

Maybe I'm gonna get a shovel, and maybe some wooden planks for shoring (because you know how hard it is to dig a hole in sand without shoring up the sides), and dig a hole, thirty or forty feet deep, straight down into one spot on Oak Street beach.

With all the buried stuff I find on the way down, I should be able to live on my own for at least a year, year 'n' a half.

—Johnny Masilewicz



## STORYTELLING

### WILD WOMEN

Storytellers are weavers of words. They weave characters and plots together magically, like threads in a fine cloth. Storytelling is an old tradition rich in history that is experiencing a modern revival.

Since early times, people have gathered around the campfire, the dinner table, and in circles, to entertain and educate. Stories have been passed on by word of mouth from generation to generation. There are folktales of heroism, tales of wit and wisdom, tales of animals, and now contemporary original tales.

Andrew Lang, a Scottish scholar, compares folktales to a kaleidoscope: the elements of story are like brilliant pieces of glass; shake them and they take on many different patterns.

Unfortunately storytelling declined in the modern age when the "global campfire," as Bill Moyers calls television and radio, overtook the spoken word. But now people like Joseph Campbell (*The Power of Myth*) have helped reawaken us to the power of myths and stories.

North Shore/Chicago storytellers Supe (Sue) O'Halloran, Nancy Donoval, and Beth Horner call themselves the Wild Women Collective. They insist there is a little wildness lurking in all of us.

Their performance Mothers & Other Wild Women began two years ago as a session at the annual Wild Onion Storytelling Celebration in Winnetka. They performed it again this past winter at the celebration, and it took on a life of its own. Their stories can be slightly wild, irreverent, funny, or serious depending on the moment and the mood. They tell stories of strong women who know what they want, but these are also stories that touch everyone.

The lights dim as the storytellers appear on stage. There is a hush, a sense of anticipation, a willingness

to see the hermit on the hill. He gives her a salve to rub on her belly each night, and an incantation: "Be nice, be nice." She repeats this faithfully every night until she dies at age 70, still pregnant. When they cut her open they find inside two wizened men with long gray beards, each saying, "You first; no, you first; no, after you . . . no, after you . . ."

Each teller has her own tales to tell. There are tales of a supermom who wants to give her son the world; tales of strapless red dresses and barking dogs, and tales of rats and a trip to Paris.

"The tale is in the telling," Supe says. She tells what she calls "growing up" stories, and she becomes her characters: she becomes a young Catholic girl growing up on the Southwest Side of Chicago in the 1960s, joining gatherings of neighborhood women on her front porch. From there she journeys to the front stoops of a ghetto, where she sees how different the view is from the El and the street.

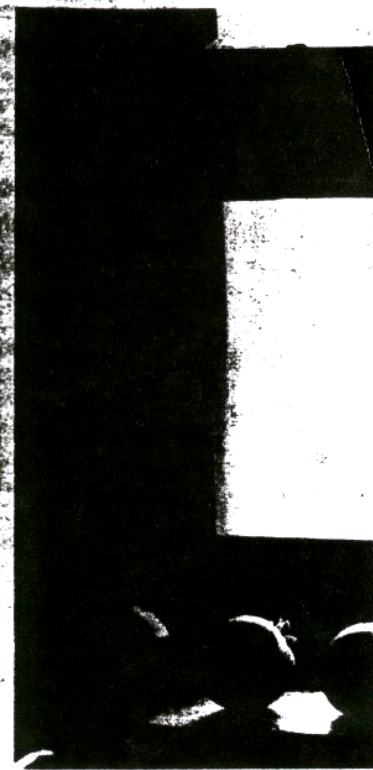
Supe says that "stories reach the heart not the head." At one point, someone in the audience remarks to a friend, "Everyone can find something in these stories to identify with." Someone cries during Supe's tale.

Beth, a former librarian, has everyone in stitches as she tells a tale of being a "closet trashy book reader." One summer vacation in the Ozark mountains she overdosed on too many romance stories with slender heroines with willowy limbs. "We're talking anorexic here," she says. She returned to Chicago, refreshed, after tossing a novel in the river, glad again to be a "self-assured, non-flaxen-haired woman."

Nancy's delivery is rapid-fire. Her tale about "Midwestern chicky chicks" and a New York director is about being wild. She tells her listeners that "some women are born wild, some women become wild later, and some women are made wild." Nancy wears one earring, to show she's wild. Problem is, she says, everyone thinks she's lost the other earring.

—Karen Campbell

June and July offer three outstanding opportunities to experience storytelling. For families, there's *Sharing Memories Chicago Children's Museum Storytelling Festival*, at North Pier June 24 and 25 (312/527-1000). For adults, there's Sue O'Halloran's "Growing Up in Chicago," June 26 (7:30 p.m., Noyes Cultural Arts Center, Evanston; \$5), 708/572-4132.



## MAKING BOOK BURNING BRIDGES

Do we choose to fall in love? Or does it sneak up behind us on soft feet and whack us upside the head with a two-by-four?

The funny thing is, even when love is our goal we seem to be looking the wrong way when the knotty pine comes crashing down on our cranium. Having recovered from a recent brain-bashing, I have some advice. The targets of my advice are those poised in springtime positions, with their rumps stuck up in the air with a sign—for Cupid only—SHOOT HERE. Warm weather, balmy nights, birds sing a psychedelic frenzy (what's in those berries, anyway?), and the sap flows free in the trees and precious bodily fluids follow suit in us humans.

In reality—how can one discuss love and think of using the words, "in reality"? "In reality," my advice is meager. Only a recommendation for those still poised as previously mentioned. There are two books, both slight, around two hundred pages, meriting attention.

The first, *The Bridges of Madison County* by Robert James Waller, is holding the country in an amorous headlock. As of this writing it's been on the *New York Times* top ten list for forty weeks, and is on track to be made into a movie. It doesn't deserve such fame, but then neither did *Lavigne and Shirlev*. The sec-