

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries December 12, 2023

Vicky Ness began the evening with a visit to a place in her inimitable imagination: Country View Estates, where life for adults is a spectator event.

Laura Holland gave us a glimpse of her childhood as the youngest of three irrepressible sisters.

Kenneth Foster told a heartwarming story of a country man who changed lives with a vegetable stand in Georgia.

Meg Brown shared a personal story about hearing Messiah for the first time as a squirmy child.

Sharon Elwell told about a man who resisted being the object of Christmas good will.

Genevieve Franklin shared a narrative about the Virgin of Guadalupe and what devotion to her has meant to a wide variety of people.

Katy Mangan took us back to the tiny English village where her delightful Shirley Anne prepared for Christmas and winter solstice.

TELLABRATION!™ 2023

Do Tell Story Swap Sonoma County

Tuesday, November 14, 2023 from 7:00 - 9:00 pm

The Do Tell story swap joins with storytellers all over the world each November to celebrate TELLABRATION!™.

Brandon Spars, our host, read the proclamation declaring the international celebration. And what a great night it was for the swap! Brandon kicked off the event by recounting his debut as a storyteller at Spanky's bar in Cotati, where patrons actually threw things at him.

Beth Wakelee recounted two folktales. The first was the Norwegian story of a husband who thought he could handle the housework better than his wife – with disastrous results. The second was a Cornish story about Duffy, a girl who made a pact with a devil.

Dr. Ruth Ochoa, who worked for many years as an ER doctor, touched us with a personal story of losing and recovering her jam (joy and meaning) after experiencing burnout.

Kenny Hamann, a 10th grader, told of annual visits to Samuel P. Taylor park with his sister and cousins. Each year they hiked the Devil's Gulch trail, getting closer to the end, passing the sign that said, "Continue at your own risk!" wondering what they would encounter at trail's end. A pot of gold? Well, no.

Luz Navarrette told us that she always waits for three signs to know that the spirit is directing her to take action. In one instance, she found herself in Nepal with the Dalai Lama, experiencing her own hero's journey – the quest where one leaves the safety of home and undertakes a pilgrimage, returning with new knowledge.

Ken Foster concluded the evening with a delightful narrative about a moment in history, when the women of a besieged castle found a way to save themselves and their beloved men. Ken reminded us that there is always another way to solve a problem.



Do Tell Story Swap Summaries

October 10, 2023

Vicky Ness told a traditional Jewish story from Greece, involving three young men - one of whom agrees to an unfortunate dare. What results is a worst case scenario for a wedding: the “other” bride shows up and she’s a rather demanding, litigious corpse. It only gets worse from there...

Beth Wakelee’s story, “Tops and Bottoms” is an old English folktale. It involves a young farmer who goes against tradition, and the wishes of a greedy goblin, to make use of a fallow field. Fortunately for the smart farmer, the goblin isn’t the brightest bulb in the box and so manages to lose the field and all the crops that grow in it to the farmer.

Laura McHale Holland told of a “teeny tiny” woman who lived in a fairytale pretty, teeny tiny house within a charming teeny tiny village. All goes well until the teeny tiny woman discovers a cache of teeny tiny teeth that fit her mouth perfectly! The fact that she finds them in the cemetery should clue you into what happens next.

Brandon Spars told part 2 of his story that began in the September 12th Do Tell swap. It’s an epic and hilarious tale of him leading his students on a trip through China. Expect operatic drama complete with fearsome Dragon Ladies, marching pink soldiers, a labyrinth path and a totally unexpected and elusive holy grail.

Meg Brown’s grandfather was 18 when WWI broke out. His experiences as a young navy recruit took him, among other places, to the paradise of Hawaii and the newly opened Panama Canal. Not the least in those adventures was the difficulty of taking a “bucket bath” in the bottom of an old ship, listing violently during rough seas!

Ed Lewis recounted his own youth as one of three young boys chased by a vile shape shifting hag one dark Halloween night. Fortunately there are tools on hand to repel such creatures, such as a knife, a bible, matches and a pair of your best shoes. Or... you could simply open up a box of salt and be done with it.

Katy Mangan's beloved character, Eduardo, returns as a young boy who is destined to find his way through the ethereal world of senses and the spirit on his journey to awaken to his true nature. Mysteries deepen and guides appear just when they are most needed!

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries

September 12, 2023

Elaine Stanley began the evening with a favorite folktale about a contest between Luck and Intelligence. Each set out to prove he was of more benefit to people than the other. Within the story was a Czech story of a gardener who set out to win the hand of a princess. Would he achieve his goal through intelligence, or would luck win out?

Sharon Elwell in Montana told a personal story of a child pretending to sleep so she could overhear the thoughts of the adults around her.

Beverly Schwartz in New York followed with a story of inventive ways she involved her local community to get her third-grade students interested in science.

Beth Wakelee shared a Norwegian folk tale about a rich farmer who tried to force a beautiful young neighbor girl into marriage. She outwitted him and the story ended with, “Snip, snap, snout; this tale’s told out!” – our new favorite conclusion.

Genevieve Franklin told of the days when her beloved husband was nearing the end of his life and she was required to make decision after decision.

Brandon Spars shared an experience when he took seven high school students to visit their sister school in Beijing. They soon learned that although towels had not been on their packing lists, the dormitory didn’t supply them. Finding a way to get towels set Brandon on a rollicking adventure.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries August 8, 2023

The evening began with a funny story by **Ken Foster**, who told of a quiet farmer, who wouldn't provide a passing traveler with information until he learned more from the man.

Sharon Elwell told of a beloved high school student who refused to continue his education in the way she thought best.

Katy Mangan shared an Indian folk tale of an elephant who stopped destructive behavior when he was given a focus.

Vicky Ness took us into a fantasy world where space aliens had imbued human footwear with intelligence, and the ability to choose the people wearing them – with amazing results.

Brandon Spars related a hilarious personal anecdote about his visit to Missouri this summer, where he and his brother mistook a woman grilling her dinner for a cook in a public restaurant.

Deb Downer told of the Tomboy Club when she was a child. She loved baseball, and the happiest day of her life was when the girls were allowed to play with the boys. As a teacher, she sometimes substituted in PE class, and liked to let smaller kids play and run before the bigger, more capable children. She had learned an important lesson: Let everyone play!

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries July 11, 2023

Beth Wakelee started the evening with a story from Tales from Wales. It seems that giants are too big for their caves. We learned that the tallest giants must stick out their toes while they sleep, and their cold toes make them cranky and cruel. Only a clever Welsh boy can defeat such a giant!

Sharon Elwell brought a personal story about a teenage tragedy that turned out to be a triumph.

Meg Brown shared the legend of St. Christopher, who searched the world for the most powerful king, eventually found the Christ, and became the patron saint of travelers.

Marie told of being a graduate student while working 24-hour shifts at a rehab facility for mentally ill patients who were disturbed and taking psychotropic drugs. She was attacked by one and has never forgotten that terrifying moment.

Brandon Spars recounted an experience with Jared Diamond, the author of *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. As a high school teacher, Brandon had used Diamond's book as a text for many years and had great admiration for the author. Multiple attempts to get the writer's attention led to hilarious results.

Elaine Stanley recited the famous poem, "The Quitter," by British author Robert Service, something we all need to hear sometimes!

When you're lost in the Wild, and you're scared as a child,
And Death looks you bang in the eye,
And you're sore as a boil, it's according to Hoyle
To cock your revolver and . . . die.
But the Code of a Man says: "Fight all you can,"
And self-dissolution is barred.
In hunger and woe, oh, it's easy to blow . . .
It's the hell-served-for-breakfast that's hard.

"You're sick of the game!" Well, now, that's a shame.
You're young and you're brave and you're bright.
"You've had a raw deal!" I know — but don't squeal,
Buck up, do your damndest, and fight.
It's the plugging away that will win you the day,
So don't be a piker, old pard!
Just draw on your grit; it's so easy to quit:
It's the keeping-your-chin-up that's hard.
It's easy to cry that you're beaten — and die;
It's easy to crawfish and crawl;
But to fight and to fight when hope's out of sight —
Why, that's the best game of them all!
And though you come out of each gruelling bout,
All broken and beaten and scarred,
Just have one more try — it's dead easy to die,
It's the keeping-on-living that's hard.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries June 13, 2023

Sharon Elwell told the first story of the evening: an Appalachian folk tale from the Cathryn Fairlee collection about an ornery farmer and his equally ornery mule.

Liz Nichols joined as a guest teller and delighted us with two folk tales: one a Japanese story of a young man who was “three times unlucky,” and the second from the Hassidic tradition dealing with the age-old question of how to accept the bad with the good.

Bev Schwarz shared an adapted fairy tale in which a frantic mother must figure out how to rescue her babies who have been traded by goblins for changelings.

Laura McHale Holland told an enthralling story she wrote about a niece who was “different,” called “When She Wakes Up.”

Kenneth Foster made us laugh with a poem about patched jeans.

Vicky Ness told a thought-provoking story about adults who cautioned their worried daughter not to let her imagination run away with her, but their own imaginations were carrying them away.

Genevieve Franklin told of helping a friend clean out a storage unit and getting trapped in the facility when the gates locked for the night.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries May 9, 2023

Brandon Spars began the evening with a personal story about using the book, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* in teaching his high school students. His admiration for the author, Jared Diamond, was such that he produced a manuscript of his own about using the book in his classes. When the opportunity came to meet Diamond in person, however, everything changed.

Beth Wakelee shared a delightful African folktale about a giant caterpillar that teaches a lesson about courtesy.

Elaine Stanley, a founding member of the Do Tell swap, recited the much-loved ballad, *The Face on the Barroom Floor*.

Sharon Elwell told a personal memory that taught her that people are very much alike under their superficial differences.

Laura McHale Holland, a newcomer to the group, told a sweet story about a tailor who never had enough fabric to make himself a garment. His ingenuity solved the problem.

Kenneth Foster, another Do Tell founding member joining us from Utah, told of a favorite summer when buckets of pollywogs resulted in dozens of bullfrogs.

Katy Mangan shared a story about a blank book that comes to life and adds a twist to the plot of an old fairy tale.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries
April 11, 2023

Ed Lewis told a story about Fred, a freeloading friend who was determined to hitch a ride on Ed's two-month trip up the Amazon River. Fred is a kidney stone – a kidney stone who decidedly did not want to foray into the big world and kept retreating back to the comforts of his favorite kidney. That is, until Ed adopted a genius strategy for ushering the little fellow out.

Vicky Ness told a story about a poor widow with two daughters who lived in the shadow of a perfectly beautiful and very prosperous town. Bringing gifts of vision, hope, compassion and creativity, the two daughters help the town realize that it takes more than beauty and wealth to make a community.

Tom's story, Big Joe, was a poetic recitation of a haunting song made popular by the group, Asleep At The Wheel. A tale of a hitchhiker getting a ride from "Big Joe" whose truck, number 309, was barreling down the highway before stopping to pick up the hitchhiker. Part ghost story, part popular urban myth material, Big Joe left us creating our own endings.

Elaine Stanley told an old favorite. What happens when two master pickpockets fall in love? Yep, they steal each other's hearts. But what happens when they want to settle down and start a family? "And baby makes three" turns out to be more than they bargained for.

Do Tell Story Swap Summaries March 14, 2023

Brandon Spars opened the evening with a personal story about trying to help his first grade son prepare for a speech. The boy had to face Louie the bully and Larry the one-eyed bullfrog during his presentation, with hilarious results.

Beverly Schwarz zoomed in from New York to share an experience that caused her to face down Pan Am Airlines.

Vicky Ness told about Linnea's attempt to document on a spreadsheet all of the names of the various plants in her neighborhood, until a friendly witch with a taste for elegant clothing showed her the futility of such an idea.

Diamond paid homage to Dr. Seuss with a story and some of his famous sayings.

Meg Brown paid tribute to our dear Sher Christian, who recently passed away, by reading one of her poems that included the line, "Something that comes from the heart urges us to share our gifts."

Katy Mangan related another chapter in the magical, mysterious life of Eduardo, who dances with cranes and learns the healing ways of women.

Sharon Elwell told a Japanese folk tale from the collection that Cathryn Fairlee bequeathed to the group.

Genevieve Franklin told about the power of the poem "Invictus" in the life of a hospitalized man facing death.

Do Tell Story Summaries February 14, 2023

Brandon Spars and **Katy Mangan** served as hosts for a remarkable evening of stories.

Beth Wakelee started us off with an Appalachian folk tale with a cast of characters involving a hungry bear and a clever squirrel.

Beverly Schwarz joined from New York to share another animal story about the day that Jimmy's muddy dog showed up at school.

Elaine Stanley told a story from Maine about that is based on a pun about Mrs. Pott's pit, where she didn't want the snakes in Piscataquis County to hiss.

Kenneth Foster shared a story about the owner of a mercantile store in 1907. He told all of the judgments he was able to make to assess job candidates based on their grooming and behavior. Respect, kindness, and patience are characteristics that show in daily behavior.

Sharon Elwell told a Japanese folk tale about a cracked tea cup that ended up feeding 1000 people for a whole year.

Vicky Ness shared an original story about a couple struggling with the rigors of old age and accepting beauty and joy through pain and sorrow.

Laurie Reaume was a welcome sight back in the group. She told of a cutting board made by her father that was falling apart and useless, but hard to give up. She taught us that it is good to renew, and to experience the gifts of kindness.

Katy Mangan brought Shirley Anne, her English friend, back to life for us in an imagined visit to California, "Women Cry When They're Happy."

Diamond ended our evening with a heartbreaking story of a near-kidnapping in her teenage years. She discovered after the fact that she had actually encountered Jaycee Dugard during Jaycee's time as a prisoner.

Do Tell Story Summaries

January 2023

Meg Brown started a winter's evening with a story of traveling through a white out snow storm in Minnesota. All of us put on another sweater and got a warm cup of tea.

Beth Wakelee in Hawaii took us to the other extreme, telling a story of Pele, the fire goddess. An arrogant young man treated an older woman disrespectfully when she asked to race him on a slide down the lava. Pele is still angry today, sending out fire from Mauna Loa and Kileaua. It is best to treat elders with deference!

Sharon Elwell told a Chinese folk tale curated by Cathryn Fairlee. A spoiled young girl, Xian-Ling, learns to care for others through difficult experiences.

Beverly Schwarz shared a story about a WWII survivor of the Nazi concentration camps who discovers her real identity many years later through a preserved family necklace and pendant.

Kenneth Foster, in Ephraim, Utah, told of a Christmas when his father taught him that the real joy of the season comes in giving, as he took his young son to help an impoverished family.

Vicky Ness ended the evening with a story contrasting Abner, who found jewels in pomegranate seeds and broken bottles, with his acquisitive neighbors, whose greed and anger destroyed their home. A great night of stories!