



In The Wind

Seattle Storytellers Guild Events

1st and 3rd Friday
Virtual Story Swaps Page 7

Zoom StoryFest: "Aunt Lena"
with Anne-Louise Sterry
June 19th—7:00 PM Page 2

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A Special Virtual Storytelling Issue!

Usually the Summer months bring a break from storytelling events for the Seattle Storytelling Guild. Apart from the NSN Conference, and with the demise of the Powellswood Storytelling Festival – and just a few summer swaps remaining, the Board recently decided to drop our Summer issue of *In The Wind*.



However, due to the impact of the pandemic and the need for social distancing, all of our gatherings to share in the joy of story from March on were canceled or postponed until 2021. This included our Annual Meeting and elections, usually held in May/ June – so a Special edition has been sent out providing you with our Annual Reports – that meeting, tentatively will be in the Fall, possibly September. Hopefully we will be able to resume our Story Fests in the Fall. We want you to know what is currently happening in your storytelling guild. Lots to read! You will want to print this one out!

If there are symbols for these difficult times, perhaps they are the *Teddy Bears* peeking out of people's windows or through the virtual windows of Zoom, feeling shut in, waiting for this to be over. Or the *toilet paper rolls* that people seem to hoard for no reason other than they just "need to do something." Or those **cloth face masks** – that sadly hide our faces from each another as we stay indoors, or six feet apart.



"I compare the art of telling stories to a gigantic tree sustained by age-old roots. It is a robust tree that stands firm in the midst of new technologies surrounding it. And the storyteller is the voice that is woven with the soul . . . Can there be anything more powerful than the voice that is kept alive . . .?"

Beatriz Montero of Spain in Storytelling Magazine, April/May 2016

Stories are supposed to bring us together – though now, perhaps only through virtual means on Facebook, YouTube or ZOOM. NW Folklife went virtual this year and the National Storytelling Network had a virtual conference instead. The MOTH is having virtual Slams. A World Virtual Storytelling Group exists on Facebook and other events increasing appear on YouTube channels. The Seattle Storytelling Guild coped with the pandemic with 1st and 3rd Fridays ZOOM Story Swaps. Stories have been told to elders online, and a number of our tellers are participating remotely in a variety of national online events.

There has been a seismic cultural shift affecting the entire arts and entertainment community. What will the "new normal" look like? What place will storytelling have in it? This issue addresses that new era of virtual storytelling in a variety of ways. Norm Brecke shares how he and Anne, professional storytellers, have coped with Staying-at-Home. Our webmaster, Larry Hohm tells us how to upload video stories to YouTube and has added lists of virtual events to our web site. Judith has been Zooming around the World from her living room and Barry discusses the changing dynamics of telling live streaming stories to small screens, and has appended a revised edition of his Hints for SSG ZOOMers.

How to Post Videos on YouTube



Many storytellers are posting performances online these days, as are many other performing artists. One popular platform, of course, is YouTube, which is free to use, widely viewed, and fairly easy to use.

To post a video performance on YouTube, follow these steps.

1. Create a video recording of your performance. This can be done with any smartphone or tablet, or a computer with a web camera. It is best done in horizontal. The result should be a video file, with a filename ending with an extension such as .mov, .mp4, or .wmv.

2. In your browser (Firefox, Chrome, Safari, Internet Explorer, ...) navigate to: www.youtube.com

3. Along the top of the YouTube home page, you will see a search bar. Immediately to the right of the search bar is a video camera icon, which looks like a black silhouette of a video camera, with a plus sign on it. Click the video camera icon, then click "Upload video".

4. From the "Upload Videos" page you have two options. You can drag and drop your video file to the center of the page, or you can click "Select Files" and use the pop-up file browser to navigate to the video file of your performance.

5. Continue to follow the online instructions. YouTube will step you through a three phase process. First, it will upload your file; this will likely take a few minutes; the amount of time will depend on the size of your file and your upload speed. Second, it will "process" your file; this will also likely take a few minutes. Third, it will allow you to publish your file.

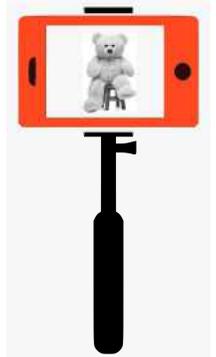
6. While your file is being uploaded and processed, you will be able to enter information about it. You can enter a title and description for it. You will be required to indicate whether it was made for kids. And you can select one of three visibility options.

- a. Public: anyone may view it.
- b. Private: only people who have the link that you will share may view it.
- c. Unlisted: similar to private, but in addition, your video will not show up in any searches.



7. YouTube will create and display a video link for your video. Right-click on the link, copy it, then share it with people (via email, text, or a link on a webpage) to let them see your video.

8. There are more options as well, which you can explore. You can add thumbnail pictures, cards, and an end screen. Just poke around to learn about these options.



By Larry Hohm

The New Era of Virtual Storytelling by Barry McWilliams

Perhaps by now we have stopped reeling from the Covid-19 Pandemic. After a couple of months of Social Distancing with all its working at home, online schooling, and the massive shutdown of life as we knew it, we are coming to grips with a new “normal.” It has had a tremendous impact of our cultural life – no public gatherings whether for education or worship, sports or the arts. Movie and TV production has ground to a halt. Suddenly, musicians, teachers, preachers, performers of all sorts, and storytellers found themselves in a stuck-at-home bind. So TV newscasters report the news from homes, American Idols compete in living rooms, game shows are without audiences and other shows have “home editions.” Everyone, from the biggest stars to us humble storytellers have had to adapt to this new reality.

We have struggled with drawing audiences to our public events, especially the media-savvy young adults of the Millennials, Gen X, Y or is it now Z generations, who relate to life through their smart phones. Now we are compelled to enter a new era with our age old art. Cut off from their busy lives and slick entertainment people have been forced to discover the value of simpler life. Fortunately there is technology enabling work and schooling at home, business meetings and social gathering through the internet. Quite a few “gig” artists have resorted to reaching fans via performances from home through Facebook and YouTube and Zoom.

With any technology, there is a learning curve – starting with connecting online and getting audio and video working right on a variety of devices. And navigating with clicks through various buttons and menus. There are unforeseen challenges – in the midst of a story, garbled audio, out-of-sync video, or screens locking up due to insufficient bandwidth. Or an invasion of miscreants “zoombombing” gatherings with vulgar and off-color language. All of which have happened at our virtual swaps!

Perhaps there are new dynamics for this virtual storytelling world. Traditionally, we have been used to performing before audiences, whether in a small circle, or before a large room full of people from a stage. We learn how to draw people into our tales with voice, movement and gestures, developing these skills is a part of our art. Often lights are dimmed to focus attention on the teller. And our audiences bring energy to our telling responding to us with body language, laughter and “*ahh*’s”. For storytellers, there isn’t a fourth wall – they need their audience to make their story come to life. When I tell a story, I move around a lot and use a lot of gestures. I sense when the audience is with me, and know when to use clever repartee to draw attention back.

Prerecorded videos, such as those posted on Facebook or YouTube may capture some of that dynamic – especially if they were made before a live audience, and the recording is wide enough to take in the movements and gestures, On a small

screen, even these lack the excitement of a live performance. And trying to capture that dynamic is more difficult when recording on a “narrow stage” with just a lonely camera watching.



ZOOM Screen - Gallery View

In the world of live-streamed virtual storytelling, there is a need for a different dynamic. We are on a small screen, perhaps just a thumbnail portion of the screen. Our audience has just our face to see – so voice and facial expressions become much more important. As is seeing our face clearly and well-lit, without a distracting background or bright window behind us. Perhaps using a green screen and simple virtual backgrounds will help. Our laptop or other cameras should at our eye level – put it up on a box – so people won’t be looking up at your chin. Or get a selfie tripod for your smart phones.

Verbal pacing and a variety of rhythm and speech are even much more important now, if we are to capture and keep people’s attention. Tellers must show animated emotions of fear or worry, joy and surprise with just their face. That makes practicing before a mirror important. We can’t see how audiences are responding. They are in separate environments with all sorts of distractions, and their attention to the screen can easily wander away. You have to connect right away in a way that relates to them. You can’t be boring. Jokes fall flat when listeners laugh alone. That is why situation comedies have laugh tracks. In the world of virtual storytelling, there are clearly new dynamics to be learned.



ZOOM Screen - Speaker View

I would strongly recommend you read online:

Chris Lema’s article on 7 Tips for Telling Stories on Zoom and Lynn Torrie’s articles :

*** How to be a good online storyteller or audience**

*** See More of Your Audience and * ZOOM “pin video,”** where she suggests you use to focus your telling on just one face, so that everyone will sense you are telling it individually.

But it is still the story that matters. The readers of this article have discovered the joys of tales told and passed on, But choosing the right ones for a dispersed audience on small screens is even more important.



ZOOM Screen - Pin Video

There is still the need for a beginning, ending and creating that path of increasing tension leading from the one to the other—that is the essence of stories. And bringing about that emotional “Eureka” moment – whether it is a “*Ha Ha*” of laughter, an “*Ooh or Ahhh*” of shared wonder, a “*A-ha*” of sudden realization and discovery, or an “*Amen*” of meaning and enlightenment. Stories can offer understanding, healing, transformation and hope. And perhaps this is our opportunity to connect with younger generations; but in doing so, we must adapt, skillfully using these new technologies, especially with younger audiences while keeping alive age-old stories that touch hearts!