaret and Lynn Miller** commented that, "Today was great, it was great focusing on the practical applications. And there was a well of expertise in the audience. So many talented audience members they almost didn't need the speakers. We could have had an absolutely amazing conversation among ourselves."

At lunch **Sharon, Allison, Mary and Ruth Alice** started naming books we must all read so fast it was hard to keep follow. *The Alphabet and the Goddess* and *Sex, Time and Power: How Women's Sexuality Shaped Human Evolution* by Leonard Shlain. Shlain helps explain why Western culture got so captured by the linear thinking model (left brain). Also, *The Heroine's Journey* by Maureen Murdock, *The Soul's Code* by James Hillman, *Orality and Literacy (New Accents)* by Walter J. Ong, and *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* by Jared Diamond.



Writers: Kelly Cresap,  
Ruth Alice Keeting-White,  
Joan Girardi, Seth Kahan

Producer:  
**Group Jazz**  
[groupjazz.com](http://groupjazz.com)

*group jazz*

Sponsor:  
**EduTech Ltd**  
[edutechLtd.com](http://edutechLtd.com)

