

AUGUSTA BAKER:
EXPONENT OF THE ORAL ART OF STORYTELLING;
UTILIZING VIDEO AS A MEDIUM

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"I believe storytelling to be not only a folk-art but a living art . . . it lives only while the story is being told."¹ Therefore, since storytelling is a living art "Thrice blessed is that child who comes early under the spell of the traditional storyteller, one who holds unconsciously to the ancient and moving power of her art."²

Storytelling is an art not easily described through the written word, but can be a unique experience with literature and language when told by a gifted storyteller. Storytelling, like music, is an aural experience, and like art, is a visual experience. When combining the aural and the visual with language and literature they culminate in a universal language for man. For this reason it was felt that a major portion of the study was best conveyed in a second medium rather than wholly in the conventional dissertation format. Therefore, "Augusta Baker: Exponent of the Oral Art of Storytelling" was presented as a video production in addition to the comprehensive written portion.

¹Ruth Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller (New York: Viking Press, 1970), p. 29.

²Ibid., p. 16.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purposes of this study were: (1) to determine if there was a correlation between a storyteller's personality and style, and the types of stories that the storyteller selects for telling; (2) to examine the premise that a live audience has bearing and impact on the quality and effectiveness of telling stories; (3) to develop an alternative source of instructional materials to be used in library science instruction in children's literature and storytelling curriculum; (4) to preserve for future study and research, via the video presentation, Mrs. Baker's storytelling style, and her philosophy as related to technique and appreciation of storytelling; and (5) to furnish a procedural scenario of the video production in order that others may develop a similar presentation, and to convey an understanding of the obstacles encountered during the process.

The study featured the art and techniques of

. . . One of the nation's leading authorities in children's literature and librarianship, Augusta Baker, who established her reputation as an outstanding librarian, administrator, educator, author, raconteur, and folklorist during a thirty-seven-year career at the New York Public Library³

Mrs. Baker continues to share her expertise and knowledge during her retirement years. Mrs. Baker lectures at

³"People," Top of the News 37 (Winter 1981):110.

numerous colleges, universities, public and school libraries, and is presently Storyteller-in-Residence at the University of South Carolina School of Librarianship and Information Science and Adjunct Professor of Library Science at Texas Woman's University School of Library Science.

As previously stated this study addressed itself to five purposes. The primary purpose was to determine if there was a correlation between a storyteller's personality and style, and the types of stories that the storyteller selects for telling. In order to develop a personality and style profile of Mrs. Baker a search of the literature was conducted for documentation relating to her personality traits and those found were duly recorded. After the literature search was completed there was the need to determine the correlation premise. Mrs. Baker was requested to select two stories from her storytelling repertoire and then she presented her stories before the video camera. Mrs. Baker and the interviewer viewed the tape, and during the video taping of the interview the two discussed personality and style of the storyteller. In the written portion of the dissertation an analysis of storytelling styles was presented, along with an analysis of Augusta Baker's personality and style as it compares with other noted storytellers of the past. It was believed that a correlation did exist-- that storytellers tend to tell stories that suit their

personality and style. Therefore, it was necessary to introduce several storytellers of the past who had exerted an influence on storytelling as it is practiced today, and to some extent had an influence on Mrs. Baker the subject of this study.

Those storytellers discussed in chapter two were:

(1) Marie L. Shedlock who was famous for her renditions of the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tales; (2) Ruth Sawyer Durand who was a storyteller, author, and a collector of tales; (3) Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen who was a storyteller, recording artist, and an educator; (4) Anna Cogswell Tyler the first Supervisor of Storytelling at The New York Public Library (NYPL); (5) Mary Gould Davis who was Miss Tyler's assistant and succeeded Tyler as Supervisor of Storytelling; and (6) Eulalie Steinmetz Ross the third Supervisor of Storytelling at NYPL. Chapter three was dedicated to Mrs. Baker and her career. The examination of Tyler, Davis, Ross and Baker was an analysis of storytelling NYPL style. It was developed because Shedlock's style and presentations were greatly admired by Miss Anne Carroll Moore, the first supervisor of children's services at NYPL. Although Miss Moore herself was not a storyteller she realized early on that children needed more than just books to read, they needed a regular story hour. Thus beginning with Tyler the program progressed and each succeeding storytelling

supervisor continued to build on that foundation begun in 1908, and each one influencing the next in line.

The second purpose was to examine the premise that a live audience has bearing and impact on the quality and effectiveness of telling stories. Video was again used to examine this premise. Mrs. Baker was requested to present one of her stories in a studio/no audience setting while the camera focused on her throughout the telling; and once again employing the same camera technique, Mrs. Baker related the same story to an audience of children. The presentations were examined to determine if there were visible differences between the two. Mrs. Baker and the interviewer analyzed the two sessions utilizing a comparison checklist. The criteria used to judge the two presentations were: (1) eye contact and movement; (2) facial expressions; (3) the use of gestures; (4) the use of the pause; (5) voice quality; (6) body movements; and (7) the overall setting. It was felt that an audience does make a difference, but would the differences be apparent in the presentations of a professional storyteller who has had video camera experience and who has been telling stories for over forty-five years?

The third purpose was to develop an alternative source of instructional materials to be used in library science instruction in children's literature and storytelling curriculum; and to provide material for in-service training for

others interested in the art of storytelling. It was visualized that the video production would be used by educational groups, civic organizations, and public and school librarians, as well as in the reading classes in colleges of education, to mention just a few.

In providing the production as a teaching aid, it was felt that the future of an educational institution rests on how well it meets the needs of both its students and the society in which it exists. As society changes and the needs and interests of entering students change, so must the programs and the processes keep pace. Thus an instructional program must make maximum use of available human and material resources; bring innovation into the classroom; and revitalize the curriculum. Conant has written,

The most important instructional function of professional education is to provide students with an understanding of the mission and practice of the profession. An appropriate instructional program stresses the concepts upon which practice is based. . . . Conceptual instruction that fails to incorporate examples from practice risks producing graduates who are not fully competent to apply their conceptual knowledge to practice. . . . It is equally the responsibility of the educator to keep in touch with practice in the field so that instruction can be illustrated with relevant examples.⁴

Therefore, it was hoped that by combining Mrs. Baker, her storytelling techniques, and video, the presentation would

⁴Ralph W. Conant, The Conant Report: A Study of the Education of Librarians (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1980), pp. 14-15.

be attempting to introduce a teaching aid concept that could be utilized in developing other video programs in library and information science. Video is an excellent device for preserving an event, a person, and/or a technique for future reference and study. Videotapes can be stored, retrieved, and distributed with relative ease and are thus available for careful study by scholars and others. Video can be a way of providing the viewer with significant experiences. Librarianship must meet new demands, assume new roles, and offer new learning situations. We can no longer afford to speculate on whether or not to use video instruction, but rather how will we use video in our classroom environment. Video presentations may be able to enrich, inform and instruct. The fourth purpose goes along with the above discussion. The purpose was to preserve for future study and research, via the video production, Mrs. Baker's storytelling style, and her philosophy as related to technique and appreciation of storytelling. To quote Cicero, "Nor, in truth, would the honours of illustrious men continue after death, if their own spirits did not make us preserve a longer remembrance of them."⁵

The final purpose was to furnish a procedural scenario of the video production in order that others may develop a

⁵John Bartlett, Familiar Quotations, 14th ed., edited by Emily Morison Beck (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), p. 34.

similar presentation; and to convey an understanding of the obstacles encountered during the process. Would this video production be practical and have relevancy to other library and information science curricula? Would others in the field of library and information science benefit from this experience when making future plans and decisions about curriculum? Assuming that the answers are affirmative there can be a great potential for utilizing this form of media in developing materials to supplement the library and information science curricula, with an overall goal of developing a video lecture series in library and information science by inviting other well-known figures in the profession to be taped.

Review of the Literature

A search of the literature was conducted to determine if the monographic form and video had been combined to conduct research, and none were found in the areas of storytelling, storytellers, and/or video. The literature search did reveal, however, that the traditional monographic form was not the only form being accepted by universities. It is a well-known fact that music departments accept lecture and recital presentations in lieu of the formal written dissertation. Also, students of literature have submitted original short stories, poetry, or novelettes in lieu of the

monographic thesis. There have also been dissertations accepted that combine two media. The following selected examples relate to written dissertations in combination with another medium.

In 1976 the University of Massachusetts College of Education accepted a film series as a dissertation. It was submitted by William Henry Cosby, Jr., and was entitled "An Integration of the Visual Media Via Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids into the Elementary School Curriculum as a Teaching Aid and Vehicle to Achieve Increased Learning."

At the University of Northern Colorado in 1980, David Eugene Maynard's "The Complete Production of a Documentary Film Called A Visit with Helen Jackson," a 16mm film, was accepted in lieu of the formal dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education. Mr. Maynard developed the film as an oral history production, in order to preserve a local Colorado personality and a relative of the writer Helen Hunt Jackson. The accompanying written material included a description of the filming procedures and costs; a script; and a list of suggested activities for using the film in a school environment.

In the Physical Education Department at Louisiana State University Leonard Max Hill utilized film as part of his 1980 dissertation, "A Film Analysis of Motor Pattern Development of Educable Mentally Retarded Children." Mr.

Hill had filmed all the activities he had used in his analysis.

At the University of Michigan College of Music Education in 1980 Hunter C. March created an animated film as part of his dissertation "The Development and Evaluation of an Animated Film to Improve Listening Skills of Junior High School General Music Students."

In 1980 the College of Education at Western Michigan University accepted Sesta Verleen Peekstok's "The Development and Use of a Film on Public Art in the City of Kalamazoo, Michigan, for the Purpose of Building Community." She produced a film entitled "Art is All Around Us."

In regards to the subject, Mrs. Baker, there have been no biographical studies utilizing her as the subject. The literature reveals only articles about Mrs. Baker and her various accomplishments. This study was the first to bring together the literature on Mrs. Baker and the literature she herself wrote in professional publications. This same literature was augmented by interviews with the subject. Chapter three addresses Mrs. Baker and her career. The extensive quotes from her articles and the speeches she gave are an indication of her philosophy. It will be noted that Mrs. Baker was constantly stressing better publishing for children and young people, especially in the area of the black experience. It was felt that full quotes would allow

the reader to follow Mrs. Baker's thoughts and ideas through the years she was a professional librarian.

In writing a dissertation and combining it with another medium it was hoped that "Augusta Baker: Exponent of the Oral Art of Storytelling" may be accepted as an innovative and pace-setting trend for future library and information science theses.

The real worth of . . . video experiments is to show to the producer and consumer alike that the television medium is anything but neutral, that it is not merely a pipeline of ready-made messages, a mere distribution device, but that it can be used effectively in the formulation, in the building, of the message itself.⁶

The written segment of "Augusta Baker: Exponent of the Oral Art of Storytelling" includes: (1) an introduction and background statement; (2) storytellers and their styles; (3) a biographical portrait of Mrs. Baker; (4) storytelling techniques as presented in various storytelling articles and books; (5) an analyses of purposes one and two as they pertain to Mrs. Baker; (6) the video script; (7) the procedural scenario of the video production; and (8) the recommendations for using the video production, the contributions to the field of library and information science, and further research needs.

⁶Herbert Zettl, Television Production Handbook, 3rd ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1976), p. 7.

Video Methods and Procedures

The video production was presented in three parts:

(1) an introduction and biographical profile of Mrs. Baker; (2) storytelling settings; and (3) discussion, examination, and conclusions. In order to produce a whole out of the three parts, the presentation was involved in five stages.

During the video taping technical advisement and expertise were utilized, as video is a creative process through which machines and people interrelate to provide the viewer with significant experiences. The technical assistance was provided by the General Dynamics Fort Worth Division's Multimedia Department, Jerry Burns, Chief; and his professionally trained video and film staff.

The video production entailed the writing of a script from data gathered in the literature search and the interviews with Mrs. Baker. The script was the framework for placing the entire production into perspective. The script development: (1) necessitated translating the information accumulated into visual and audio requirements and (2) provided the basis for visualizing what materials and equipment would be needed for taping and editing the production. The script is included as chapter six in the written portion of this study.

The video production included preproduction activities and the videotaping itself. The taping utilized a three-

quarter inch (3/4") videotape cassette format. The major segments of the production were taped in an industrial video studio utilizing major production cameras and equipment, and at a public library. The production involved: (1) directing the video crew and subject before and during the taping; (2) establishing the sets, properties, and graphics that were used during the taping; (3) keeping a detailed log of procedures and events in order to re-establish a situation if retakes were necessary; (4) recording any off-camera narration; (5) selecting and recording the music; and (6) predetermining that all aspects of the taping had been accomplished before the editing process took place.

The postproduction activities represented the editing procedures. At this stage all the segmented parts of the videotaping were assembled into a meaningful whole. The editor examined and evaluated the material in order to determine what parts would be included in the final version, and to establish continuity throughout. It was during the editing phase that the master release tape was built. At this stage special effects were added to enhance and/or clarify the production.

Terminology is oftentimes subject to habit and change, and the video industry is no different; but for the most part, the terms are fairly consistent. For that reason, the

video terms utilized throughout the production and study came from the glossary in Herbert Zettl's Television Production Handbook, third edition (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1976, pp. 505-525).

Before moving on with the next seven chapters it is felt a note to the reader is justified. In chapter three, which deals with Mrs. Baker and her career, there are numerous quotes utilized throughout. Many of these quotes are lengthy and will appear to be repetitious. These were included for a reason. This study is the first attempt to bring together the literature on Mrs. Baker, and as such is a means of including the writings--hers and others. The writings emphasize her professional philosophy and indicate a continued belief in what she was recommending. Recommendations from which she never wavered.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS PAST IS PROLOGUE:

RACONTEURS FEMMES

[Storytelling] is an art which can broaden the horizon of ordinary men, which can give them the extent of their potential greatness. It is an art which reveals the common humanity of men, the instinctive belief in the worth and meaning of the human spirit.¹

Storytelling is an art as old as man's oral language of expression. As soon as man was able to convey meaning to his grunts and gestures, the tale began. Man used the tale to express his own pride in performing some act of bravery or accomplishment. As man passed the stage of merely surviving and began to dwell on the outside forces affecting his life, he related stories in the third person, breathing life into the gods that controlled his life and making them even larger than life itself. Heroes had the mettle that all men wanted to possess, and the gods themselves provided patterns for man's very existence.

Storytelling was evolving from one form to another in order to fulfill needs and satisfy desires. From hero tales to myths to animal tales to ethical tales, man was expanding

¹Elizabeth Nesbitt, "The Art of Storytelling," Horn Book 21 (November/December 1945):443.

his world and at times exaggerating his accomplishments, as well as establishing standards by which to live his life. Storytelling became a form of entertainment and

After generations of haphazard storytelling it was inevitable that it should begin to develop as an art, with certain ones showing more talent than others, until the chief and the wise old ones of the tribe chose a certain man among them who would tell tales and do nothing else.²

One person was designated to carry on the "history" of the group, to keep all records in his head, and to pass them on to the next generation's storyteller. These tales were carried on by word of mouth, traded with other groups, and eventually were preserved in some form of "written" record.

In olden days, story-tellers knew the value of stimulus and response; the place of inspiration in true education. They knew how to transmit to their listeners the sanity of humor, the exhilaration of beauty. They knew how to instil in their audiences hatred of evil, and love of good, of honor and courage and loyalty and integrity of purpose. They opened to people of limited experience a vast pageant of humanity, a world peopled with figures that tower above the normal run of mankind, filled with incidents of cosmic implication, illuminated with the significant beauty that surrounds all attempts of mankind to pierce the mystery of human destiny. This was and is the supreme accomplishment of story-telling.³

Down through the ages there were medicine men, priests, minstrels, minnesingers, ollams, shanachies, poets, parents,

²Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, p. 52.

³Elizabeth Nesbitt, "Hold to That Which is Good," Horn Book 16 (January/February 1940):14.

grandparents, housekeepers, and nurses who carried on the storytelling traditions, enthralling both adults and children. There were also the children's librarians who were seeking to carry on the art of storytelling--to present and preserve it for their young clientele. ". . . As sharers of tales we link ourselves with bards, troubadours, jesters, and minstrels from the past."⁴

In the late nineteenth century children's library services were struggling to become an integral part of the public library arena. Librarians were seeking ways to bring children and good literature together.

Children's librarians realized that children needed a wider knowledge of books and that, since children lacked the power of comparison and the ability to discriminate, storytelling was a strong tool for broadening their range and guiding them in their reading.⁵

Also,

Storytelling was early recognized by the pioneers in children's librarianship as a means of giving life and color to the otherwise quiet pursuit of reading; of bestowing drama on the written page; of giving groups of children an opportunity to enjoy mutually the music of the spoken word, the taste of good prose on the tongue, the communion of shared adventure and emotion, and the ability to see with the inward eye.⁶

⁴Ramon Royal Ross, Storyteller, 2nd ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1980), p. 75.

⁵Jeanne B. Hardendorff, "Storytelling and the Story Hour," Library Trends 12 (July 1963):55.

⁶Frances Clarke Sayers, "From Me to You," Library Journal 81 (September 15, 1956):2010-2011.

In 1899 two libraries started a regular story hour program; they were the West End Branch of the Pittsburgh Carnegie Library and the Buffalo Public Library. The news of their venture spread and others began to develop programs in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland and New York City (NYC).

It must be remembered that storytelling as it is known today did not exist in the early 1900s. The mode of the day was something known as elocution, painful in its gaucheries of overdramatization and rampant sentimentality.⁷

For the most part, this form of storytelling was not acceptable to many librarians and they were searching for ways to develop an art of storytelling. Thus from those early days there were storytellers who honed and sharpened their styles and techniques until they formed a foundation that is still solid today.

. . . Their greatest strength and conviction came from their contacts with the grass roots of the art, with storytellers in places where the direct communication between the teller and the listener held something of its primitive power to light up the mind and imagination as well as to instruct the emotion.⁸

Two of those storytellers who had a great influence on storytelling as we know it today were Marie L. Shedlock and Ruth Sawyer.

They [made] the way of the storyteller not easy, but so inviting that most of us are ready to take our pack of

⁷Frances Clarke Sayers, Anne Carroll Moore: A Biography (New York: Atheneum, 1972), p. 78.

⁸Sayers, "From Me to You," p. 2011.

stories and start on the journey, stumbling sometimes, weary often, but always with the joy of knowing a warm welcome is ahead--just one more mile, then over the drawbridge and into the castle.⁹

Storytelling in its true art form comes alive in the books that each wrote on the subject--Shedlock's The Art of the Story-Teller and Sawyer's The Way of the Storyteller. Through the relating of their own experiences the novice storyteller's road to the castle is much smoother and not as long.

Marie L. Shedlock

No one who heard Marie Shedlock tell a story in English or in French will ever forget the music in her voice, the quality of her diction, her inimitable gesture, the sheer magic of her presentation of a complete drama in miniature.¹⁰

Marie L. Shedlock, English by nationality, was born on May 5, 1854 in Boulogne, France. She lived her next six years in France where she learned to speak French before she spoke English. (Years later, the French language would prove to be an enhancement to her storytelling career). Miss Shedlock received her schooling in France, England and Germany, and at the age of twenty-one she took a teaching

⁹Ruth Hill Viguers, "Over the Drawbridge and Into the Castle," Horn Book 27 (January/February 1951):62.

¹⁰Marie L. Shedlock, The Art of the Story-Teller, with a Foreword by Anne Carroll Moore, 3rd ed., rev. with a new bibliography by Eulalie Steinmetz (New York: D. Appleton, 1915; Dover, 1951), p. vii.

position that would last nearly twenty-five years. After a successful tenure in teaching she decided to seek a new career as a storyteller and a lecturer on Hans Christian Andersen. Miss Shedlock's new vocation led to a lecture tour in the United States.

When she decided in 1900 to give up active teaching and go to America to give French monologues and recitals in English from the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen, she was not making so marked a departure as it might seem. She was fully aware of world thought. She had made her debut as an artist ten years before at Steinway Hall, London (1890), while still carrying on as a teacher. She had done amateur acting all her life, had recited and sung at evening parties in French and in English, and had made a serious study of the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen.¹¹

The trip to America . . . had awakened cultivated, reform-minded literati to the potential of formal storytelling. Her publicity photographs were captioned "The English Interpreter of Hans Christian Andersen" or "Marie L. Shedlock as the Fairy Godmother." A program cover showed her bent forward, head cocked to one side, pointing a finger as if to cast a spell. "Is she a fairy or a lady?" one child asked. She wore pointed black shoes, a white peasant blouse with wide sleeves, a long dark skirt with ankle hemline, and a black laced bodice. Her silk gowns bordered on costume. She had an impressive international repertoire of stories, stressing the faerie or the marvelous--suitable for children or adults. In her lectures she emphasized that storytelling could be the skill of all who took the time to commit to memory and relate engrossing narrative literature from books.¹²

The influence Miss Shedlock exerted and the responsiveness she excited during her two stays in America (1900-

¹¹Anne Carroll Moore, "Our Fairy Godmother Marie L. Shedlock," Horn Book 10 (May 1934):138.

¹²Jane Merrill Filstrup, "The Enchanted Cradle: Early Storytelling in Boston," Horn Book 52 (December 1976):603.

1907 and 1915-1920) had a far-reaching impact that is still felt today. She brought her warmth, her understanding, and her art to numerous individuals, both children and adults. One such individual was Miss Anne Carroll Moore, a librarian at the Pratt Institute of Brooklyn.

One cannot help but wonder how differently storytelling might have developed at NYPL if Miss Moore had not heard Miss Shedlock tell stories in 1902. It was after hearing Shedlock that Moore realized that a story hour and storytelling should be a basic part of library services for children. Miss Moore was even more firmly committed after observing Miss Shedlock present a story hour for children in January 1903.

Although Moore was not a storyteller, it was she who was to be the spark that lit the story-hour candle for all time. . . . Shedlock contributed the pattern of what should take place during a story hour--a carefully selected, well-told story--and Moore added the air of festival and delineated its purpose. . . .¹³

Therefore, what Moore put in practice at Pratt she was able to continue when she became the head of children's work at NYPL.

Miss Shedlock believed that storytelling for children should: (1) provide drama in their lives; (2) develop a sense of humor; (3) present ethical standards, without being

¹³Jane B. Wilson, The Story Experience (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1979), p. 69.

didactic; (4) present examples of ideals in action, and (5) develop an imagination.

In order to achieve such goals Miss Shedlock presented techniques of the highest standards. One of her first premises was that the storyteller must be willing to give time to her art. "The special joy in the slowly-prepared story comes in the exciting moment when the persons, or even the inanimate objects, become alive and move as of themselves."¹⁴ The storyteller must choose the stories with care, and if time is of the essence, it might mean having to repeat those stories already in ones repertoire. Miss Shedlock advocated that the teller must relate only the best, never second best.

Although Miss Shedlock had had stage experience, she realized that stage techniques would not be practical for storytelling. The actor has one role to play, the storyteller must have an affinity with several characters. The actor may utilize gestures and movements that would prove distracting when used in telling a story. "But the true storyteller, with eyes, hands, body and voice (and all that mind and memory can project), is the living instrument that directs and illumines the narrative."¹⁵

¹⁴Shedlock, The Art of the Story-Teller, p. 28.

¹⁵Wilson, The Story Experience, p. 5.

Shedlock was a past master in effectively using gestures and the pause in order to hold the attention of her audience. In her lectures to teachers and librarians she stressed the importance of these two techniques.

In her small person Marie Shedlock combined the French mastery of precise and polished gesture, a heritage from the Continental theater of mime, with the English habit of literature and storytelling as distinct from dramatic reading. These were the gifts she brought to bear upon the humor, pathos, and poetic irony of H. C. Andersen. Seldom has his genius been as richly served.¹⁶

Miss Shedlock also stressed the importance of voice training and the need for a well developed vocabulary--a command of the language. Shedlock was famous for renditions of the Andersen tales, and since these tales are rich in language and the words must be savored in their exactness, she felt that Andersen's words should be delivered as written. The Andersen tales include a variety of motifs: some are charming, others humorous, and still others are sad or replete with tragedy, but Miss Shedlock was able to capture the flavor, the freshness, the innocence, the irony, and the simple beauty of these tales. It is ironic that Miss Shedlock, who was so steeped in a man and his works, had never visited Denmark--Andersen's homeland. Yet there were Scandinavians who felt her interpretations were done with feeling and understanding, and that no one else would be able

¹⁶Sayers, Anne Carroll Moore, p. 81.

to tell the Andersen tales with the charm and reality that had been presented by Marie Shedlock. When Shedlock told an Andersen tale

. . . It was great storytelling, rich in characterizations, full of subtly suggested implications, and sparkling with infectious gaiety. Her eyes shone, her voice was clear and rich, and her flawless diction fell on the ears like music. Marie Shedlock will be remembered for her ebullient humor, her disciplined art of narration, her sense of the dramatic, and her unaffected delight in telling a good story.¹⁷

After reading the Andersen tales one can visualize the dramatic flair she must have brought to "The Snow Queen," or the humorous treatment she must have given to "The Princess and the Pea." Miss Shedlock once wrote that,

The greatest tribute which can be paid to a storyteller, as to an actor, is that his own personality is temporarily forgotten, because he has so completely identified himself with his role. When we have decided what the chief characters really mean to do, we can let ourselves go in the impersonation.¹⁸

Miss Shedlock shared her knowledge and expertise throughout the United States and Canada. She was able to bring to the art of storytelling the recognition that it was due.

Marie Shedlock's art signaled a new public appreciation of children's literary experience. The Boston Transcript called her program in the Library lecture hall before an audience of five hundred children a

¹⁷May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books, 3rd ed. (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1964), p. 392.

¹⁸Shedlock, The Art of the Story-Teller, p. 144-145.

"genuine Longfellow's Children's Hour" and voiced the hope that storytelling programs, which were rare in America, had come to stay.¹⁹

And even though she told other stories and collected other tales, she was best known and remembered for her Andersen tales. Shedlock's influence is still felt at NYPL, where both Andersen's and Shedlock's birthdays are celebrated. It is interesting to note that fourteen years after her last trip to the United States there were tributes written on her eightieth birthday and those accolades appeared in a journal devoted to books and reading for young people--Marie Shedlock has not been forgotten. These letters of tribute reiterate the influence of her personality and style on the art of storytelling. They were written by librarians and friends, people whose lives she touched--some only briefly. The descriptive phrases flow from each letter, phrases such as: "simple directness; subtle elusiveness; dainty; remarkable enunciation; ineffable charm; keen sense of humor; vitality; dramatic power; winsome personality; glowing friendliness; keen sense of values; whimsical sense of humor; delicate touch; and diminutive."²⁰

Ruth Hill, in her article on storytelling in the United States, was best able to convey the influence

¹⁹Filstrup, "The Enchanted Cradle," p. 603.

²⁰"Letters of Tribute to Miss Shedlock," Horn Book 10 (May 1934):145-167.

Shedlock had on storytelling, when she wrote that Shedlock was

. . . giving new life and significance to well-known stories, bringing out of the past and out of great literature stories unknown or long forgotten. Those were never-to-be-forgotten hours to the happy ones who heard Marie Shedlock. If she did not actually change their lives, which she did to a few, she certainly gave them a vision that has kept them from ever letting their expression of their work drop to mediocrity. And the story-tellers who never knew nor heard her have benefitted by her influence, for she established respect for story-telling as an art, the importance of wise selection, the value of story-telling in libraries as a means of bringing together children and books, and the significance of the told story as the rightful heritage of children.²¹

Ruth Sawyer Durand

The one source that has smoothed the path for most contemporary storytellers is Ruth Sawyer's magnificent The Way of the Storyteller. To this sensitive and wise volume storytellers turn for information, practical help, inspiration, and superb tales. It helps to build a sturdy foundation for any teller of tales. It is enlightening and stimulating for the inexperienced; it is the old friend and considerate advisor to the professional. . . .²²

. . . [It] is accorded by storytellers a reverence second only to that given Shedlock's famous old book by which it stands on the shelves of most libraries. Through her writings and her long ministry--perhaps the most compelling of any artist in the field of story-telling--she gave . . . reassurance to storytellers who may be wavering in their loyalty to the traditionally told story in a world steeped in visual entertainment.²³

²¹Ruth A. Hill, "Story-Telling Around the World, A Symposium Part I: United States," Library Journal 65 (April 1, 1940):285.

²²Wilson, The Story Experience, p. 11.

²³ibid., p. 71.

Ruth Sawyer was born in Boston in 1880. She received her education in private schools in Boston, New York, and at the Garland Training School for Kindergartners. At the age of twenty she was asked to go to Cuba and help organize their kindergarten system. It was during this period that she began to tell stories and to collect folk tales, as well as learning to speak Spanish and to play the guitar.

During her childhood she had the opportunity to experience daily the spell of the fairies through the telling of stories by her Irish nurse Johanna. Thus in 1905 and again in 1907, when The New York Sun hired her to collect folk tales and write feature articles on Ireland, she was able to visit the home of Johanna and feel firsthand the fairy touch. It was also during her visits to Ireland that she heard "The Voyage of the Wee Red Cap," a Christmas story that became synonymous with her name.

Sawyer's trips to Cuba and Ireland would be the beginning of a traveling and writing career which would include articles, poetry, short stories, novels, and the collecting of folk tales and Christmas tales from all over the world. Although much of her time was taken up by writing Miss Sawyer never relinquished her first love--the telling of stories. She presented stories and lectures throughout the United States, and as a result of these experiences she was inspired to write The Way of the

Storyteller, a book representing her philosophy of storytelling as a folk art. Ruth Sawyer discovered material for her stories and tales wherever she lived and traveled. These stories she shared with a variety of listeners and readers, for through her enthusiasm and eagerness for what she had discovered, she wanted to share her good fortune with others. Ruth Sawyer was vital, alive--she was the way of the storyteller.

The coming of Shedlock left its impact on Ruth Sawyer too. While a student of folklore at Columbia University in 1903 and 1904, Miss Sawyer had the opportunity to hear Marie Shedlock tell stories, and the remembrance of that day long remained with her--as noted in a letter of tribute written to Miss Shedlock some thirty years later.

. . . Afterwards I wanted to speak to you--to thank you for what you had done for me, to ask what a student must do to become a story-teller. But there were too many around you. I went my way, making a pact with you and myself. I said: If story-telling can be an art like this I will make it my art. I will hang the telling of these stories of Andersen like a lodestar above me. I will work for honesty and simplicity. I will never cheapen this art, make it artificial or theatrical. I will search out the best and use it; and then I will re-create it so that it will live for each listener. I will never forget my obligation to pass on to others what I have received today.²⁴

In her own book on storytelling, written in the early 1940s, Miss Sawyer once again gave recognition to Shedlock's

²⁴"Letters of Tribute to Miss Shedlock," p. 162.

influence.

The best I have had of the unconscious art of the storyteller I have had from Johanna; and the best of the conscious art I have had from Marie Shedlock. How often down the years I have pictured what a festival there might have been had Marie Shedlock of Boulogne and Tunbridge Wells, and Johanna of County Donegal ever come together for an evening of storytelling.²⁵

Through her book The Way of the Storyteller Ruth Sawyer was able to pass on to others the honest fruits of her labor of love. The almost spiritual philosophy she brings to storytelling allows the novice to gain insight into it as a true art form--an art to be honored and respected. Ruth Sawyer is her book and vice versa. The following statements, while not in her own words, are precepts gleaned from reading about her techniques and style:

1. Learning to be a storyteller comes out of the trial-and-error method
2. The teller must build a spiritual background and build a rich storehouse of experiences
3. The teller must live with what he creates, never taking it for granted, and never letting it become tedious with its numerous retellings
4. The teller has pride in the story--the story belongs to him
5. The teller has rapport with his audience, and a

²⁵Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, p. 18.

love of sharing what he has discovered

6. The teller must become aware of words--the power of them, the beauty of them, and the joy of using them

7. The teller must be a user of words in order to use them to see with and to allow others to see

8. The teller must be able to utilize a wealth of source material from which he gathers his stories; to have a depth of knowledge and feeling for folklore and the ancient storytellers; and, whenever possible, provide the folklore background for those tales shared

9. The teller must know all there is to know about a story; and to feel the story and make it real

10. The teller must be a part of everything that takes place in the story he tells

11. The teller shares with others that which has moved him, and provides a feast for others to feed upon

12. The true storyteller cannot really tell stories if he has learned them by rote--they must be assimilated by repeated retelling; they must be lived with, absorbed, and made a part of himself; and the teller must be able to tell it spontaneously

13. The teller needs to regain that creative imagination that is such an essential element of childhood and is so easily lost as adulthood is gained--exercise the imagination

14. The teller must have a rich literary background

15. The teller might be wise to have a strong background in the art of music

16. The teller must be aware of how essential the voice is--develop it to its fullest; acquire a listening ear; listen to yourself and others around you; and exercise and train the voice

17. The teller must enunciate clearly, and develop an extensive vocabulary

18. The teller should be aware that memorizing can be hazardous--one should acquire the story through working with it, and learn the incidents and visualize the pictures that the words paint

19. The teller must be aware of timing, and also be aware of the pause and how to use it effectively

20. The teller must be willing to give time to his art

And finally, these words written by Ruth Sawyer,

To be able to create a story, to make it live during the moment of the telling, to arouse emotions--wonder, laughter, joy, amazement--this is the only goal a storyteller may have. To honor one's art. To hold for it an integrity of mind, a love and propensity for it. To build richly of experience into one's life that there may be more to give out in the telling. To establish one's place in the fellowship of spirit that there may be spiritual substance as well as intellectual enjoyment in what is shared. To keep step with a child's fancy, to abide for a little space in the Land of Faery, to know joy unrestrained and those tender secret longings that belong at the heart of childhood--these are some of

the markers along the way of the storyteller.²⁶

Miss Sawyer was remembered for her warmth and friendliness which she brought to her storytelling sessions. She sought out the audience and made them feel as if they were sharing the experience with the teller. The stories she told and recorded represented a variety of types and moods, going from the sentimental to those that were most humorous. She had a feeling for words and keeping true to the phrasing and rhythm of the tales. Ruth Sawyer had studied voice and at one time had desired to sing opera, thus all her training was brought to bear on her storytelling. Not only through storytelling was she able to express the beauty of words, but her writings reflected the same rich language she thought so essential to good speaking.

It was on June 3, 1970, that Ruth Sawyer took her last "Voyage of the Wee Red Cap." Her eighty-nine years had been richly filled and she in turn had richly filled the lives of others. Down through her varied career Ruth Sawyer was recognized by her peers for her talents and contributions. Miss Sawyer was awarded the 1937 Newbery Medal for her book Roller Skates, which was based on a childhood experience in NYC. Two of her books, The Christmas Anna Angel (illustrated by Kate Seredy) and Journey Cake, Ho! (illustrated by

²⁶Ibid., p. 148.

Sawyer's son-in-law Robert McCloskey), were Caldecott Honor Books for 1945 and 1954, respectively. In 1956 Miss Sawyer received the Catholic Library Association Regina Medal and the Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal from the Children's Services Division of the American Library Association (ALA). Ruth Sawyer was a prolific writer, beginning with her book The Primrose Ring (1915) down to Joy to the World: Christmas Legends (1966). She contributed more than two hundred articles, stories, and poems to various magazines and professional journals.

Ruth Sawyer had been actively involved with NYPL, and many a Christmas story hour would not have been the same if it had not been for Sawyer telling her Christmas favorites. To rephrase Mary Gould Davis,

. . . Any one who [had] heard Ruth Sawyer tell her Irish story of the Eve of St. Stephen, "The Voyage of the Wee Red Cap," [had] a Christmas memory more precious than the gifts of the Three Wise Men.²⁷

Early in Sawyer's career Anne Carroll Moore had been an influential force and had given Sawyer the opportunity to share her talents with the children of NYPL. There was not only a professional relationship between the two women, but a friendship that lasted until Miss Moore's death.

Miss Moore believed in the worth of storytelling and

²⁷Mary Gould Davis, "The Merriest Tale," Horn Book 12 (November/December 1936):384.

in those who kept faith with the art of storytelling. Miss Moore felt that Ruth Sawyer Durand was a storyteller who "kept the faith." In writing about Sawyer Miss Moore recalled that the first time she met the storyteller was in 1910 and she found Sawyer to be ". . . a story-teller with the gift of song, a courageous heart, and a sheaf of stories freshly gathered in Donegal."²⁸ Miss Moore's admiration for Ruth Sawyer is further exemplified in the following statements:

This unquenchable story-teller with her spontaneous love and understanding of Ireland and the Irish. . . . Rich in feeling for Christmas, gifted with a beautiful singing voice, clear memory, keen sense of humor, faith in the unseen and indomitable personal courage and capacity to share the interests of others, she has been able to give dramatic joy to thousands of as strangely assorted people as ever come together upon this earth. . . . She has been a bulwark of strength to the whole body of storytellers and has never failed to respond to a call for help. . . . I believe that it is "The Voyage of the Wee Red Cap" that will keep the name of Ruth Sawyer alive wherever stories are told or read. It is a story whose perennial freshness attests the truth and beauty, the humor and good will which live in it without regard to time or age, or country or circumstance.²⁹

We look for the same things in a storyteller, a diction free from the dictionary, a voice from the lower reaches rather than the higher brackets, and a real re-creation of the story for an audience of one or one hundred. Mrs. Durand knows infinitely more than I do about placement and development of the voice. I only know that the majority of storytellers I hear do not give me pleasure as a listener and I also know as a children's librarian

²⁸Anne Carroll Moore, "Ruth Sawyer, Story-Teller," Horn Book 12 (January/February 1936):34.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 36-38.

that a well-modulated voice is the most effective means of control of any problem that can arise in a public library.³⁰

In keeping faith with the art of storytelling Ruth Sawyer Durand wrote the following about the story hour and its importance,

I believe that something far transcending our comprehension takes place during the telling of fine stories. And what storyteller of any stature is satisfied with a story that is not fine and memorable! Who can measure how far-reaching a story may be? It may help to lay a pattern for a rich life; it may start a young, untried artist creating. How aware may a story make a boy or girl of beauty, goodness, courage, yes, and mercy?³¹

Admiration for Ruth Sawyer was not limited to those comments by Miss Moore, but others have expressed their tributes as well. As one writer put it, Ruth Sawyer has the ". . . ability to express the power, the beauty, and the delight of both the written and the spoken word. . . ." ³² When Sawyer was awarded the Regina Medal the following comments were made,

She has the special gratitude and affection of thousands, for she has shared her magic power to create living substance by the spoken word and has recognized the treasures of the spirit to be found in the fairy tale. . . .

Ruth Sawyer Durand saw that the vitality of the

³⁰Sayers, Anne Carroll Moore, p. 133.

³¹Ruth Sawyer, "The Miracle of the Story Hour," Horn Book 34 (February 1958):15.

³²Frances Sullivan, "The Laura Ingalls Wilder Award: Presentation," Horn Book 41 (October 1965):474.

fairy tale is found in the universality, the nobility, and the wisdom of its themes. In it, she found the ultimate logic, the logic of the heart. It was hers to search the world over for legends that spoke poignantly of this logic. She collected the rarest kind of best. . . . She stored them in her heart, and in her books, for she knew that man must be reminded of the sublime if he is to triumph over the trivial.³³

Remembering what Ruth Sawyer's contribution to storytelling meant to her, Beryl Robinson wrote,

. . . We are grateful for the sensitive ear, the wonderful perception, and the great heart that enabled her to listen to the stories of many people, to catch the nuances of their speech and the significance of their approach to life. We are grateful for the humanity and brotherhood underlying her selection of the stories and for the skill with which she has presented them to us. We are inspired by the heritage she offers to all and for her emphasis on the continuity and identification that link storytellers of the present with their fellow storytellers of the past.³⁴

Who then is Ruth Sawyer Durand?

She is one of the rare few in America who possess the charms of the enchantress. She is one of the rare few who possess the genius to make truth and beauty live. She is able to create a world, to people it, and to clothe it in an atmosphere of reality. Ruth Sawyer Durand possesses the power to touch the human heart with her fingertips.³⁵

Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen

Shedlock had her Andersen tales, Sawyer had her Irish

³³Mother Mary Cecile, "Regina Medal: Presentation," Horn Book 41 (October 1965):477-478.

³⁴Beryl Robinson, "To Ruth Sawyer," Horn Book 41 (October 1965):480.

³⁵Mother Mary Cecile, Regina Medal," p. 478.

and Christmas stories, and Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen had her tales of nissens, trolls, and Norse heroes. Although Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen did not leave us a written philosophy of her art, as did Shedlock and Sawyer, she was able through her teaching and her lecture tours to influence a great number of storytellers-to-be. In her quiet, unimposing manner Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen had left the storytellers of the present a heritage to preserve.

Gudrun Nielsen Thorne-Thomsen was born in Trondheim, Norway, where many of her remembrances were of snow and the joys of coasting, sledding, and sleighing. At the age of four her family moved to the seafaring city of Bergen. Her mother, Fredrikke Nielsen, was an actress at the Bergen National Theatre and starred in numerous Ibsen vehicles. In fact, Gudrun's mother was considered one of the greatest interpreters of Ibsen, and it was from her mother that Gudrun developed a love of drama and poetry. From the age of nine to fifteen Gudrun lived and went to school in Oslo.

In 1888, at the age of fifteen, Gudrun left Norway and went to Chicago to live with her sisters. It was in Chicago that she attended the well-known Francis Parker School. Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen fondly remembered her Parker School education, ". . . I began to study, to love to learn, for the first time. Though I had always had excellent marks, now I

worked not to compete but for the joy of working."³⁶

Gudrun launched her professional storytelling career in 1910. As a result of a cooperative venture between the Chicago Recreation Department and the Chicago Public Library Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen told stories in the field houses of various Chicago playgrounds.

Thorne-Thomsen at the age of twenty began a forty-three year career in teaching. She lectured on Folklore and Storytelling at Western Reserve Library School (now Case Western) and at the Carnegie Library School at Pittsburgh. In 1923 she became the first principal of the Ojai Valley School near Santa Barbara, California. She was to share her storytelling expertise with children and adults throughout the United States, including Hawaii, plus Cuba and Canada.

Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen retired from Ojai in 1936, but continued her storytelling craft and also made recordings of her stories. In 1944 she published a book The Sky Bed, and in 1948 another book In Norway was published. Earlier in her career she had translated various Scandinavian folktales and published them in her book East o' the Sun and West o' the Moon.

Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen believed that storytelling had

³⁶Stanley J. Kunitz and Howard Haycraft, ed., The Junior Book of Authors, 2nd ed., rev. (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1951), p. 286.

three basic criteria: (1) the children who hear the story, (2) the relating of a story that is worthy of the telling, and (3) the person telling the story. She believed in telling those stories that had been tested by time, and ones that could stand up to numerous retellings without the teller losing any of the original enthusiasm. Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen held the belief that storytelling could not be taught,

But one storyteller can influence another, enthuse him, and advise him. Each storyteller must choose a story which he likes, which has meaning to him. It must be literature, for the best is never too good for children. One important matter is: he must never copy anyone, for, in copying, he will lose his originality, the joy of creating.³⁷

Therefore, Thorne-Thomsen seldom related stories to her storytelling students, thus copying her style was kept at a minimum. She preferred to listen to her students and then provide constructive criticism of both the telling and of the story itself.

Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen was a master of the pause which allowed the listeners to create the story for themselves, and they could through their imaginations feel, hear, or see what was taking place. She spoke in a simple, unpretentious

³⁷Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen, "Storytelling and Stories I Tell," in In Memoriam: Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen, edited by Francis Thorne-Thomsen (New York: Viking Press, 1956), pp. 3-4.

manner--direct and to the point without sentimentality. As with Shedlock and Sawyer, Thorne-Thomsen had learned the importance of words and she had the highest respect for them. "It is not I who am important. I am only the instrument through which the story talks."³⁸

Since Thorne-Thomsen did not publish a book on her storytelling techniques and style, we have to depend on others for those descriptions. In the following excerpts admiration for Thorne-Thomsen's gifts are clearly shown. One of the descriptions is furnished by May Hill Arbuthnot. Perhaps Arbuthnot's enthusiasm for those characteristics considered Nordic influenced her in describing Thorne-Thomsen as having blue eyes, yet Britton's description portrays her as having brown eyes. But the discrepancy does not negate the admiration Arbuthnot had for the storyteller and her art.

Mrs. Thomsen was small and plain with the beautiful plainness of fine silver. Her brow was high and serene, her features delicate and mobile, and her eyes Northern blue, clear and honest. She stood quietly with rarely a gesture; she spoke slowly and gravely and her voice captured you immediately. It was a light voice--with no heavy resonance, no ringing tones, but a rare sweetness. Here was a tempered instrument which had been used in the service of beauty and spoke to the spirit even more effectively than the carefully chosen words. She had a quiet sense of humor, which expressed itself subtly in just a hint of a smile or a droll turn of phrase. She

³⁸Jasmine Britton, "Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen, Storyteller from Norway," Horn Book 34 (February 1958):25.

developed the drama of her tales with astonishing effectiveness, considering her restraint. She used no exaggerated inflections and few gestures. It was the quality of the voice, the minor note of fear or loneliness, the crescendo of happiness or exultation, and the steady sustained tone of courage which told the story. Whether it was a lassie searching for her lost love or a Pancake growing cockier and cockier or a Sigurd winning his sword, the voice laid its spell on every audience. Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen was the quietest of all the storytellers, and the least humorous. Sometimes in telling a saga she seemed almost austere, and her stories were apt to fall continuously into a minor key. Her art was the essence of dramatic simplicity.³⁹

To hear her tell the simplest folk tale is to recognize in it qualities of beauty and meaning not apparent when it is read or when it is less skillfully told. She has the integrity, the directness, the power of sympathetic, dramatic interpretation, the ability to create a mood, the charm and flexibility of voice, the spontaneity, the creative quality which make a story live. As one listens to her, one appreciates as never before the delightful, ingratiating pluck of the youngest Billy Goat Gruff, the devoted love and loyalty of the wife in "Gudbrand on the Hillside," the enchantment and lovely symbolism of "Sleeping Beauty."⁴⁰

". . . Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen seeming herself to become a tree rooted in the strong earth as she told a story of a gnarled old tree. . . ."41

. . . A little person, slim and unassuming. . . . Under her serene brow were brown eyes that harbored courage and vision or danced with laughter. Her gentle mouth was capable of stern resolution. Her hands were

³⁹Arbuthnot, Children and Books, p. 393.

⁴⁰Nesbitt, "The Art of Storytelling," p. 443.

⁴¹Ann McLelland Pfaender and Eloise West Winstedt, "Storytelling Around the World, a Symposium Part IV: Hawaii," Library Journal 65 (July 1940):577.

clasped easily until she lifted one or both of them in a spontaneous gesture that heightened the effect of what she said. . . . By the merest twinkle of an eye or the quirk at the corner of her mouth, she showed that she was enjoying it all as much as were her listeners. The magic she evoked owed a great deal to a meticulous use of words. Each word contributed something to the unfolding of the tale; each was given its full value. The magic was due also to the cadence of a beautiful voice and a masterly use of the pause. To her sense of drama was added her love of Scandinavian literature. . . .⁴²

She was small, slight, simply gowned, used no gestures, spoke without effort. For some of us it was our first story hour; to all it brought a new realization of the power of the human voice. Old and young, library students and children, forgot their surroundings and were carried far from everyday existence across the seas to the days when gods and heroes walked and talked with men. . . . Many times since I have heard Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen and always the same miracle occurs. It is not difficult to find her secret. It is in her personality, her honesty, sincerity, her love of beauty and truth. She has never used her art to gain personal glory. She has used it always to share with others the treasures which she herself has found and loved.⁴³

Shedlock and Sawyer had left their impression on NYPL storytelling and in her own way so had Thorne-Thomsen. In 1944 the NYPL children's librarians had the rare privilege of hearing her and, as with the many others who had witnessed her magic, she was an inspiration and excellent role model. The above excerpts about Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen are an indication of the charm and motivation she was able to bring to her listeners, and this was no less true when

⁴²Britton, "Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen, Storyteller from Norway," p. 17.

⁴³Nina C. Brotherton, "Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen: An Appreciation," Horn Book 19 (November/December 1943):379.

she visited at NYPL.

Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen was also admired and well thought of by other well-known storytellers. Mrs. Eulalie Steinmetz Ross, a past NYPL Supervisor of Storytelling, wrote the following:

Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen is a storyteller of vast experience, of great knowledge, of many years of wise living. All of this is reflected in her storytelling. [And when she tells the Norwegian folktales] . . . they are told with simplicity and directness and warmth in the great tradition of storytelling; they are told in a voice that is rich and vibrant. . . .⁴⁴

We are indeed fortunate that through the medium of records we are able to hear the "rich and vibrant" voice of Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen. We are also privileged to experience Ruth Sawyer's storytelling via recordings. But the circle would truly be complete,

If recordings had only been made of Marie Shedlock's stories, preserving her delicate nuances, her imaginative powers, her grace, her beautiful voice for the storytellers of today and tomorrow!⁴⁵

Spencer Shaw, another well-known storyteller, referred to Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen,

As an artist who submerged herself with dignity in her art, becoming merely the instrument to bring a story alive, this renowned teller of tales influenced the medium of storytelling immeasurably and inspired others

⁴⁴Eulalie Steinmetz, "Storytelling Versus Recordings," Horn Book 24 (May/June 1948):171.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 172.

who followed in the path.⁴⁶

On June 19-21, 1956, at the ALA Conference in Miami Beach, Florida the Children's Library Association sponsored a three-day storytelling festival. The second day of the festival was dedicated to Mrs. Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen. Although Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen had died prior to the event, she had been informed of the festival, and was honored to be one of the three storytellers chosen as an honoree; the other two being Mary Gould Davis, who had also died in early 1956, and Ruth Sawyer Durand.

In a memorial to Thorne-Thomsen and Davis, Spencer Shaw wrote,

Blessed with a creative spirit, originating from the experiences and wisdom of their own being, these two artists proudly wore the mantle of a storyteller's art. . . . At some time in their storied travels, these two have stood alone--exultant in a creator's achievement--hiding even from those who benefited from their creativity the wondrous indescribable feelings of the spirit. They took the road and found it filled with waiting, wondering children. Breathlessly, child and storyteller explored the unknown path. And when they reached the end of their journeys, they understood a child's simple utterance when she said in a hushed voice, "Were you there?" Gratefully, we acknowledge the gifts of Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen and Mary Gould Davis. We accept the mantle.⁴⁷

Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen always maintained a deep affection

⁴⁶Spencer G. Shaw, "Whither Bound?" Library Journal 81 (September 15, 1956):2009.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 2009.

for her Norwegian background, and returned to Norway on numerous visits. Through her books this love is apparent, but she also held a deep love for America. The following describes her feelings about both her homelands, "If life may be compared to a tree, my roots are in Norway, but trunk, branches, and leaves belong to America."⁴⁸

At the Feet of the Lions

Shedlock, Sawyer, and Thorne-Thomsen have given meaning and sustance to storytelling, and as such have been an influence on the subject of this dissertation. In order to place Augusta Baker in perspective to the art of storytelling, we must go back to the early 1900s and Anne Carroll Moore.

In 1906 Anne Carroll Moore was appointed the first supervisor of work with children at NYPL. In her position as head of children's work she realized early on that children needed more than just books to read. After having heard Marie Shedlock tell "The Nightingale" Miss Moore knew that every children's library needed a regular, well-planned story hour. But, it also required the services of a highly professional storyteller--one in the Shedlockian tradition.

While still working at the Pratt Institute--where she

⁴⁸Kunitz and Haycraft, The Junior Book of Authors, p. 286.

had been employed before coming to NYPL--Miss Moore had had a young assistant who, after hearing Shedlock, was inspired to seek a career in storytelling. On May 1, 1905, Anna Cogswell Tyler conducted her first story hour, telling a story out of Pyle's Merry Adventures of Robin Hood. It has been said by some that this event was the origin of the story hour as it is practiced in NYPL up to this time.

After graduating from Pratt Miss Tyler went to NYPL as a children's librarian in one of the branches. In 1907 Miss Moore appointed Miss Tyler to develop a storytelling program for NYPL. By 1908 the first story hour took place, and by 1909 the program was in full operation. During this period Miss Moore named Miss Tyler the first supervisor of storytelling. "Through Miss Tyler's enthusiasm and vision storytelling grew in scope and demand."⁴⁹

Miss Tyler believed that the storyteller must gather her stories from the best literary versions available. The storyteller must be knowledgeable in books, and must have poise, dignity, warmth, and a love for sharing stories. Miss Tyler also felt that a successful storyteller had developed the means, the sixth sense, to select the right story for the group that would be listening.

⁴⁹Anne Carroll Moore, My Roads to Childhood: Views and Reviews of Children's Books, (Boston: Horn Book, 1961), p. 145.

Like Moore and Sawyer, Miss Tyler was a New Englander. She was born and raised in Connecticut. Her advanced education was attained at Brooklyn's Pratt Institute.

Miss Tyler had studied for the stage and her voice and presence, added to unusual literary judgement and a sympathetic attitude, made her remarkably successful not only in the telling of stories in person but also in training others in her own methods.⁵⁰

Miss Tyler collected and edited Twenty-Four Unusual Stories, a book that was a favorite with the boys and girls of NYPL. She had first told these stories at various story hours and when she published them, she dedicated her book to the children of NYPL.

She [Tyler] always began with the dominant interest of the group about her, and never did she fail either to identify herself completely with their natural tastes or to make such thorough preparation as to give her right of way to extend the boundaries and enrich the quality of the reading interests of adventurous boys and girls.⁵¹

During her tenure, 1907-1922, storytelling became an integral part of service for children at the NYPL. Miss Tyler also developed a reading club program that has not been equalled in library services for children. Miss Tyler also initiated the storytelling symposium. This annual spring "festival" allowed NYPL storytellers to share their expertise with their peers.

⁵⁰Arthur E. Bostwick, "Anna Cogswell Tyler," Library Journal 48 (April 15, 1923):372.

⁵¹Moore, My Roads to Childhood, p. 231.

Shedlock had built the candle mold, Miss Moore and Miss Tyler had formed and lighted the candle, and it was up to the next supervisor of storytelling to keep the wick burning. In 1922, Miss Tyler retired from NYPL, but she was able to entrust the program to her young assistant, Mary Gould Davis, who became the second supervisor of storytelling, a position she was to hold for twenty-three years.

New England could very well have been called the "home of storytellers," with Moore, Tyler, Sawyer, and Davis having been born there. Miss Davis was born in 1882 in Maine, but had left there at an early age. She was raised in Kentucky and New York, but she never forgot her Cumberland Mountain days and years later she would share the stories of her early childhood with the children of NYPL. Before coming to NYPL in 1910, Miss Davis had been a librarian with the Brooklyn Public Library.

Mary Gould Davis was widely known for her storytelling. She shared her knowledge of the art with her NYPL librarians, as well as with her students she taught at Columbia University. She instilled in librarians and students the pure joy and marvel of relating good stories to children which could bring only delight and a feeling of accomplishment to the teller. Miss Davis began the tradition of the formal story hour season, one that started on Halloween and ended with a symposium in May.

Miss Davis had a rich background in reading, travel, and folklore. As a child she had the good fortune of hearing stories told by her Irish nurse, and she was able to keep the fire of magic glowing by sharing with children, librarians and students her gifts of the oral art. Davis was skillful in choosing the right stories to tell, and her presentations were of the highest quality, which provided inspiration for emulation by other aspiring storytellers. Miss Davis once wrote,

We story tellers have each told our stories in our own way, backing them with our own enthusiasm, bringing to them gladly whatever gifts we possess. And there lies I think most of the art and all of the joy of the storyteller. . . . We are not creating--we are sharing something that we believe in, and with our faith in the power of the story strong about us the technique becomes a secondary thing.⁵²

Miss Davis brought to storytelling an air of formality. She believed in approaching the story hour with dignity and an awe of the relationship between storyteller and child. She established the story hour table, with its flowers, books, and a wishing candle. Miss Davis believed in being true to the tale itself and in being true to the children who would hear the tale. As she once wrote,

. . . the Children's Room of a public library is the happiest place in which to become a story-teller. There the books are all around us, our right to share them

⁵²Mary Gould Davis, "Children's Librarians Section," Bulletin of the American Library Association 23 (August 1929):304.

with the children is unassailable, and there is no reason for us to bring to that sharing the slightest trace of artificiality.⁵³

Miss Davis collected and published several folk tale books from sources she had gathered during her travels in Europe. A collection of Italian legends was entitled The Truce of the Wolf and Other Tales of Old Italy. Her Three Golden Oranges were retellings of Spanish folk tales; based on the collection gathered by Ralph Steele Boggs and herself. She wrote articles for professional journals and did numerous reviews of books for children, always seeking and emphasizing the best of those being published. She also believed that the storyteller must have available to her the resource materials that could provide background and inspiration in preparing stories for telling. She once wrote how important a professional folk literature collection is to the storyteller, "The book belongs on the shelf that we story-tellers turn to when we need to enrich the soil from which our story-telling springs."⁵⁴

Miss Davis, as with the other storytellers discussed, had a gifted voice, was an artist in the use of timing, and

⁵³Mary Gould Davis, "The Story-Teller's Art," Horn Book 10 (May 1934):171.

⁵⁴Mary Gould Davis, "Story-Tellers' Harvest," Horn Book 13 (November/December 1937):354.

utilized gestures to a minimum. She allowed the words of the tale to carry the story and could never be accused of overpowering the tale with theatricals or such. She only presented the "best" in a most dignified, but skillful manner. Miss Davis believed there were two main ingredients for becoming a storyteller: (1) an extensive knowledge of literature and (2) as an exegetist of the literature. Under her tutelage the story hour was not only utilized for sharing good literature but for aiding the child in becoming aware of what the Children's Reading Room collection could provide in the way of other fine publications. She felt that storytelling was a natural progression for enriching the reading interests of the child.

In a tribute written to Miss Shedlock, Miss Davis also included her own philosophy of storytelling when she stated,

We cannot all study Danish, as Miss Shedlock did, in order to read Hans Andersen in the original; we cannot all bring to our story-telling her great gifts and her unusual inheritance. But we can all recognize her integrity as an artist, we can give to our work, as she is giving, every bit of knowledge and sympathy that has come to us through our background and our inheritance, we can shun the mediocre and the artificial and we can cultivate every gift that the good fairies have given us, counting nothing too precious to enrich and perfect our art as story-tellers.⁵⁵

Miss Davis encouraged her students and her librarians to develop and improve their personal styles of telling stories;

⁵⁵Davis, "The Story-Teller's Art," pp. 171-172.

to utilize their experiences and abilities in order to establish a firm storytelling foundation.

The following poem written by Miss Davis describes her thoughts about the story hour. She had written the poem early in her NYPL career--1915. Her sister had discovered it after Miss Davis' death and gave it to The Horn Book for publication.

STORY HOUR

I stood with them before a guarded door
A door to which I held the magic key.
And all their lifted faces turned to me
As flowers to the sun. And all their words
Were stilled. They waited there to see
What lay beyond the door.

I felt their shy unwillingness to show
Their great desire; and their faith in me.
Their power, their need, their quickened energy
To seize and make their own this shining Hour,
To know the wonder and the mystery
That lay beyond the door.

The silence grew. The sun came in and lay
Across the floor. And then, I think, they knew
The time had come. Slowly the silence grew
Breathless. I moved and slipped the magic key
Into the lock. It turned and--breathless, too--
I opened--wide--the door.

We saw the gleaming towers of Fairyland,
The hills, the rivers, and the arching sky,
The fields and meadows and the lakes that lie
Under the shadows of the whispering trees.
There where the never-ending Road runs by
That leads beyond the door.

We heard the sound of Roland's silver horn
 And the clear pipes of Pan among the green.
 Here where we pushed aside the leafy screen,
 Puck Laughed aloud. Then from the hills a band
 Of elves and gnomes and fairies swept between
 Us and the open door.

The wonder grew. We saw the Table Round,
 And--faraway--the faint, mysterious flame
 Where Fafnir guards the Glittering Hoard. Again
 Puck laughed. And kings and emperors stood
 And told us tales. All history came
 Between us and the door.

And when the Hour was done and we came back
 We locked the door again. Yes, but the key
 Hangs there within the reach of all. They see
 The winding Road. They hear the haunting call.
 The power is theirs--to know the mystery
 That lies beyond the door.⁵⁶

Thus with Miss Davis' retirement in February 1945,
 there had been for nearly forty years a well organized and
 well supervised program of storytelling at the NYPL. Miss
 Davis died in 1956 and,

Finding "the road not taken" a source of every growing
 wonder and delight, Mary Gould Davis brought to the old
 folk-art of storytelling lasting gifts which have
 enriched a teller's sphere. . . . She evinced a keen
 interest in the lore of other lands and accordingly
 sought the sources from which these tales had sprung.
 Then she passed on this new-found knowledge to the young
 in her telling. Her gifts of oral artistry and writing
 she shared with others. She left to us, the story-
 tellers, a valued heritage to perpetuate. . . .⁵⁷

⁵⁶Mary Gould Davis, "Story Hour," Horn Book 42
 (October 1966):540-541.

⁵⁷Shaw, "Whither Bound?" p. 2009.

Storytelling NYPL style was now firmly entrenched, the candle was being passed to the next in line.

In 1943, Eulalie Steinmetz, later Ross, had joined the staff of the NYPL as a children's librarian under Frances Clarke Sayers, Superintendent of Work with Children. When Miss Davis retired in 1945, Mrs. Ross became the Supervisor of Storytelling. She carried on the traditions that had long been established by those before her, such as giving boys and girls an opportunity to hear the spoken word; to learn the art of listening; and to share the wonder of it all with another person--the storyteller.

Mrs. Ross had grown up in Cincinnati, Ohio where

Seven years of her childhood . . . were full of enchantment, when her family lived in a wonderful house high over the Ohio River winding through the valley below with Kentucky hills rising sharply from the opposite shore, and the memory of them has been a long and sustaining influence. She grew up on the Hausmarchen of the Brothers Grimm as told by four German grandparents, and when she tells . . . stories . . . her ear is often turned inward to catch the remembered cadence of a German sentence, the lilt of a German song. It was really the Grimm Brothers and her own marionettes who catapulted her into library work with children. While working in the catalogue department of the Cincinnati Public Library, she was often on the road with her puppets, presenting "The Frog Prince" at the storyhours in the various branches. Of course the inevitable and happy outcome was that she joined Miss Julia Carter's staff in the Department of Work with Children in the same library.⁵⁸

⁵⁸"The Hunt Breakfast," Horn Book 24 (May/June 1948): 146.

Mrs. Ross had attended the University of Cincinnati for her B.A., with her library science degree program being done at the Pratt Library School where she was a Caroline Hewins Scholar.

Mrs. Ross felt that a wide variety of life's experiences should be brought to bear on the stories being told. These experiences were to be the backdrop on which the story could be painted. The storyteller must be able to hear, visualize, and remember in order to make the story live and breathe for the listener. When writing about storytelling Mrs. Ross appeared to deal with the subject as a spiritual experience, as seen in the following descriptions:

Almost involuntarily the storyteller modified voice and gesture so as not to break by any intrusion of her own personality the mood of enchantment. . . . Spirit met spirit . . . and from perfect listening came near-perfect telling: customary cadence and inflection, phrasing and pacing were all changed to meet that obligation for perfection.

.
Storytelling is a twofold relationship made up of teller and listener, and neither can exist legitimately alone. . . . The play of personality upon personality, the creation of mood, the influence for good . . . those attributes which make up the living heart of storytelling.

.
Storytelling demands much from those who practice its art: knowledge, imagination, the ability and willingness to work, the capacity for joy, the acceptance of sorrow--in short, a kind of spiritual adulthood. Only from such richness can good storytelling come.

.
Storytelling is a simple art with a storyteller acting as its interpreter and its re-creator.
.

There is no place for self-enchantment in story-telling.

Let us have children in a sunlit room, bright with flowers and books, their eyes fastened on the animated face of a storyteller, actively participating in the story she is telling with their imaginations, their laughter, their tears. These are the experiences that feed the human spirit, that stretch the imagination, that provide the catharsis of emotions which comes from honest laughter or healthy tears.⁵⁹

Although Mrs. Ross' tenure at NYPL was relatively short, she was involved with several interesting projects. In the late 1930s the NYPL had experimented with story-telling and radio. They had presented radio programs for children in co-operation with WQXR NYC radio. The programs had included storytelling and appropriate music. The programs had been under the direction of Miss Davis and storytellers had been chosen, after auditions, from those on the NYPL staff. Mrs. Ross also involved herself and her staff in radio storytelling, but by the late 1940s television was becoming a medium of great influence, and the storytelling programs went on television in 1949. That first show saw Miss Maria Cimino, associate librarian of the Central Children's Room, providing story and song. Mrs. Ross and her staff were able to utilize the mediums of radio and television to carry the storytelling "message" into the homes of the children, thus providing an access to good literature

⁵⁹Steinmetz, "Storytelling Versus Recordings," p. 163-172.

which many children might otherwise never know. Mrs. Ross felt that television was an effective way of bringing children and books together. Mrs. Ross wrote this about the storyteller and television,

. . . the personality of the storyteller is of major importance: she must have an outgoing nature, be pleasant to look upon and listen to, relaxed, and obviously enjoying what she is doing.⁶⁰

Mrs. Ross left NYPL in 1953 and returned to Cincinnati as the Director of Work with Children at the Cincinnati Public Library. Again the candle was being passed.

The high standards established by Miss Moore and Miss Tyler were continuing to be maintained. In turn each Supervisor of Storytelling had believed in the story hour policy established and had been able to bring children and books together,

For the storyteller, the story hour is also a time of magic and joy. She sits waiting with her book as the children seat themselves; then the candle is lighted. To the storyteller, the little pause while the candle catches the flame is a precious thing; it brings the eyes of the children to her. The flame burns high and steady--and the story begins.⁶¹

So, from Halloween to May Day, the boys and girls in New York City came to a story hour based on a pattern of

⁶⁰Eulalie Steinmetz Ross, "Hints from a TV Storyteller," Library Journal 81 (April 15, 1956):984.

⁶¹Pauline O'Sullivan, "Storytelling in the New York Public Library," New Jersey Libraries 4 (Spring 1971):22.

formality: free tickets, procession line, special room or corner, age limitation, and a restricted number in the audience. . . . And have a story hour table with a bowl of flowers, books, and the wishing candle that is blown out at the story hour's end with a wish from each child going into the candle flame.⁶²

Shedlock, Sawyer, Thorne-Thomsen, Tyler, Davis and Ross lighted a candle and paved the way for the next guardian of the flame--Augusta Baker.

In chapter three the discussion turns to Augusta Baker and her career. The information utilized for the chapter came from books, articles, and numerous conversations. The conversations were informal give-and-takes between Mrs. Baker and the writer of this dissertation done from 1975 to the present. The information was then verified as to its accuracy by Mrs. Baker. The more formal interview technique was utilized for chapter five and the video production.

⁶²Augusta Baker, "A Legacy to Storytellers," Library Journal 81 (October 15, 1956):2430.

CHAPTER III

LIFE IS A TURQUOISE OWL AND MORE . . . MUCH MORE

1911-1937

"Once upon a time there was and is Augusta Baker, once only. If we're lucky she'll live happily ever after."¹

Augusta Baker is a woman with a zest for living and the ability to infuse some of that enthusiasm into all those who happen to meet her. . . . [She has an] awareness and appreciation for all about her. . . . [She is] a people person.²

On April 1, 1911, "Saturday's child," Augusta Braxton Baker Alexander was born in Baltimore, Maryland. Mrs. Baker was an only child of school teachers Winfort J. and Mabel Gough Braxton. Winfort Jerome Braxton was one of four sons and two daughters born to Hamilton and Mary A. Braxton. Winfort attended schools in Baltimore graduating from the Colored High and Training School in 1905. He had been active in sports and politics during his high school days, having served as class President as well as playing baseball and football. In 1906 he graduated from Baltimore's Teachers Training School. During his twenty-two years as a

¹"Storyteller Helps Others Discover Happy Ending," Dallas Morning News, 8 May 1976, p. 26.

²Barbara Rollock, "Augusta Baker: Storyteller and Librarian," Catholic Library World 52 (March 1981):336.

teacher he taught industrial arts, math, and science. Mr. Braxton had received his B.A. from Morgan State College Magna Cum Laude, and his M.A. from Columbia University. In order to provide a better living for his family he would work evenings and weekends at an exclusive men's club in Baltimore, and also did catering on the side. Mr. Braxton was gifted with a beautiful singing voice and he would often entertain at parties and gatherings with friends. He was also an active participant in the Episcopal church choir on Sundays.

During his early teaching career he met and married a fellow teacher Mabel R. Gough. Miss Gough was the youngest of two girls and two boys born to Walter and Augusta Fax Gough. The Goughs emphasized the importance of obtaining an education to all their children, and Mabel fulfilled their dream by becoming a teacher. Teaching was more than just a career to Miss Gough, it was a commitment. Thus when Miss Gough was informed that the school system did not allow married women to teach, she refused Mr. Braxton's proposal of marriage. After a concentrated pursuit by Mr. Braxton the two were married in 1909, with the marriage lasting nineteen years and ending with Mr. Braxton's death at the age of forty-one in May 1928. After her husband's death Mrs. Braxton returned to teaching and achieved a most successful career as a special education teacher, and retired

from the Baltimore Public School System in 1958. After her retirement she continued to live in Baltimore and manage the several pieces of property she owned until her death in July 1971.

Education and books were second nature to Augusta Braxton. Her childhood had been steeped in a love of books and learning. Not only did she sense this love from her parents, but one of the central figures in her early childhood was her grandmother, Mrs. Augusta Fax Gough, who made her home in the Braxton household. Mrs. Gough had been raised on a Maryland plantation and as the daughter of a house servant, Augusta Fax had been educated and tutored at the plantation school. As an adult Miss Fax had come to Baltimore to live and she shared her knowledge with other ex-slaves, including Walter Gough whom she later married. Augusta Fax knew that in order for the black person to succeed he must be educated, and this belief she fostered in all she came in contact with down through the years.

As an only child in a household of adults Augusta Braxton came under the spell of her grandmother's tales and stories. Augusta was never to forget the stories she heard or the influence her grandmother had on her, and years later Augusta would describe those experiences as follows:

It began when I was a small girl and I met folklore as a body of "just good stories." I was fortunate to

have a grandmother who did not invent little gems of her own when I asked for a story. She told me the stories which she had heard when she was a little girl. My "once upon a time" was the folktale, and the versions told held no apologies for the elemental values therein. No changes were made. The wolf ate grandmother instead of putting her in a closet; the wicked giant beat to death his own wicked daughters; Cinderella's stepmother was mean and conniving. On the other hand, the good princess and the brave prince always lived happily ever after. Evil got its comeuppance, and good triumphed. My grandmother did not use these stories as vehicles for moralizing and preachment. She did not need to do this because the stories themselves had such strong, moral truths. Each tale fit the moment and the mood. Fortunately, the child psychologists were not raising a hue and cry over folktales. I was a normal healthy child, just as are most of today's children, and so the vigorous folktale did not give me nightmares nor did it make me a juvenile delinquent. These were "once upon a time" stories, and I accepted them as such.

There were the positive values of these stories. They gave pure, unrestrained joy to a sometimes lonely child who needed it. I was an only child, and I had a lively imagination. These stories strengthened it and guided it into constructive and aesthetic channels. I learned new words--long, difficult, beautiful words--for my grandmother did not know about vocabulary control and short sentences. In fact, these educational discoveries had not been made. I think that was the time when I developed a sense of humor. The Jacks of the world were such fools in the stories which my grandmother told, but they could laugh at the world, at themselves and their problems. Over the years I have been grateful for whatever small sense of humor I have. I learned about "one world" because she knew many versions of the same story. Sometimes we played games to see if I could identify the part of the world from which the story came--Germany, Africa, the United States, South America. I asked why Brer Rabbit was so much like Wakaima, the African rabbit, and this led to a discussion of slavery and the relationship of the American Negro to the African. Then, because my grandmother had been born on a plantation where her mother was a slave, I heard stories about her childhood. As I look back on my childhood, I recognize the influences which storytelling and folktales had on my personal development. I am grateful that I heard

these stories when I was "knee-high to a grasshopper."³

Augusta attended schools in Baltimore, as her mother and father had done before her. She excelled in her classwork, and enjoyed the school environment. Her childhood was filled with the usual childhood games of make believe, hide-and-go-seek, hopscotch, jump rope, and even wanting to run off and live with the gypsies. When Augusta was small she had a little friend who was a gypsy and who adorned herself with numerous necklaces and rings, and wore dangling earrings. Augusta loved to do the same, but young ladies did not "deck" themselves out in such finery--only a simple pin or such was allowed. Augusta never got over the need to wear jewelry like her gypsy friend and years later this desire would be fulfilled by the wearing of her turquoise.

Augusta's playmates were many, but her special friends were the two girls who lived across the street. The girls' father was a doctor, and their mother was the daughter of a well-known theology professor and Dean at Howard University and a sister of the poet Sterling Brown. Augusta would often accompany her friends when they visited their grandparents, and it was there that Augusta was exposed to a literary surrounding much like the one Alcott experienced

³Augusta Baker, "Once Upon a Time," in Come Hither!, edited by Lawrence Clark Powell (Los Angeles: The Yeasayers Press, 1966), pp. 10-11.

when she visited Emerson in her childhood. It was also at the Browns that Augusta met James Weldon Johnson, who would later play an important role in her library career.

Augusta grew up in an atmosphere of enlightenment plus doing all things children do. Augusta was an avid reader and would have made the library a second home, but because she was black, the girl who one day would be head of Children's Work in the largest public library in the world, was not allowed to patronize the children's room of the public library located one block from her home. She attended the same high school her father taught in and proved to be an outstanding student, graduating at the top of her class.

There was no question whether Augusta would attend college or not, the problem lay in determining which college. Many of the wealthier girls were planning to attend Vassar or Smith, but the Braxstons' resources would not allow Augusta to do the same. Augusta's mother suggested that she attend one of the black colleges--Morgan State, Fisk, or Howard--where she would meet some nice doctor or lawyer-to-be. But her father felt that Augusta did not have a realistic perspective about the "real world." Mr. Braxston knew that Augusta's image of the white world had been limited to the trolley car drivers, the street cleaners, the clerks in the downtown stores, and other similar occupations, which at that time were jobs not open to blacks. Her

father also knew that during Augusta's lifetime she would have to encounter whites on an equal basis and must have a better understanding of them and their ways. In a sense Augusta had a prejudiced attitude toward the whites, living with the idea that whites were only able to hold non-professional type jobs. Augusta thought that doctors, lawyers, bankers, teachers, and other professional occupations were held by blacks, not realizing she was not allowed to go to a white doctor or attend a white school.

At the age of sixteen Augusta Braxton enrolled at the University of Pittsburgh. The University being chosen because Mrs. Braxton's sister lived in a suburb of Pittsburgh, which allowed Augusta to live with her aunt and ride the trolley car to the campus. This arrangement would also aid in defraying expenses. The Pittsburgh days were ones of adjustment to a predominantly white world. She soon realized that grades were not as easy to achieve as those of the past. Although she had graduated high school with honors, it had been in a segregated school where resources were at a minimum. She had also come from an environment where everyone knew her and it was difficult to accept being just a number in the large freshman classes. But Augusta was determined to adjust to this new world, and when she left two years later she left behind good friends and some very pleasant memories.

Along with her studies Augusta also managed a social life. When she was seventeen Augusta had her coming out party. She and ten other debutantes were introduced to society during the Christmas season of 1928 when the Half-Century Club, of which her father was a member, held its annual dance. Back at school Augusta met a young man who was attending the University on a scholarship from the Urban League--Mr. James Baker. Mr. Baker, who was doing graduate study in social work, was attending a party given by a group of fellow black students when he met Augusta. They attended League meetings and other social events and their friendship soon blossomed into romance. By the end of her sophomore year the two were married. It was during her sophomore year that Augusta was asked to become a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, one of two prestigious black sororities, with membership based on scholarship.

Mr. Baker's job required that the young couple move to Albany, New York, where James worked for the Albany Interracial Council, a branch of the National Urban League. After the new household was established Augusta was ready to continue her education. She applied for acceptance at nearby Albany State Teachers College, and friends and relatives thought she was following in the footsteps of her father and mother--she was going to be a teacher. The University of Pittsburgh forwarded her transcript to Albany, but Albany

was reluctant to accept her. Since she was enrolling in teacher training she would have to student teach at Milne High School, a model school located on the campus, and an all white school which did not want a black student teacher. Augusta Braxston Baker was determined to meet the challenge and she received backing from Pittsburgh. The problem lay in the fact that all students doing their secondary training did their teaching at Milne. But Albany would only accept Augusta if she would agree to do her teaching at one of the elementary schools located in the black neighborhood. The University allowed that since Mrs. Baker had been enrolled in their school and had met all the requirements then surely she could be accepted at a teachers' college. Along with this the Albany administration realized that Mrs. Baker's husband was in a position to bring the Council into the dispute, which had the backing of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, the Governor's wife. Albany accepted Augusta and when it came time for her to do her practice teaching, she did so at Milne High School and went ahead to receive her B.A. in English on June 19, 1933. This would be the first of many injustices Augusta Baker would fight against.

Fortunately for the library world it did not take Augusta long to realize she did not care for the confining classroom environment, but she did care for books. Since Augusta realized that teaching was not for her she was

seeking alternatives, but there were not an abundance of careers open to women--especially black women. In a sense fate placed Augusta in the "right place at the right time." There was a member of the Albany faculty who was a folklore historian and a well-known storyteller--Dr. Harold Thompson, and Augusta had taken his course. She talked with him about her dilemma and he suggested she talk with Martha Caroline Pritchard, the Director of the Library School at Albany. In Augusta's discussion with Miss Pritchard it was suggested that she might consider seeking a library career. After much consideration of the change in career plans, Augusta enrolled in the Library School. Some of her work in library school meant that she work in a school library setting, and Augusta realized that the school library was still a tentacle of the classroom and its limiting curriculum. It was not until she did her practicum at the Albany Public Library that Augusta finally found her niche. Mrs. Baker received her B.S. in Library Science in 1934.

The Albany days were not totally filled with educational endeavors. Augusta and Jimmy--as James Baker was called by his friends--were actively involved in helping their people to better their station in life. The Bakers would go out to the black schools and work with the young people, attempting to instill in them the importance of going beyond high school and to seek a college education.

There were Interracial Council meetings to attend and many times Mrs. Baker would meet and talk with Mrs. Roosevelt. The paths of these two ladies would cross often during the years Mrs. Roosevelt was alive, as both were concerned with Civil Rights and libraries. Augusta was never too busy to work actively on the behalf of her people or her profession.

In September 1934 the Bakers moved to NYC. Mr. Baker was working for the Home Relief Bureau and, as it was the depths of the Depression, Augusta Baker was unable to attain a library position. Augusta had made application with NYPL, but nothing was available. By the spring of 1936 she knew she was going to have a baby and that fall James Baker, III --better known as Buddy--was born. From 1934 to 1937 time was spent keeping the apartment, cooking meals, grocery shopping, and taking care of Buddy. Augusta tried many times to get some type of employment, but jobs were not available to someone whose husband was employed. If jobs were available they were given to those who had no one to support them.

1937-1953

Ironically the application to NYPL had not been misplaced and in 1937 Miss Anne Carroll Moore hired Augusta Baker to be an assistant to Priscilla Edie Morton, Children's Librarian at the 135th Street Branch in Harlem--this

branch would later be renamed the Countee Cullen Branch in September 1951. At the time Augusta came to NYPL, there were only three or four black librarians in the system, and even though racial barriers were slowly beginning to crumble NYC was not ready for black librarians in white neighborhoods. Thus the assignment to Harlem. But Mrs. Baker could not have chosen a better library to begin her career and no better time to be there than the late 1930s. The Branch was more than a library, it was a center for black involvement in the arts. Ernestine Rose, the Branch Librarian, and her staff had set about providing more than books to the community. The library housed the Schomburg Collection, a collection of material on black history and culture for adults, and named for Arthur Alfonso Schomburg who, in 1926, had sold his personal library and works of art to the NYPL. There was a theater group using the basement for its productions. The library was actively involved in the Harlem community. But in spite of all this there was something lacking as far as work with children was concerned. Mrs. Baker recalls those early days,

I came to work at the 135th Street Branch . . . in 1937 and found that the children in Harlem had little knowledge of their cultural heritage and background. With the exception of one school in the area, where the principal was a black woman, there was little interest in the subject on the part of the schools, teachers, parents--and librarians. There were exceptions, but they were few. Oh yes, there was a great flurry of activity during Negro History Week, one week out of

fifty-two.⁴

Mrs. Baker was a librarian who wanted the children to be aware of their heritage and the great people and events in their background, but there were no books being published for children on black history and culture. Indeed it was just the opposite those books that did contain black characters ". . . represented them as shiftless, happy, grinning, dialect-speaking menials."⁵ With the discovery that the library was lacking such material, Mrs. Baker became the force behind establishing a collection of books which later became the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection. This collection was

. . . significant for its attention to books which contained appropriate language, illustrations and non-stereotypical themes. . . . this collection was the basis for a lifelong interest in bringing to all children, but black children in particular, a literary and historical perspective that had long been neglected.⁶

The need for good material on blacks was evident, but what better impetus than a child to truly indicate that need. Years later, in 1968, at a conference sponsored by the Atlanta University School of Library Service, Mrs. Baker

⁴Augusta Baker, "My Years as a Children's Librarian," in The Black Librarian in America, edited, with an introduction by E. J. Josey (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1970), p. 117.

⁵Ibid., p. 118.

⁶Rollock, "Augusta Baker: Storyteller and Librarian," p. 336.

related the incident that brought about the decision to establish such a collection.

The real beginning of the James Weldon Johnson Collection in our library came from the reaction of a small boy to illustrations. We did a great deal of reading aloud in that library and one day I did what I tell my students one must never do. I was going to read aloud to a group of children and I dashed over to the shelf and I pulled off the first book on the shelf and settled myself down to read to the children. I learned that you don't ever read aloud anything that you haven't read first yourself. This little book was The Mule Twins, by Inez Hogan (NY: Dutton, 1939).

I started to read The Mule Twins. I really got going in this book and I thought, "Oh, my goodness, what a book to read to these little children." They were looking up at me, trusting me. Should I stop and say to the children, "This is a terrible book and I'm not going to read this anymore?" Should I just try to struggle through to the end and ignore the whole thing and think that they are ignoring it along with me? I was new, I was young in this game and I didn't know what to do, so I did the latter. I read The Mule Twins from beginning to end. At the end of the reading the children all looked at the book and one little boy went off with this book, and spent a great deal of time looking at it. Then he brought it up to me and gave it to me, and without any bitterness at all, he said to me respectfully that the Mule Twins were cuter than the boys. We decided we'd better do something with The Mule Twins.⁷

The illustrations in The Mule Twins were exactly what Mrs. Baker would fight against. They were stereotyped and typical of many of the books at that time that contained black characters. It presented the little black boys in the

⁷Augusta Baker, "Significant Factors in Selecting and Rejecting Materials," in The Georgia Child's Access to Materials Pertaining to American Negroes, edited with an introduction by Annette Hoage Phinazee (Atlanta: The University School of Library Service, 1968), p. 52.

patronizing and contemptuous manner of the "pickaninny," and as the child stated the mules "were cuter than the boys."

An outgrowth of this collection was Mrs. Baker's bibliography entitled Books About Negro Life for Children-- in 1971 it was retitled The Black Experience in Children's Books. The bibliography is periodically updated and issued by NYPL and is a catalog representative of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection.

Mrs. Baker's bibliography . . . was to be a benchmark for selection of materials for all minority presentations in literature, since in formulating specific criteria she insisted on respecting the dignity of the child and stressed positive representations of a culture.⁸

The Collection was established to acquaint black boys and girls with their own heritage and racial achievements, and to help white children gain a truer, more sympathetic picture of their fellow Americans.

A gift of money from the James Weldon Johnson Literary Group, whose membership was made up of black women who were interested in furthering the cultural growth of their children, made it possible for the Branch children's librarians to review the existing books written about blacks, ascertain if they were suitable for children, purchase a basic collection, and to add to the collection those new

⁸Rollock, "Augusta Baker: Storyteller and Librarian," p. 336.

publications that met the criteria established. When Mr. Johnson was killed in a tragic car/train accident in 1938, the collection was presented as a memorial to him and his achievements. Mrs. Baker wrote the following about the collection,

It is the purpose of this collection to bring together books for children that give an unbiased, accurate, well rounded picture of Negro life in all parts of the world. . . . In order to give children more democratic attitudes towards all the racial groups that make America the great nation it is, we must use literature that will strengthen the growth of democracy. Those of us who knew James Weldon Johnson realize that his life was devoted to this cause. The books placed in this collection are chosen to further this purpose.⁹

The criteria that Mrs. Baker established in the beginning still holds true for today. She chose books with three basic points in mind: (1) language, (2) theme, and (3) illustrations. She wanted to eliminate those books that described the black in terms of derision and those that contained the use of dialect. The collection would include books that portrayed the black making some worthwhile contribution to the society in which he lived and those that contained illustrations portraying the black child in an attractive and appealing manner. The first bibliography contained forty titles, and of the forty few could meet all three points of the criteria. As better books were

⁹Augusta Baker, "Reading for Democracy," Wilson Library Bulletin 18 (October 1943):144.

published most of the original forty titles were removed from later revisions of the bibliography. Mrs. Baker once wrote, "Perhaps the criteria were too simplistic, but we were starting at the bottom, struggling to have a need recognized."¹⁰

Establishing the collection was an important aspect of Augusta Baker's early career, but she was also involved with the everyday running of a children's reading room. Working in a NYPL branch meant that the children's librarian was in charge of the story hour, and the story hour meant telling stories. Mrs. Baker was fortunate to be trained by one of the well-known storytellers of that time--Mary Gould Davis, ". . . who helped the young storyteller to perfect her technique, and more important to select those stories which best suited her style and ability."¹¹

Mrs. Baker did not come to the Branch a professional storyteller, she was a novice and, as such, had to practice long and hard to attain the stature which came later in her career. All new children's librarians to NYPL had to be observed by the Supervisor of Storytelling in an actual story hour presentation, and since the Shedlock aura was

¹⁰Augusta Baker, "The Changing Image of the Black in Children's Literature," Horn Book 51 (February 1975):82.

¹¹Rollock, "Augusta Baker: Storyteller and Librarian," p. 337.

still felt at NYPL and because the young Mrs. Baker wanted to impress Miss Davis--Mrs. Baker chose an Andersen tale to tell. Needless to say the choice was wrong for Augusta, and the kind supervisor recommended that Mrs. Baker might search out those tales that were more suitable to her style. Even as Augusta had struggled to learn the tale, for Andersen should be given word for word in order to retain the beauty and meaning, she realized that Andersen and the children had been cheated by her telling. Augusta had been made keenly aware that she needed to find stories that were "her." It is too bad that Ruth Sawyer's book had not been published yet, for the young storyteller's ordeal might have been made easier if she could have read the following passage,

In spite of the fact that one may like a story immensely, be acutely aware of its fine points, its quality of appeal, I am firmly convinced that certain storytellers are allergic to specific stories. In other words, there are stories that are not for you or for me, and personal liking has nothing whatsoever to do about it. There are many storytellers who have not the essential delicacy or humor to tell Andersen. There are others who fail utterly, and will always fail, to bring out the true majesty and splendor of the hero tale or saga. Herein lies a part of the storyteller's integrity, to be honestly aware of this and say: This story is not mine. As in the days of the ancient storytellers of Ireland, by some spiritual right we may own certain stories and we may not tell those owned by others.¹²

The NYPL Spring Storytelling Symposium, which had been started by Anna Cogswell Tyler, was still an annual event

¹²Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, pp. 151-152.

that allowed selected new Children's librarians to demonstrate their storytelling expertise for their peers. All new librarians sought to be among the chosen few and Augusta Baker worked toward that goal. But the Spring 1938 Symposium did not find Augusta on the dais--she was sitting out front listening to those who had been chosen.

Story hour was but one aspect of working in the 135th Street Branch. Mrs. Baker was constantly striving to provide a children's room where the children could feel perfectly at ease, free to come and go, to look for a book that appealed to themselves, to find the "right" book on the shelves, and to read it in peace and with joy. For Mrs. Baker the period between 1937 and 1953 was rich and full. She recalls that period,

Working with the children was one of the most exciting parts of my professional life. I was with them for seventeen years and I was where I belonged, and where I was happiest. We children's librarians worked hard to bring children and books together. We told stories, read aloud, showed fine art, gave concerts. We were dedicated to the cultural growth of our children. We had reading clubs where Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes read their poetry and then encouraged the children to write their own poems. We invited Aaron Douglas, the black muralist, to meet with groups of children to explain and discuss the exciting Negro History Murals which he had painted on the walls of our library auditorium. Frederick O'Neal talked to our Drama Club about the theater and then gave the club members a tour of the American Negro Theatre (it was in the Library's basement). Attilio Galti, one of the first white men to be accepted by the Pygmies, spoke to our boys and girls and rolled up his pants leg to show where he had been bitten by a poisonous snake and to illustrate how a Pygmy had

saved his life. African stories were told in story hours and African art shown in exhibitions. A Haitian diplomat showed slides of Haiti and discussed the history and culture of his country. He read aloud "at the drop of a hat" and black boys and girls, so-called non-readers, were motivated to read and enjoy books.

Classes came from all parts of New York and from the surrounding communities for Negro History Lectures. The boys and girls in our neighborhood schools came for regularly scheduled class visits during which they received book talks and tours of the Schomburg Collection. These children had special talks because their book background was weak. Each book talk consisted of three types of books: one classic, one new title, and one book about black history. Each time I showed children the first book written by a black man or the beautiful statue of Ira Aldridge as Othello, I was grateful to be Children's Librarian at 135th Street Branch and to be an active part of Harlem. My community work was often exhausting but it was so very rewarding. I still cherish a plaque awarded me for my work with the children of Harlem. . . .

I brought all that I could to the boys and girls who came to that children's room in Harlem, and I have been repaid many times by the success which has come to many of these children. James Baldwin pays tribute to the Library and speaks warmly of the influence that the library and librarians had on him. I read about our children and I am proud. Rising young television producer and playwright William Greaves is one of my boys. Cyril Tyson, who haunted the children's room, is now Commissioner of the Manpower and Career Development Agency of the New York City Human Resources Administration. Jim Boffman, once a page in the children's room, is now principal of a large senior high school in New York City. I ride the subways and strange young people speak to me, identify themselves as "story hour" children, and then talk eagerly about the influence of the Library on their lives. Yes, these were the happiest seventeen years of my professional life.¹³

Mrs. Baker was not only working with children, but was actively engaged in working with parents, teachers, and the

¹³Augusta Baker, "My Years as a Children's Librarian," pp. 119-120.

community members. She was also working to get better children's books published about the black heritage and culture. Mrs. Baker writes about that period and how the work of herself and others came to fruition.

One of my first allies in the fight for better children's books about black life was Frederick Melcher of the R. R. Bowker Company, the donor of the Newbery and Caldecott medals. It was he who literally took me before a gathering of children's editors and told me to "say my piece." Some listened, others resented my presence. In 1940 there were few books being published on the subject. Salesmen said that they couldn't handle these books in the South and that the North wasn't too interested. Publishing boards listened to these salesmen but a few houses, such as Viking, Doubleday and Harper, began to listen to their more liberal children's editors. Organizations such as the Child Study Association, the Bureau for Intercultural Education, and the National Council for Christians and Jews joined the "cause." Fred Melcher was always there to support me and he never missed an opportunity to push for good books on black history and culture. By 1958 most publishing houses had a few books on the subject but the real push has occurred over the last few years. The first edition of Books About Negro Life for Children had about forty titles, half of which should not have been included. The 1963 revision had nearly 250 titles, and the 1970 revision will have nearly twice that number. So we can look back on a job well done by many people. I was privileged to be part of the movement.¹⁴

Between July 1941 and July 1942 the 135th Street Branch was closed for remodeling and the librarians were assigned to other branches. Augusta went to the Tompkins Square Branch where she worked with Polish and Czech children. Later in her career she substituted at the Mott Haven Branch

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 120-121.

located in the Irish community. These assignments provided her with an opportunity to study other cultures, and she in turn was able to bring about a better understanding of her own culture.

During Mrs. Baker's stay at Countee Cullen the Children's Room was an active, busy place to be working. But there were times when it could be more active than one would want it to be. For example, there was the time in 1942, September 24th to be exact, that the children's librarians and the children were celebrating the English illustrator/writer Leslie Brooke's birthday (1862-1940) and enjoying the collection of Johnny Crow books. This event alone was enough to keep the librarians on their toes, but it also happen to be the day Miss Anne Carroll Moore, Coordinator of Children's Work for NYPL, decided to pay a visit to the Branch and also showing up that day was the first lady-of-the-land Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Indeed the children took part in a celebration "wondrous strange." True this was not a typical day, but events like this happened often enough to make this library an exciting place to be a children's librarian. (It was not unusual for Mrs. Roosevelt to show up at places unannounced).

Soon after starting to work for the 135th Street Branch, Mrs. Baker was separated and later divorced from her husband. During the war years she was to meet her present

husband Gordon Alexander and they were married on November, 23, 1944.

In 1946 Augusta Baker became a "celebrity" when she appeared in Ellen Tarry's and Marie Hall Ets' book My Dog Rinty (illustrated by Alexandra Alland and published by Viking Press). This book was one of the early publications that went far to meet the criteria Mrs. Baker had established for the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection. The book was done in black and white photographs and Mrs. Baker was portrayed doing what she loved to do best--telling stories to children.

The active life that Mrs. Baker lived did not allow much time for hobbies, but growing flowers was one she actively pursued. The window sill garden of a NYC apartment was not the same as being able to have one's hands in the good, rich earth. And in June, 1948 this arrangement changed when Gordon and Augusta bought a home in St. Albans, Queens. Her yard was to become the flower show place of the neighborhood and was admired by all until she moved from there in 1980.

Mrs. Baker was a woman who others listened to, and if they did not agree with her, they at least respected her for what she said. She was continuing to press on the publishers to provide quality books on black culture and heritage. Her voice was being heard in the community she served and

was heard on a national level when she was chosen as a delegate to the Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth.

1953-1961

1953 was destined to be a year of great change for Augusta Baker. On June 24, 1953 Mrs. Baker was the recipient of the ALA E. P. Dutton-John Macrae Award for advanced study in the field of library work with children and young people. This award had been established in 1930, but had lapsed in 1933. It was re-established in 1952, with a one thousand dollar award designed to give the recipient an opportunity for study and/or observation, and that would prove beneficial to the recipient and to library service. Augusta was selected out of twenty-two aspirants who had completed applications. ALA had received one hundred and twenty-seven requests for applications from librarians all over the United States. Augusta utilized the award money to complete a study on the "Role of the Children's Library in Inter-Cultural Education with Special Emphasis on the Negro." The end product of the study was her James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection bibliography. In later years some others receiving the award were: Mark Taylor, Jean Lowrie, Effie Lee Morris, and Richard L. Darling.

In 1953 Dr. Frances Lander Spain came from California,

where she had been the Assistant Director of the School of Library Service of the University of Southern California, to become the third Coordinator of Work with Children for the NYPL. Before Dr. Spain officially took over the position she was involved in interviewing people for the newly formed position of Assistant Coordinator and Storytelling Specialist. Mrs. Ross had resigned as Storytelling Specialist and had returned to the Cincinnati Public Library. Thus Mr. John Cory, Director of Branches, had decided to combine the two positions into one. Among the applicants was Mrs. Augusta Baker. As exciting and fulfilling as the Countee Cullen days were life was moving forward. For an active and involved person, like Mrs. Baker, she was bound to attract attention and interest. Although Mrs. Baker was not seeking a new position, Mr. Cory had requested that she make application. In 1953 the NYPL did not have a minority person on the administrative level and was searching for qualified people to apply for such positions. At the conclusion of the interviews Dr. Spain and Mr. Cory had both selected Augusta to take over as the new Assistant Coordinator. Mrs. Baker's decision to take the position was influenced by Mr. Cory agreeing to retain the title of Storytelling Specialist as part of the position title. Mrs. Baker had felt very strongly that a title which had been an integral part of NYPL children's work for forty-five years must not be

eliminated. In September 1953 Mrs. Augusta Baker became Assistant Coordinator of Work with Children and Supervisors of Storytelling. The candle was being passed and was still burning brightly.

At that time it was quite a decision to bring Mrs. Baker into the NYPL administrative echelon, because in many instances a black would be representing the largest public library in the world and the time was 1953, and before Civil Rights had come to the forefront.

The professional life of Augusta Baker would never be the same after she became the Storytelling Specialist for NYPL. From this period and into her retirement years, Mrs. Baker became the wandering troubadour of children's services. She would carry her message throughout the United States, Canada, Trinidad, Australia, and Greece, and people would listen and learn. Hers would become a life of workshops, conferences, in-service training, and storytelling workshops and conferences, where she was teaching, consulting, organizing, lecturing, and above all providing inspiration to others. Through the years Mrs. Baker as a concerned professional and citizen was involved with Civil Rights and desegregation; UNICEF and the International Year of the Child; union activities at NYPL; and a force in the local, state, and national library associations. And through all this she maintained a full work load as librarian, storyteller, and

administrator.

The gathering of tales into collections appears to be a part of being a professional storyteller. Storytellers such as Ruth Sawyer, Anna Cogswell Tyler, and Mary Gould Davis had been involved in collecting tales from all over the world, they had published their collections and preserved them for others to have a source from which to draw their repertoire. Mrs. Baker joined their ranks in 1955 when she published her first book. Augusta had studied old story hour reports and lists of stories told by former storytellers to determine which ones were favorites with the children year after year. Many of the stories were no longer in print. The list of favorites was lengthy and had to be pared down. The tales were retold to children at the various branches of NYPL and finally twenty-eight tales from fifteen countries were selected for inclusion in The Talking Tree (Lippincott, 1955) anthology. The book was reviewed in several library professional publications and was received most favorably. But what better endorsement can there be than for the book to be reviewed by a child, the intended reader.

Junior Reviewer Thomas Smucker of Lombard, Ill. (age 9): . . . The book contains fairy tales and folklore. . . I liked most of these stories. Folk tales are not written by famous authors who write just to make a living but by people who tell the stories first because they like to tell stories. . . .

There are folk tales from Italy, England, Wales,

Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Spain, Brazil, Hungary, Poland, India, China, and Jewish stories. There was one story I especially liked: "The Blue Lake" from Spain. It was more exciting than some of the stories and it lasted longer. Three more stories I liked were "Krencipal and Krencilpalka" and "Lie-A-Stove" from Poland and the "Valiant Chattee-Maker" from India. These three stories were funny and made me laugh.

I didn't like "The Horned Woman" from Ireland. It tells about horned women who make cakes from blood. . . . Another one just like it was "To Devil with the Money." These are two horrible stories. They are bloodthirsty. They are no better than cowboys on television.¹⁵

Mrs. Baker was involved with Civil Rights long before the official Act was passed. She was speaking out and writing articles to help librarians become aware of the dignity and worth of each child, regardless of their race. Back in 1955 she was discussing what to do when the first black child appeared in what had been an all white library setting.

You are now facing the first and the most important factor in the integration of a children's library in a mixed neighborhood. Your attitude toward minority groups has an important bearing on the attitudes of your children. Therefore, it is your primary duty to improve your own human relations. Ask yourself if you believe in the American heritage of freedom and equality, in the essential dignity and integrity of every human being which must be respected and safeguarded. . . . Are there books on the shelves which will hurt and alienate your newcomers while at the same time they perpetuate stereotyped ideas in the minds of your regular library users? . . . Make your book stock inviting and worth while for all groups who may use your room. . . . It is

¹⁵Thomas Smucker, "Review of The Talking Tree," Junior Reviewers 14 (January/February 1956):17-18.

permissible to have programs and exhibitions in weeks other than Brotherhood Week. Include all groups in your plans so that they will acquire knowledge about each other and pride in their own contributions. Your minority groups then realize that you are truly interested in them.¹⁶

She asked that librarians take an active interest and part in agencies working in the field of intercultural activity. That librarians read the non-fiction literature written on the subjects of prejudices and human relations. She advocated that libraries use recommended book lists dealing with minority groups from which to purchase, and that librarians learn the criteria for selecting books about minorities and discard those titles that fail to achieve the criteria.

At the invitation of Carlton Comma, Director of the Trinidad Public Library, Mrs. Baker traveled to the Island where she spent the month of September 1955 consulting with children's librarians about methods of improving service. She also conducted in-service training classes and helped to establish several new programs of service. During her stay in Trinidad she presented story hours and the following is what she had observed,

As I stood before these boys and girls and said, "Once upon a time," I was further convinced of the universality of storytelling. Here was a storyhour audience just like every other storyhour audience all over the world. I might just as well have been in any

¹⁶Augusta Baker, "The Children's Librarian in a Changing Neighborhood," Top of the News 11 (March 1955):40-41.

public library in America. . . .¹⁷

As Mary Gould Davis had done before her, Mrs. Baker joined the Columbia University School of Library Service as a visiting lecturer. Mrs. Baker would hold a position on the faculty from 1955 until 1981. She taught "Oral Narration" (Storytelling), and team taught with Dr. Frances Henne in the course "Objectives in Services of Library Work with Children and Young Adults." As the years passed Mrs. Baker would also share her expertise with library students at NYC College, NYC New School, Rutgers, Syracuse University, University of Nevada at Las Vegas, Texas Woman's University, and the University of South Carolina.

The 1956 ALA June Conference was held in Miami, Florida and,

. . . In a setting of great beauty in the Fountainebleau Hotel, six of America's outstanding story-tellers and three foreign librarians held a capacity audience enthralled for three hours on three successive days!¹⁸

Each day was dedicated to a different storyteller of the past--Mary Gould Davis, Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen, and Ruth Sawyer. Mrs. Baker was one of the nine storytellers and, on

¹⁷Augusta Baker, "Trinidad's Children and Their Library," Bulletin of the School Library Association of California 27 (May 1956):8.

¹⁸Charlemae Rollins, "Story Telling--Its Value and Importance," in Creative Writing and Story Telling in Today's Schools, edited by Paul Witty, reprinted from Elementary English (March 1957):34.

the day set aside for Mary Gould Davis, Augusta told "The Goat Well" an African folktale from the Courlander and Leslau collection entitled The Fire on the Mountain and Other Ethiopian Stories (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1955).

Augusta Baker was, and continues to be, an active participant in library association work. She served on numerous committees and held various offices in the New York Library Association (NYLA) and NYC Library Club. By 1958 she was a member of the Board of Directors of ALA's Children's Services Division and served on the Board until 1961, and again from 1966 to 1969. She never passed up the opportunity to speak out about her concerns for all types of library service, but was always relating those concerns back to children and the importance of providing the best library service for them. She was also active in other associations such as NAACP, Women's National Book Association, New York Folklore Society, and Delta Sigma Theta, to mention just a few.

In the spring of 1959 Augusta Baker was Chairman of ALA's Advisory Committee to the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company on its projected television reading aloud program. The "Reading Out Loud" series consisted of thirteen thirty minute readings done by celebrities from various entertainment and government fields. The celebrities would read to their own children or to a selected group of children. The

Committee assisted with the selection of books and stories, and provided suggestions on how to conduct a reading aloud program. Some of the people involved in the series were: Archibald MacLeish, Eva Le Gallienne, Cyril Ritchard, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mr. and Mrs. Jackie Robinson, Richard Boone, Jose Ferrer and Rosemary Clooney, and Senator John F. Kennedy.

In 1960 Augusta published her second collection of tales--The Golden Lynx (Lippincott, 1960). She was also asked by Parent's Magazine Press to be the editor of their multivolume work the Young Years Library. This Library consisted of stories, tales, rhymes, and poetry which Mrs. Baker supervised the selection of, and with a critical eye toward providing only the best for the young child. Not only had she published and been an editor, but she was asked to write the introduction to Verna Aardema's Tales From the Story Hat (illustrated by Elton Fax, NY: Coward-McCann and Geoghegan, 1960).

As Assistant Coordinator and Storytelling Specialist for NYPL, Mrs. Baker was often called upon to speak at conferences. Mrs. Baker's speaking engagements were not limited to just library problems or storytelling, but to social problems as well. As has been noted throughout the chapter thus far, Mrs. Baker believes in books and in their use as an aid to bringing about attitudinal changes in

children. The following is a portion of a talk she gave at the Bank Street College of Education Conference held in NYC in 1960, and reflects her feelings about books and change.

I want to close with another little story to show you what these intercultural books can mean to white children. One day I received a phone call from a young teacher who identified himself as a teacher in a school near the Bowery. He said to me, "Mrs. Baker, you must help me. I've run up against a terrific problem in my class of seventh graders. We were talking about the different people in New York City and I asked the class how many knew any Negroes. One young boy stood up and announced that he was well acquainted with them and that everyone knew that all Negroes were drunkards." The teacher said that he expected the rest of the class to pounce on this boy but they all shook their heads and nodded in agreement. Now, of course, this teacher could have given them a ten-minute lecture on the fact that there are Negroes who are not drunkards and then, taking the easy way out, he could have passed on to the next topic. This happened to be a very alert teacher so he stopped his lesson because he knew that something was wrong. It turned out that these boys and girls had had their closest experiences with the Bowery bums and they were unaware of Negroes in other capacities. The teacher came to me to see what books could do to clarify the situation. He realized, of course, that books could only be a part of his project. These children had to be introduced to people who were making contributions to the community, but he wanted to see what books could do. So we worked from our list, "Books About Negro Life For Children" and from the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection and introduced these young people to books which told them something about Negroes, about the way they lived and the contributions which they made to society. I will never forget the first time that I met that class. I took great armfuls of books to their classroom. I was Exhibit A but being wonderfully alert young people they were not shy, so they asked all kinds of questions. I reassured them that I would not be embarrassed and that I would answer their questions, no matter how personal they might be. We had a wonderful time. At the end of that project they made scrapbooks and then took a trip up to the Countee Cullen Branch Library and the Schomburg Collection. I cannot say that books were totally responsible for the change but a

great deal of it had come from books. These young people were grateful and they told me later that they were going to tell their parents about these things and about this wonderful library and the special Schomburg Collection. I tell you this story because I want to leave this in your mind--that a false kind of book not only harms the Negro child, the Puerto Rican child, the Chinese child, but it also harms the white child. As a matter of fact, I think that it does greater harm because hurt feelings are never as serious as mis-education.¹⁹

1961-1974

Augusta Baker's seven years as Assistant Coordinator and Storytelling Specialist drew to a close when Dr. Frances Lander Spain retired on July 31, 1961. Dr. Spain had been widely recognized for her leadership in the field of library service to children. She had been a Fulbright scholar and visiting lecturer to Thailand. She was a past President of ALA, and had been to Russia on a State Department sponsored cultural exchange visit to Russian libraries. The two women, Spain and Baker, had worked well together and great strides had been made on behalf of New York's children during her tenure. Thus when retirement came for Spain she recommended Augusta Baker as her replacement, and on August 1, 1961, Mrs. Baker became, like Moore, Sayers, and Spain, the head of the world's largest public library children's

¹⁹Augusta Baker, "Children's Books in a Changing Culture," in Diversity in Our Society: Challenge to the Schools Conference 1960 (NY: Bank Street College of Education, 1960), p. 35.

services department.

Occasionally, an event occurs which makes one very happy almost beyond expression. The . . . announcement of your appointment as Coordinator of Children's Services for the New York Public Library is such an occasion. . . . I am very happy that the Library Administration recognizes your talents and abilities in such a concrete manner. Truly, you have been an inspiration to those with whom you have worked and have taught. Your knowledge of the specialized field of library service to children and your warm understanding of its many avenues of approach have resulted in enriched services to the children of New York City. The field of Library Service to Children will now receive added benefits from you in your new capacity. . . . I am looking forward with keen anticipation to your contribution which you will make in your new role.²⁰

As Coordinator of Children's Services Mrs. Baker would be responsible for eighty branch libraries and four book mobiles. Mrs. Baker would now be a spokeswoman for trends in children's services and work closely with the publishing world; she would be influential in helping talented authors and illustrators to get a "foot in the door"; she would co-ordinate and recommend policy for all work with children; she would be involved in approving materials, compiling and editing publications, training librarians in book reviewing, reading guidance, school and group work; she would be planning and conducting programs, and maintaining a liaison with other Library offices; she would be representing the Library

²⁰Spencer G. Shaw, Children's Consultant Nassau Library System, to Augusta Baker, Hempstead Long Island, New York, 26 May 1961, Personal Files of Augusta Baker, Columbia, South Carolina.

at youth-serving agencies; she would be giving information and advice on children's books and reading interests; she would be advising on development of branch book collections and participating in personnel decisions; she and her staff would attempt to maintain a continuous literary dialogue with children, their teachers, and their parents, and to plan as many innovative and imaginative programs as possible; and she would continue to represent the Library at conferences, workshops, and seminars.

On June 15, 1963 Mrs. Baker received a telegram from President John F. Kennedy requesting that she meet with him and two hundred other leaders in the field of education to discuss Civil Rights problems that related to schools at all levels. At the meeting held on June 19th Mrs. Baker would be representing NYPL, as well as ALA's Intellectual Freedom Committee. The leaders discussed what could be done in the various communities to provide improved educational and employment opportunities; how to upgrade people who have had a substandard education, or none at all; and how to advance the national goals by utilizing each citizen to his maximum capacity.

The pressures of being an administrator never seemed to deter Mrs. Baker from giving freely of her time to other services. She edited two bibliographies for the NYLA Children's Division--Once Upon A Time and Recordings for

Children both done in 1964. And as part of her regular job she prepared annual annotated book lists, as well as bibliographies for poverty programs. She was also involved with television as the moderator for the weekly program "It's Fun to Read." The program consisted of introducing authors and illustrators of children's books and they would discuss their publications and their craft.

During the course of her career Mrs. Baker would be asked to write forewords and introductions to children's books. One such book was Pura Belpré's The Tiger and the Rabbit and Other Tales (illustrated by Tomie de Paula, Lippincott, 1965) in which Mrs. Baker wrote the foreword.

1965 found Mrs. Baker going to the University of Mississippi to discuss desegregation plans with white teachers. This trip took place during a time of unrest, and for the most part these people were not ready or did not want to hear a black woman counsel them on what to do upon having blacks in their classrooms for the first time.

Go West, Mrs. Baker! In February 1966 she went to be one of the speakers at the Thirty-third Annual Claremont (California) Reading Conference, a conference sponsored by the Claremont Graduate School and University Center. The annual conference is one that teachers and others interested in reading can attend to be inspired, to listen to "food for thought," and talk with speakers and discussion leaders about

children and reading. The following is an excerpt from the speech she gave,

Are we giving our children books that will build azure palaces or are we giving them factories that will grind out "learning" from morning to night? Have we declared war on imagination, beauty, dreams? . . . I am particularly concerned today because I hear talk, all around me, about what to give the child. The voices do not say, "give him wings" but rather, they say, "give him pinfeathers. Give the bright child more information because he needs to be practical, he needs unimaginative knowledge." What are the problems of the inner city? Consult the city records to find out more about the sewage system. These are his assignments. Cram his mind with facts and figures--stifle his soul. And then, that poor, newly-discovered child--the culturally deprived, the disadvantaged, the socio-economically handicapped, the slum child. Don't dare let him stretch to a piece of fine literature. Let us get busy and write books that will have limited vocabulary, short sentences, familiar surroundings (the slums?). Books that he can read without the least bit of strain; books with which he can identify; books about his own way of life--the hard, dirty, noisy city. If you were a slum child, would you want to stay in that world forever? If you had a bright, inquiring mind, would you not want to let it roam without restraint? If you had difficulty with words and language, if you were a non-reader, would you want to be confined to the dull, unimaginative world in which you already find yourself? If I were a slum child I would want to be brought up from my morass. I would want my intellect strengthened and challenged, for, make no mistake, these children have intellect. They have not had the kind of stimulation and environment which we associate with an affluent, middle-class society, but they have imaginations, aspirations, and the seeds for successful living.

These are all children trying to be just plain children while we are busy planning different childhoods for different categories of children--the gifted, the normal, the disadvantaged. Granted that there is a necessity for a certain amount of planning in various areas, it might be of greater worth to remove some of the mediocrity, false standards and over-stimulation to which children are exposed and encourage them to be children. . . . In our plans for the knowledgeable child, are we forgetting the fairy godmother in his soul? . . .

. . . It is our responsibility as parents, librarians, educators, to listen and act as the children plead, "Give us wings--not pinfeathers but strong, powerful wings that will take us soaring over the ordinary, the mundane, the silly, empty, pedantic books that paralyze our souls, that stifle our young hearts, that crush our imaginations. Please--let us keep our dreams."²¹

While she was in California she was also guest of the Long Beach Public Schools and took part in a Storytelling Symposium.

The Parent's Magazine Medal Award for 1966 went to Augusta Baker. This medal is given to a person who has given outstanding service to the nation's children. Mrs. Baker's citation noted that she

. . . was one of the first to survey intercultural material in children's libraries throughout the country. . . She has worked with publishers, authors and illustrators to improve the quality of children's books by and about Negroes.²²

ALA was once again calling Augusta to serve. She was elected to sit on Council for a three-year term (1965-68). She chaired the important Newbery/Caldecott Awards Committee in 1966. The Children's Service Division elected her to its highest office, the Presidency in 1967. The ALA

²¹Augusta Baker, "Beyond Literacy: Pinfeathers or Wings in Children's Books," in Beyond Literacy Thirtieth Yearbook of the Claremont Reading Conference (Claremont, Calif.: Claremont Graduate School and University Center, 1966), pp. 60-66.

²²"Librarian, Educator Win Parents' Magazine Awards," Publishers' Weekly 190 (October 31, 1966):59.

membership elected her to serve on its governing Executive Board in 1968. Through her professional career a number of ALA Nominating Committees have approached Mrs. Baker to run for the ALA Presidency, but she has always refused. As Lillian Gerhardt put it, "With that refusal, AB prevented ALA from electing one of the finest presidents it could have."²³

Augusta was awarded the 1968 ALA Grolier Foundation Award, which had been established in 1953. This award of one thousand dollars and a certificate is given for outstanding work with children and young people. The recipient is recognized for either long term service or for a single contribution of lasting value. The Award citation is as follows:

We are pleased to present the Grolier Award to an outstanding librarian who has made a great contribution to children's reading and to librarianship through her work at the New York Public Library since 1937. As coordinator of Children's Services, she supervises eighty children's departments throughout New York City--and her innovative leadership has been an inspiration for others to follow. She has brought joy to many children through her own art of storytelling and through the art of those whom she taught or guided by her instructive anthologies. Most recently she has traveled to all the major cities of the U.S. lecturing on Storytelling for Children and giving Storytelling demonstrations. Recipient of the 1953 Dutton Macrae Award, she used her grant to make a study of inter-cultural material in children's libraries throughout the country. As

²³Lillian N. Gerhardt, "AB Biographers, Please Note," The Calendar 36 (March-October 1977):no paging.

librarian of the Countee Cullen Branch in Harlem, she established the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of juvenile books. This library and its librarian became a resource for the authors, artists and publishers working with books by and about the Negro to provide the best literature for children, and her bibliography "Books about Negro Life for Children" has guided many librarians in developing intercultural collections. Her leadership in the field of librarianship is attested to by her Chairmanship in many important committees and her election to the Council of the ALA. For her contributions to the profession of librarianship, and to the reading guidance of children, we present to Mrs. Augusta Baker the Grolier Award for 1968.²⁴

It is always an honor to be recognized by ones professional peers and friends, and it was also in 1968 that Ezra Jack Keats, a children's author/illustrator, dedicated his book A Letter to Amy (Harper, 1968) to Augusta.

NYC is a Mecca for the radio and television industry, and as previously noted, Mrs. Baker had been involved with the media in roles as participant and/or consultant. Besides being moderator for the "It's Fun to Read" program, she was also involved with the program "Discovery." At the end of each program they would show books pertaining to the subject discussed. These books were selected by Mrs. Baker. Then in the late 1960s an innovative children's show came to television--"Sesame Street." Mrs. Baker became one of four persons in the country to serve on the book committee for

²⁴American Library Association, "The Grolier Award 1968," award citation presented to Augusta Baker at the 1968 ALA Conference, New York, N.Y., June, 1968.

this award winning program. She also contributed to the parent/teacher guide that went out to schools, libraries, and individuals interested in furthering the work done on the program. The guide contained bibliographies of the books that were used on the show. Mrs. Baker had these comments about "Sesame Street,"

"Sesame Street" was actually created to help the culturally disadvantaged child learn, which makes you think that the child in the ghettos and poverty stricken areas were to benefit, but such is not the case. There are just as many, or more perhaps, culturally deprived children living in millionaire homes where the books were placed by an interior decorator as there are living in the slums of New York. So, the program "Sesame Street" actually reaches across all economic lines.²⁵

The public library world has often looked to NYPL to be the leader and "trend setter" in developing programs and services that other libraries could also put in force in the communities they served. Augusta was called upon to be the "guiding light" as far as children's services were concerned and, as such, was often a speaker at various libraries across the country. For example, Mrs. Baker was the speaker for the Sixth Annual Miriam A. Wessel Lecture sponsored by the Detroit Public Library in 1969. The topic of her lecture was "We Too Are America: How Children's Books Portray Minority Groups." In the late 1970s she would be the first

²⁵"Author Cites Prejudice in Old Children's Books," Tampa (Florida) Times, 19 April 1973, p. 14.

lecturer of a new lecture series that was being established by the Houston Public Library. She was and has been guest lecturer at numerous academic institutions and other public libraries, always carrying the message that communities and library administrations must support books and activities for children--that preserving children's work in libraries is essential to developing an informed, astute, and concerned member of society when they reach adulthood. She has oft been heard to say, "I never have been crazy about adults, I can take you or leave you, but I have always had a healthy respect for children."

Over the years Mrs. Baker's close working relationship with the editors of children's books has helped to improve the portrayal of black life in books for children. But she has never let up emphasizing the need for the publishers to continually maintain high standards in their books for children--books about minorities in particular. She began her crusade in 1937 and in 1969 she was still stressing the criteria established for the James Weldon Johnson Collection. In a May 1969 speech she delivered to the membership meeting of the Children's Book Council, Inc. Mrs. Baker spoke about the criteria.

One of my pet irritations today is the whole idea that the great interest and upsurge in books about black life has just come along. . . . the need was recognized as early as the 30's. . . .

We had to work with some kind of guidelines. Since

then, we've added a few more. We can afford, now, to add "quality." We absolutely couldn't consider "quality" in 1939, 1940, 1941, because we really had very few books to meet our general criteria. However, we still use the same guidelines today. . . .

We do want the illustrations to be attractive. We do not want these Negro boys and girls to look like white children with brown wash or black wash spread over them. We want them to have features, to have the distinction, to have the attraction that one finds among Negro boys and girls. Let the characters be natural . . .

We discarded the books that were so full of dialect that you couldn't understand them. . . . The white children would speak as if they had Ph.D.'s from Oxford but you couldn't understand one word the little black children were trying to say because you were bogged down in the "deses" and "doses." We don't come across too much of this today. . . . Regional vernacular is fine, but if you use it, then all the characters should speak the same way. If they all came from the same place, with roughly the same economic standing and the same general education, they're going to speak pretty much the same way. So we still look for this--consistency in speech patterns.

There is no place for the hero of a story to use derogatory terms. One of the last disagreements we had with some people was about what constituted a derogatory term. I think the last word we really gave up was "pick-a-ninny" because this, for so long, was "a term of great affection." Other terms, such as "darkie" and "nigger" were dropped without too great a problem, but it took a little doing to give up some of those other "affectionate" terms. Gradually, we got this point across. There is never an excuse for such words to appear editorially or for the author himself to think this way. If a book is historical in background, however, it must be true to the times. In Hildegard Swift's "Railroad to Freedom," she explains to the boys and girls that she uses certain words because they are historically accurate. When the patroller, who has been chasing the escaped slave, catches Harriet Tubman, he does not say, "And now, Miss Tubman, will you please return to the plantation with me?" He is apt to use more "colorful" language. So that when we're looking at the books, we recognize this. It's just the same with the realistic stories of today. You have the pattern of

speech that one finds in the streets, and this is part of the atmosphere of the story. We try very hard, though, to make sure that the hero doesn't use this kind of language indiscriminately. There still is a feeling about the use of this kind of language and its indiscriminate use.

Another general criterion is theme. In the late 1930's and the 1940's, when we reached theme, we really had reached a barrier. If we had applied the criteria of today, where we now expect a full picture of Negro life, we wouldn't have had any books. We did have about 40 books in the . . . Collection, but in all of those books, the Negro was portrayed in some kind of servile position, and it was unheard-of to portray a black man as anything other than a servant. This just wasn't done. Since that time, of course, children's editors have taken care of that problem, but we never have had as wide a range of social life portrayed in children's books as there should be.

. . . the characters should be just people and circumstances should be normal circumstances. . . . I would hope that we would not take a manuscript and go through every third page and paint one child and every fourth family black to integrate the book. . . . If it's a normal part of life for the families and children in the book to be all kinds of families and all kinds of children, fine. This is as it should be.

. . . we have a number of good, realistic stories but we still need more realistic books. I have a feeling that we have not quite moved into the area of what I call "an unhappy ending." I believe some of the ghetto stories, some of the very realistic stories, are very good--until we come to the end. Something happens, and perhaps it's that we do not really carry that realism to the end. The thing which impressed me with "Edgar Allen" was that the author made no attempt to give it a they-live-happily-ever-after ending. "Edgar Allen" is based on the truth and the author had the courage not to twist that truth. I would hope, too, for books about a Negro family that does not necessarily find itself in the slums. There's still room for stories on all levels, all facets, of black life; all black people are not in the ghettos and slums. . . .

The person who writes realistic fiction must be inside, writing about life, rather than outside, looking in on it. Then he has written a book which youngsters will say really has soul, as opposed to a book which

just doesn't quite make it. This requires fine writing, along with the other criteria. . . .

The books on the history of the black man, the books on civil rights and nonfiction in general are good. They are so numerous that we now apply literary standards to them. This is something that we did not do a number of years ago. If the attitude was right, if the book said what we really wanted it to say, that was sufficient. Now we ask that the nonfiction book meet the same literary standards as all our other books. It should be lively and entertaining rather than encyclopedic.

About black authors and illustrators: like white authors and illustrators, they are not all good. . . . Children don't care whether the author is green, lavender or what. They won't read badly written, contrived books. Of course, talented black authors and illustrators should be encouraged. I believe they will come to the fore, that they will be encouraged to produce good books because there is great talent there. It simply needs to be found, and nurtured. . . .

I think the books must be worth reading. I think that is the very first criterion of all. A book has to be about people who are individuals with character and who really come alive. I keep Anne Carroll Moore's books on my desk, and when I need a little sustenance, I very often go back and reread them. In one of her books she tells about a young author who came to see her because she was disturbed about whether she was writing the right kind of books for children. I think Miss Moore's answer holds for all of us today. She told this young woman: "I think you have the biggest chance in the world, if you keep straight on working and appraising everything you do on the basis of sound criticism. Writing for children, like daily living with them, requires a constant sharpening of all one's faculties, a fresh discovery of new heights and depths in one's own emotions. The saving conviction is that children have as many and as varied tastes in reading as grown-ups. In the matter of their reading, I think that they have more sense since they are entirely unconcerned with other people's opinions of books. When they are bored, they stop reading the book. 'I didn't like that book' is reason enough and it admits of no argument." If we think about the child who is going to decide whether this book is read or not read, we will come out on the

right track whether we are writing about whites or blacks.²⁶

In 1970 Mrs. Baker was asked by Hawthorne Books to write a historical introduction to a new publication entitled Lift Every Voice and Sing (with words and music by James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson; illustrated by Mozelle Thompson; and simple piano arrangement with guitar chords by Charity Bailey). The introduction offered Mrs. Baker the opportunity to pay tribute to the man for whom the Memorial Collection was named. She wrote about the Johnson brothers and their contributions to black culture, and the importance of the song itself to blacks and their heritage.

In December 1970 Mrs. Baker and NYPL children's librarian Barbara Rollock were invited to attend President Nixon's White House Conference on Children. The group was called upon to define problems, seek new knowledge, evaluate past successes and failures, and to outline alternative courses of action in order to come to grips with the new challenges facing the nation and how they pertain to the children of today and in the future.

Mrs. Baker revised and retitled the former publication Books About Negro Life for Children in 1971. The books

²⁶Augusta Baker, "Guidelines for Black Books: An Open Letter to Juvenile Editors," Publishers' Weekly 196 (July 14, 1969):131-133.

listed in the bibliography were now entitled The Black Experience in Children's Books, which reflected a change in times. In her introduction to the retitled bibliography Mrs. Baker wrote,

In the plan for intercultural education books about the black experience can perform an essential function. While providing a means for gaining knowledge and improving social skills, they can influence and reinforce attitudes and ways of thinking. . . . These books help develop awareness and can carry readers into the experiences and feelings of people different from themselves. Books cannot take the place of first hand contacts with other people. However, they can prepare children to meet people, to discount unimportant differences, and to appreciate cultural traditions and values unlike their own. The black child is given pride in his heritage at the same time that the white child gains knowledge of another culture and history. Not only must the black child find his identity as a black but he must also develop in relation to others in the society in which he lives.²⁷

The Constance Lindsay Skinner Award was given to Mrs. Baker in 1971. The award has been given since 1940, and recognizes and commends women who have made an imaginative and outstanding contribution to the world of books or to our culture through books. Many accolades were shared with the guests at the annual Women's National Book Association dinner held at the Hotel Biltmore in NYC on October 1, 1971. Keith Doms representing ALA said, "Augusta Baker is not just

²⁷Augusta Baker, "The Black Experience in Children's Books: An Introductory Essay," Bulletin of the New York Public Library 75 (March 1971):143.

a children's librarian--she's a librarian!"²⁸ A member of the audience Velma Varner said, ". . . Augusta Baker's greatness did not lie in her professional achievements at all--it was due to the fact that she is a great human being."²⁹ Congresswoman Bella S. Abzug was the featured speaker and the following are excerpts from her talk,

We who are here to pay tribute to Augusta Baker are honored to be in her presence. Augusta Baker is the greatest children's storyteller of our age. She is a great teacher and librarian and has played an unusual role in encouraging and inspiring writers of new children's books. . . .

Concerned about the horrors of racism and the widespread ignorance about black people, Augusta Baker has worked hard and fruitfully to overcome the biased, discriminatory and blank spaces on library shelves about the black experience. . . . She directed and encouraged writers to write children's books about the black experience, to do battle with the overt racism and covert discriminatory silence which marks our culture

Augusta Baker is an embattled, courageous woman, fighting for books, for libraries, for all the people and especially for the children, and at the same time, fighting for the highest standards of culture. For her, it is one fight--more library services for children and the best literature for children. . . .

To honor Augusta Baker means to do battle for the cultural standards she exemplifies, to fight for more storytellers, bigger and better library services, and to say a resounding 'no' to bigotry of all kinds, at all times, and in all places.³⁰

²⁸"An Evening for Augusta Baker," Wilson Library Bulletin 46 (November 1971):294.

²⁹Ibid., p. 295.

³⁰"Bella Abzug Speaker at CLS Dinner," New York City, October 1, 1971. (Mimeographed.)

The Constance Lindsay Skinner Award citation presented to Mrs. Baker read as follows:

Librarian, folklorist and storyteller, administrator, anthologist--an emissary from the world of imagination to children everywhere. She has worked directly with them--black and white, rich and poor--and has touched the lives of many thousands more through the adults she has inspired and guided. Always aware of the role that books play in shaping self-image and lifelong values, Augusta Baker has insisted that nothing but the best in style, format and substance is ever good enough for children. Convinced that all children can learn to love books and reading if only given the opportunity, she has worked to strengthen library service to children and to get books into the hands, homes, and hearts of all. For her creative use of television as a link between books and reading, for her remarkable and successful efforts to develop and call attention to the literature of the black experience and, above all, for her readiness always to go far beyond the confines of her job to enrich, support, and make fruitful the useful work of others, this Award is given.³¹

As a recipient of this Award Augusta Baker's name joined a long list of distinguished authors, book editors, and librarians. Some of the women receiving the Award were: Anne Carroll Moore (the first recipient), Lillian Smith, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Margaret C. Scoggin, Elizabeth Gray Vining, May Hill Arbuthnot, Pearl Buck, Eleanor Roosevelt, Rachel Carson, Mildred L. Batchelder, Ruth Hill Viguers, Charlemae Hill Rollins, Mary V. Gaver, Margaret K. McElderry, and Frances Neal Cheney.

³¹Women's National Book Association, "The Constance Lindsay Skinner Award, 1971," award citation presented to Augusta Baker at the Hotel Biltmore, New York City, N.Y., October 1, 1971.

In 1973 Mrs. Baker was invited by the Australian Library Association to be the main speaker at the plenary session of their annual conference held in Perth. Mrs. Baker's topic was entitled "Needs of Disadvantaged Children in Urban Library Services." The public libraries of Australia took advantage of her speaking engagement and had her conduct workshops and storytelling sessions in Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra, and Sydney. Mrs. Baker worked with the librarians on ways to improve their services to children.

Wherever Mrs. Baker spoke in the United States and, there were numerous speaking engagements, she always received a warm welcome and was remembered long after the event was over--whether she was talking about children's services, or the black experience, or telling stories.

The speaker ended her talk by telling a story, "Uncle Bouki Rents a Horse," which quickly demonstrated why she is a master story teller. The adult audiences listened--spellbound--and will probably remember the story long after they have forgotten her advice. It brought home to the listeners the importance of storytelling for the sheer pleasure of listening. Years from now if they meet her on the street they will probably say, "You're the woman who told us the story of Uncle Bouki in Ithaca when you spoke there for National Children's Book Week."³²

Or were presented with ideas which set the listener to thinking about the black experience and its importance to

³²"Story Reading Should Be for Pleasure," Ithaca (New York) Journal, 13 November 1974, p. 10.

libraries and society-at-large.

. . . I would like to talk about our attitudes towards Black Children and other minority groups. I feel very strongly that all the bibliographies in the world, all the books published on the subject, all of the conferences and workshops we attend mean nothing if we do not examine deeply our own feelings and prejudices. Our attitudes toward others are of the utmost importance. We cannot work constructively with Black children if we consider them inferior, second class citizens. How we truly feel about others is a private matter to be explored and examined by ourselves. We must decide about our own attitudes. . . .

Don't sell yourself on the idea that you only buy books on the Black Experience for Black children. I have often said that if I had only one copy of such a book, and I had to choose between giving it to a Black child or a white child, I would give it to the white child. The Black child is exposed to the Black Experience every day, whereas this book may be the only introduction to Black people that the white child has. Don't cheat the white child out of his experience, even if it is coming through a book.³³

The black experience in books is not a new one, But we shouldn't go overboard in pushing black books upon the children. The key, . . . is integration. They must realize these are not black or white experiences, but human experiences.³⁴

Stereotypes about black people have affected both black and white children. The white children have been misinformed about black people and have been given a false impression about them. For black children the literature has strengthened certain ideas about black people that are not true. When considering language it

³³Augusta Baker, "Children's Materials and the Black Experience," in "Workshop Proceedings The Media Program and the Utilization of Instructional Materials for Minorities 1973," Maryland State Department of Education Division of Library Development and Services School Media Services Section, pp. 1-7. (Mimeographed.)

³⁴"Storyteller: She Teaches How to Fill Books with Leaves of Understanding," St. Petersburg (Florida) Times, 21 April 1973, sec. D, p. 1.

is important to be critical of books which describe blacks in derisive terms, which use derogating names and epithets. These terms are either insulting or patronizing rather than humorous or affectionate. With illustrations an artist can make a black child attractive or make him a caricature. The black child who sees pictures which ridicule his race may be deeply hurt, feel defeated, or become resentful and rebellious.³⁵

No child wants brotherhood thrown at him, sticking out like porcupine quills. [Negro History Week and Brotherhood Week] should be celebrated every week of the year. . . . The story [about minorities] should be put together naturally. . . . You should not make up illustrations and then dab on the text.³⁶

All writers, black and white, who recognize the universality of childhood should be free to write about it without self-consciousness. . . .

. . . Will we deny children books about the past, books about the ugliness, the humiliation, the cruelty, and the destruction of human dignity that existed during slavery days and during the days when the Ku Klux Klan rode openly and often? I hope not--for all children black and white, deserve the truth.³⁷

Now we have books about black professionals, judges, soldiers, sailors, and cowboys. We have books about black conservatives as well as books about black militants--blacks, in fact, as they are found in every walk of life. These books help the black child discover his own identity. Authentic situations and realistic characterization contribute to the universality of experience. . . .

We have now reached the point where most aspects of the human experience in the black community can be portrayed in children's books without self-consciousness. The whole range of black life is shown in [The

³⁵"Author Cites Prejudice in Old Children's Books," p. 14.

³⁶"After Huckleberry Finn . . .," New York Herald Tribune, 5 February 1965, p. 23.

³⁷Baker, "The Changing Image of the Black in Children's Literature," pp. 86-88.

Black Experience in Children's Books] representing every class and condition of society, a variety of experiences and all periods of history. Some of the characters are good, some are bad, some brave, some fearful. Together they portray the complexities of life for black people. Any discussion on the relationship between blacks and whites is not without limitations in perspective, depending on the origin of the commentary or the reaction to the whole racial question. Blacks and whites have each, from their own vantage point, made a contribution to the "Black Experience" in the past and in the present and they will both contribute in the future. Work of an author or artist, black or white, has been included and recognized wherever it has demonstrated a sensitivity to the black man's striving to fulfill the American dream or his attempt to maintain his identity, with dignity, in the total human community. Any attempt to assess the present should of necessity provide adequate perspective for viewing the past. Children's books that, at the time of their publication, marked a breakthrough in literature for the young on the role of the black in our history, either social or political, have been annotated to show the scope of attitudes, changes, and progress in race relations through the years.³⁸

1974-1983

There comes a time in ones working career when their thoughts turn to the idea of what retirement might offer. Mrs. Baker could spend that extra time in her garden, or she might take that trip to the Southwest to collect more turquoise, or she might add another owl to her collection already numbering in the hundreds, or take the time to visit South Carolina and her grandchildren, or go rummaging around in the clothes outlet shops, or do all those things plus

³⁸Baker, "The Black Experience in Children's Books," p. 145.

give workshops, teach storytelling, and still go all over the country talking to children, college students, teachers, parents, and librarians. Whatever her choice Augusta Baker decided to retire in March 1974.

The news of Mrs. Baker's retirement was like a "shot heard 'round the world," and her service to the field of librarianship and to children was noted by various writers.

Lillian N. Gerhardt, editor of School Library Journal, wrote the following:

There are retirements and there are retirements--very few clearly demarcate an era. But so it has always been with the heads of New York Public Library's (NYPL) Office of Work with Children, from the time of Ann Carroll Moore's tenure through to that of Mrs. Augusta Baker. . . . AB retired on March 1 after 37 years of essential and influential library service to children.

A most distinguished and dedicated career that also included pioneer union activity at NYPL in the days when unionism was generally and meanly equated with unprofessionalism, fighting for civil rights long before it became a popular cause,

AB was guest lecturer on an international scale and further represented her profession by speaking out in local, state, and national library associations up to and including ALA's Executive Board--always about the concerns of all library service, never bypassing the chance to relate these concerns to library services to children.

A storyteller par excellence, a notable anthologist, and the instigator/coordinator of many prestigious selective reading lists for children, AB's foresight and energy have been not only at the service of NYPL, but freely granted to librarians, students, and children's book publishers. AB once described herself as a practical idealist and defined that term as the recognition that worthwhile goals are only achieved through hard work. She retires with the highest regard of her profession having achieved the chief reward of the practical idealist--her contributions to library service and especially to library work with children will endure.

Her library career and her retirement career will continue to inspire the admiration, respect, and gratitude of all librarians. . . .³⁹

Children's Library Consultant for New York State, Anne IZARD, presented her tribute in the form of a letter, with various others contributing to the letter.

Dear Augusta,

The news is out. Reading the release and seeing in black and white the outline of all you have done on the local, national, and international scene, I could not help but think of all the informal information that was missing, and I wondered who would fill in those gaps for the young librarians to come who have not known and worked with you. My association with you dates back to the days when we both worked under Anne Carroll Moore, on through our joint struggles with Harriet Brown to get visibility for good books on "Sesame Street" to my term as CSD president when you were on the ALA executive Board. So I tried my hand at writing a memoir but I was dissatisfied with the product. I decided it would be more interesting and more pointed if I gathered short statements from a few people who have shared different phases of your career to make a composite letter of testimonial to your achievement. Here goes! Do you recognize yourself

. . . as guest speaker at workshop in Maryland

Augusta Baker has a ready stock of stories to tell whenever the opportunity presents itself. Be it adults or children her stories provide for more intimate contact and rapport with her audience. Her enjoyment and knowledge of children and adults enable her to convey her enthusiasm and appreciation for a story. All of her own life experiences enrich her interpretation of the story.--Rosa Presberry, specialist in Special Programs, Division of Library Development and Services, Maryland State Department of Education.

. . . as international representative in Australia, 1973

Augusta Baker distinguished the seventeenth biennial conference of the Library Association of Australia with

³⁹Lillian N. Gerhardt, "Augusta Baker," School Library Journal 20 (March 1974):75-77.

her presence and was scheduled to address the last session in the great hall of the University of Western Australia. In her slow drawl she captured the attention of everyone present. . . . In the speech pungent with wit and crackling with common sense she pithily put forth her views on public library service and the role of the librarian. Her ideals rang forth clear and true stirring sparks in the thousand minds and hearts. With positive and dynamic statements Augusta Baker demolished the concept of the library as an institution existing for the privileged and literate elite and the picture of librarianship as a cozy career for introverts.-- Christobel Mattingley, children's author and reference librarian. Quoted in Children's Libraries Newsletter published by Library Association of Australia.

. . . as administrator

In 1951 when I became Chief of the Circulation Department of the New York Public Library, one of the first and most impressive children's librarians whom I met was Mrs. Augusta Baker, who had pioneered in children's services at the Countee Cullen Branch Library in Harlem. She was so impressive, so gifted and so humane in her approach to the library needs of children that it was a pleasure to participate in her promotion in 1953 as Assistant Coordinator of Children's Services and in 1961 as Coordinator of Children's Services. Any administrator is, by definition, suspect as to his interests in the support of children's library services. Augusta Baker made my life easy by her very presence which insured the best possible treatment for children's library activities in the New York Public Library. She is a close personal friend, a fellow gardener, a dedicated librarian and a memorable human being.--John Mackenzie Cory, director of the New York Public Library.

. . . as boss

I first met Augusta Baker when I was a student at Rutgers. She had come to talk about storytelling and to criticize our own feeble attempts at the art. Listening to her tell stories was sheer delight. We knew we were in the presence of a master story-teller. Yet her comments about our storytelling were so gracious she left us more inspired than awed. After graduation, and refusing a job offer from the New York Public Library, I proceeded with the native confidence of youth to ask Augusta to help me with my staff in-service training program and she complied. This magnanimity of spirit

was to show itself again and again in our professional association which has extended over a period of eighteen years. Her dedication to library service to children is unstinting. This super-star willingly shared the humblest tasks with her staff. She was a strong administrator and encouraged professional development by assigning responsibility and giving commensurate freedom to carry it out. It was a rare privilege to work for this serene lady whose genuine charm never fades.--Ellin Greene, coadjutant faculty, Graduate School of Library Services, Rutgers, the State University; formerly assistant coordinator of Children's Services, New York Public Library.

. . . as teacher

To say that the training of storytellers at Columbia University School of Library Service since 1955 is the story of Augusta Baker's career as a faculty member of the school, while true, is to tell only a part of her important contribution to the education of librarians here. Mrs. Baker joined the school as a visiting lecturer in the summer session of 1955 and has held an appointment to the faculty since that summer. While continuing to teach Oral Narration once or twice a year, since 1961 she has been a member of a team with Frances Henne, teaching the course Objectives in Services of Library Work with Children and Young Adults. Bringing to her courses her knowledge of the changing demands of children in libraries, the high standards she maintains in all her work, her creativity, warmth, perception, and understanding, Mrs. Baker has made a contribution of great value to the education of all librarians working with children and young adults. We, at Columbia, are grateful that her retirement does not apply to the School of Library Service and that she will be teaching for many more years.--Richard Darling, director, School of Library Service, Columbia University.

And I must add a word for the children's consultants of New York State. How much we shall miss you at our regular meetings of the group in the Greater Metropolitan Area! Your calm voice has so often stilled our frustrations and helped us plan more effective action. Your good humor has led us into bubbling laughter at the ridiculous situation. But Dick Darling is right. We must be grateful your career as teacher and lecturer is continuing and be reassured that wherever you go you will carry our message. You have proven that a great children's librarian with high standards and clear

vision will be heard and listened to as a great administrator.

Thank you, Augusta.
Sincerely, Anne Izard.⁴⁰

The librarians at Fisk University Library contributed the following tribute:

Augusta Baker the grande dame of children's services in the New York Public Library, who wove stories of make-believe into believe, retired on March 1st after 37 years of distinguished devotion to the love of children and books. The career of Augusta Baker as a librarian, author, critic, bibliographer, and above all storyteller was a very illustrious one that gave a special interpretation to children's librarianship. As the first black head of Children's services of the New York Public Library this in itself was a unique distinction in the annals of black librarianship. For the children of her race she founded the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection of books about black life for them to seek and have knowledge of their identity and respect for their heritage. To the children of all races, colors, and creeds her legacy to them was her ability to mirror universality in the imaginative world of books.⁴¹

The retirement party given by the NYPL children's librarians to honor Mrs. Baker was an evening filled with sadness, as well as much laughter over the many memories they shared. Those that know Augusta Baker know that she has a "thing" about owls. She has collected them for a number of years and her house "runneth over." Thus one more

⁴⁰Anne Izard, "Augusta Baker, Coordinator of Children's Services of the New York Public Library, Retired on March 1, 1974," Top of the News 30 (June 1974):352-355.

⁴¹Fisk University Library, Nashville, Tenn., "Augusta Baker Retires," Black Caucus Newsletter 2 (May 1974):1.

owl would be a fitting farewell gift. A group of the children's librarians spent hours making a papier-maché owl that was taller than Augusta herself. In order to keep the owl a surprise, it was made at the apartment of one of the librarians, and the night of the party was transported via the subway to the gathering. Those that travel NYC's subways are not generally distracted by unusual sights, but the over five-foot owl did cause some second looks. The owl and more than two hundred friends, co-workers, publishers, editors, and librarians attended the farewell party.

Mrs. Baker was once again taken by surprise when the Children's Book Council honored her. Augusta had gone to a regularly scheduled meeting, expecting to take care of business as usual. The Council presented her with a Festschriften made up of illustrations and words of tribute from authors and illustrators of children's books. Each page of the over-sized volume was done by an individual author or illustrator, who thanked Augusta for being Augusta. One of the contributors to the Festschriften, Jose Aruego, had earlier in the year dedicated one of his books to Augusta--"For Augusta Baker, who likes owls." The book was Owliver by Robert Kraus, with pictures by José Aruego and Ariane Dewey (NY: Windmill Books and E. P. Dutton, 1974).

1974 was turning into a year of surprises and more were still in the making for Mrs. Baker. In April 1974

Richard W. Couper, President of the NYPL wrote a letter to Mr. Robert B. Iadeluca, Director of the Alumni Office for the State University of New York at Albany. The letter is as follows:

I have found a most unusual press recently and I do apologize for some delinquency in getting to you a comment or two about Augusta Baker.

Let me first off say that I am still a short timer here and there are others in this library, especially John Cory the Director, who have known Augusta Baker for a considerably longer period. One needs to know her scarcely at all to have the most enormous kind of enthusiasm for her as a person and as a professional librarian. She has been among the most distinguished members of our staff for a considerable period of time.

Let me expand on the matter of Gussie as a person. There is no warmer, more delightful person simply to be around, no matter what the subject, no matter what others are present. She is engaging, perceptive, literate, thoughtful, and with all, has a good sense of humor. Her professional competence at least matches her personality, for she has been and is a distinguished author. No one can compare with her as a storyteller. She has been sought out nation wide as a speaker, consultant, and teacher.

With all the attention Gussie Baker had and has had on a state and national basis she was in my book first and foremost a great staff person. She was always supportive of the Director of the Branch Libraries, terribly perceptive in comments which would be helpful to whatever person enjoyed the position of Director, and she made these comments in a way which would be supportive and helpful. With almost three thousand people on our rolls it is hard to say that any one person is more important than any other person but, I have the feeling in my three years at it there's no single person we shall all miss more on our staff than Augusta Baker.

If this is not the kind of comment which will be helpful to you please let me know, I can easily get others to join in. . . .⁴²

⁴²Richard W. Couper to Robert B. Iadeluca, April 1974, Personal Files of Augusta Baker, Columbia, South Carolina.

Mr. Ideluca had requested comments about Augusta in order to use them in his presentation. Augusta was to be one of four to be honored as Distinguished Alumni at Albany. The other three were: Donald P. Ely class of 1951, Kathryn Merchant Fitzgerald class of 1922, and Rose Handler Tischler class of 1930. The Alumni honors those members who have distinguished themselves professionally, or in community service, or in contribution to the work of the Alumni Association and of the University.

Mrs. Baker was unable to attend the dinner honoring the recipients because of a previous commitment to C. W. Post School of Library Science. Mrs. Baker was to conduct an all day storytelling workshop and later speak at a banquet. In a letter to the Alumni Association Mrs. Baker recalled her time at Albany.

It is a great honor to be so designated. State University of New York at Albany--Albany State Teachers College, in my day--played a great part in my professional life, for it prepared me to make whatever contributions I have made to librarianship for children. Dr. Harold Thompson and Dr. Hastings created an excitement about English Literature and American Folklore which sparked my interest. Martha Pritchard and Madeline Gilmore introduced me to librarianship, when they realized that I liked children and books but not the teaching profession. The personal interest of these teachers started me on a career which I have always loved.⁴³

⁴³Augusta Baker to Lloyd Kelly, 13 May 1974, Personal Files of Augusta Baker, Columbia, South Carolina.

Mrs. Baker asked Dr. E. J. Josey, librarian and an Albany Alumni, to be present at the dinner and accept the honor in her name. The following is a portion of his acceptance speech.

As we pay homage to Augusta Baker we need to be cognizant that hundreds of librarians all across the country think of her with pride and joy as their intellectual mentor and recognize their immeasurable indebtedness to her tutelage. As Eugene McCarthy, of New Hampshire in 1968, said, "A cause needs a person to personify it." Augusta Baker is the very personification of a librarians librarian. The Alumni Association of the State of New York at Albany in honoring Augusta Baker is honoring itself in bestowing upon her its most coveted award.⁴⁴

On the evening of June 9, 1974 the Harold Jackman Memorial Committee honored Augusta at a testimonial dinner held in NYC. The late Harold Jackman was the founder of the Countee Cullen Collection of Black Memorabilia at Atlanta University, Georgia. The Collection was founded for the purpose of preserving memorabilia relating to cultural activities of people of color.

Once again ALA was recognizing Augusta Baker. In 1974 Augusta received the ALA Clarence Day Award. The American Publishers Institute donated a one thousand dollar award to a librarian or other individual for outstanding work in encouraging a love of books and reading. The Award was

⁴⁴E. J. Josey to the Alumni Association of the State of New York at Albany, May 1974, Personal Files of Augusta Baker, Columbia, South Carolina.

established in 1959, but was discontinued in 1976. Some of the past recipients were Lillian H. Smith, Frances Clarke Sayers, and Clifton Fadiman.

Mrs. Baker was never too busy to speak on behalf of the black experience. Her opportunity came when she wrote the introduction to a book of poetry selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins entitled On Our Way: Poems of Pride and Love, with photographs by David Parks (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974). Mrs. Baker's introduction speaks to poetry and the black experience, and is as follows:

Historically the most popular literary form among black Americans has been poetry. The black poet expresses his frustration, anger, love, and hope through his poetry and in so doing he speaks for all his people. The young person who reads this poetry feels these intense emotions and responds to them accordingly. He relives the black experience and relates to it. The 1960's saw an upsurge of poetry that reflected the black man's disillusionment, bitterness, anger and growing militancy. Pent-up emotions spilled forth and the black poet spoke directly to black folk about black folk. Race pride was in its ascendancy and black was beautiful. This was not an intellectual approach but rather it was an emotional one coming from the poet's soul. Black poets were putting it all together and putting it all down. Some people were shocked with the out-spoken language but the poets knew that they must speak in the language of the day if they wished to relate to the people.

True poetry deals not alone with beauty and goodness, and the poetic vocabulary is not always refined and polite. Anger and protest were at their peak in the 60's, blacks were on their way. Poetry of the 1970's seems to say, "We're not going to make it one day, we already have, we're here." . . . We are black, we are proud and we are on our way, we are here and here we will remain. Today's youth black and white need to be reminded of this. The poems in this collection will not only remind young people of the past but more

importantly they will point them to the future.

There is power to do this in these poems. Today's fine young poets are expressing their new excitement with directness, intelligence, poetic sense, and honesty. The poems in this collection have all of these qualities and so they speak directly to children and young people. It is good to have a collection presented to young readers which conveys this excitement and relevance. One hopes that teachers, librarians, parents will share these poems with our children so that new poets and writers will be born.⁴⁵

Mrs. Baker traveled to San Francisco in 1975 to attend the annual ALA Conference, and on June 29th at the first General Session ALA President Edward G. Holley presented Augusta and three other distinguished Americans with ALA's highest award--an honorary membership. Those receiving memberships along with Mrs. Baker were Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, United States Congressman Carl D. Perkins, and the first president of the Freedom to Read Foundation, Alex P. Allain.

Mrs. Baker's citation read in part,

Storyteller "par excellence," children's librarian and true representative of the library profession, you have been aware of the book needs of children from your earliest moments in the profession. . . .

As a consultant and lecturer to librarians and publishers around the world, you have served as a leader at national and international levels, setting standards for service and standards for literary value.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Lee Bennett Hopkins, On Our Way: Poems of Pride and Love, photographs by David Parks, with an introduction by Augusta Baker (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), p. 1-2.

⁴⁶"Augusta Baker Honored by ALA," School Library Journal 22 (September 1975):16.

Another part of the citation read,

. . . for your common sense in working with children and fellow librarians, wit and humor which relieved many a tense situation in professional meetings and delighted listeners in many a conference, and ability to guide diverse groups of people to common goals and understandings, librarians everywhere are grateful.⁴⁷

In NYC's Central Park there is an outdoor storytelling center with a statue of Hans Christian Andersen. This area literally represents "hands across the sea." Baroness Dahlrup of Denmark and George Jensen of NYC headed a committee, of which Augusta was a member, to raise money to establish this outdoor center. To make it even more meaningful the money (pennies for the most part) came from the school children in NYC and Denmark. The first storyteller for the dedication was Eva Le Gallienne. Since its dedication many summer storytelling programs have been presented in front of the seated Andersen.

His statue stands in Central Park and there his fairy tales are read aloud to children. Do they know that he was Danish, and does it matter? They may think him an American, for the story of his life follows so closely the American dream. He called his fairy tales his "gift to the world"; and the children have come to hear the song of the nightingale, a treasure which belongs to all of us, be we fishermen or emperors.⁴⁸

⁴⁷"ALA Honors Augusta Baker," Top of the News 32 (November 1975):9.

⁴⁸Erik Haugaard, "What a Pity That America Lies So Far From Here," Danish Journal (Special Issue 1975):31.

In a special issue of the Danish Journal, commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen's death on August 4, 1875, there is a picture of Mrs. Baker telling a story to a group of children and they are seated in front of Andersen's statue. What better way to illustrate Andersen's influence on fairy tales and storytelling.

Retirement for Augusta only meant she no longer worked at NYPL, for she was still teaching classes at Columbia University and going to Las Vegas to the University of Nevada every summer to conduct a week-long workshop. In 1975 she added another institution of higher learning to her itinerary--Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas.

In order to place Mrs. Baker in relationship to Texas Woman's University, it is necessary to go back to the summer of 1962 and a storytelling class at Syracuse University. Mrs. Baker had a student in her class who was to remember that classroom experience for over ten years, and when that student, Hazel Furman, became an assistant professor at Texas Woman's University School of Library Science, Miss Furman arranged for Mrs. Baker to teach storytelling during the summer of 1975. Mrs. Baker's "one-time only" visit has turned into a nine-year tradition for Texas Woman's University.

Mrs. Baker's influence was also felt by a student in

that first class she taught in Denton; an influence that has led the writer of this dissertation to choose Mrs. Baker as the subject of this thesis.

Public libraries that have "Friends" groups have benefited from the extra services, materials, and gifts that otherwise would not have been possible through their local budgetary systems. NYPL is no exception, but in 1976 they achieved a first when a Friends of Children's Services was organized. Remy Charlit, a children's author/illustrator, called together persons in the publishing field, other children's authors and illustrators, and librarians to form such an organization. Mrs. Baker became the chairman and under her leadership the organization attracted influential community leaders to join and lend their support. An annual fund raising auction is held where items such as first editions of children's books, rare children's books, illustrators original sketches and drawings, galley proofs, original manuscripts, and other children's book publishing memorabilia are offered on the auction block. The auction has become a prestigious and gala event that has raised much needed funds in the budget-cutting years of the late seventies and early eighties.

In 1976 Mrs. Baker made her first visit to Europe where she spoke at the International Board on Books for Young People, which met in Greece. She was representing the

Children's Book Council, Inc. at the conference. This trip afforded Augusta the opportunity to do some sightseeing and not have to rush back to her work--retirement does have its merits.

In 1977 Augusta Baker and Ellin Greene co-authored a book--Storytelling: Art and Technique (NY: R. R. Bowker, 1977). In the preface to their book they stated their reasons for presenting their manual as a further addition to the storytelling literature.

It has become apparent to us at workshops and in-service courses across the country that storytellers, both novice and experienced, are facing situations today that did not exist prior to television and modern technology. It seemed to us that, in response to these new situations, an inexpensive, updated, practical manual was needed by students of storytelling in library schools, colleges, and other educational institutions; by persons taking in-service courses; by experienced storytellers who wanted a "refresher course." This book was designed to fill these needs. It was written primarily for librarians serving children in public and school libraries, but teachers, recreation workers, and other adults interested in the art of storytelling also will find it helpful.

Our emphasis throughout is on storytelling as an oral art. We believe that storytelling as a listening/language experience should not be lost. Our eye-minded society has forgotten the power of the spoken word and emphasized the visual, reducing written language to everyday speech, but in storytelling the full range of language is possible.⁴⁹

That same year Mrs. Baker was the keynote speaker at the Storytelling Conference held at the National College of

⁴⁹Augusta Baker and Ellin Greene, Storytelling: Art and Technique (NY: R. R. Bowker, 1977), p. xi.

Education in Evanston, Illinois. She spoke on "Sharing Literature with Children." Mrs. Baker also conducted a workshop on "Folktales for Older Children: Philosophy, Selection, Preparation and Telling," and took part in a storytelling festival. She joined Betty Weeks and Ellin Greene in telling stories to the conference attendees.

Sunday, June 4, 1978 was a momentous time in the life of Augusta Baker. On this day the one hundred and eighth Commencement of St. John's University in Queens, New York was held. The University conferred upon Mrs. Baker the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters. Joining Mrs. Baker that day were Mr. Paul Anka, songwriter and performer, who received his honorary degree of Doctor of Music; and Justice Milton Mollen, who received a honorary Doctor of Laws. The citation honoring Mrs. Baker appeared in the commencement program, and is quoted in its entirety:

Augusta Baker is renowned throughout the United States and abroad as a skilled specialist in storytelling. For 35 years she has been employed by the New York Public Library, where initially she served as Children's librarian at the Countee Cullen Regional Branch. In 1953 she became the Assistant Coordinator of Children's Services and held this post for eight years. Subsequently for 13 years as Coordinator, she was the chief administrator of children's services for the Library's 82 branches and six bookmobiles in Manhattan, The Bronx, and Staten Island where under her leadership, records and cassettes were made available in every children's room. She made intensified efforts to expand the annual children's bibliography, which now features, in addition to books, special juvenile materials. Earlier in life, our honoree had received both her B.A. and B.S. in Library Science from the State University

of New York, Albany. Since 1956 Mrs. Baker has taught storytelling at Columbia University's School of Library Science and given frequent lectures at Rutgers and Syracuse Universities, Texas Women's [sic] University, as well as the Universities of Southern Nevada and Southern Florida. Professionally prominent in the American Library Association, she has served at varied times on the Executive Board and as President of the Children's Services Division. Aside from contributing to numerous professional journals, Mrs. Baker is the author of The Black Experience in Books for Children and two collections of folk tales, The Talking Tree and The Golden Lynx. Her editorial credits include Young Years: Anthology of Children's Literature, Once Upon a Time, and Recordings for Children. Her consultant services have been called on internationally from Trinidad in 1953, where she helped organize library work for children, to Australia in 1973, where she lectured for the Australian Library Association. Former active TV consultant for N.B.C.'s children programming, she contributed her knowledge to the successful Sesame Street series. Her numerous honors include the first Dutton-Macrae Award; Parent's Magazine Medal; ALA Grolier Award; and the Constance Lindsay Skinner Award, presented by the Women's National Book Association. She has also participated in the White House Conference on Children. Married 34 years to Gordon Alexander, they have a son and two grandchildren. With admiration and pride, St. John's University confers upon this talented and gracious lady, Augusta Baker, honoris causa, the degree of Doctor of Letters.⁵⁰

The commencement exercise was a dignified occasion, but was not without humor. Justice Mollen was tall in stature and in his regalia appeared even taller. During the processional line-up it worked out that Augusta and Paul Anka were paired. During the walk-down Mr. Anka leaned over to Augusta and professed his previous anxiety that he was

⁵⁰St. John's University, Queens, New York, "One Hundred and Eighth Commencement," Program, 4 June 1978.

going to have to march in with Justice Mollen and was relieved that the two "shorties" were together. He further added, "Baby, we were made for each other."⁵¹

NYC had been home to Augusta for more than forty-seven years and in 1979 she and Gordon were in the process of making a decision whether to leave their home and move to Columbia, South Carolina. The Alexanders were beginning to tire of the New York winters, the price of heating fuel was reaching astronomical figures, and inflation was eating into retirement income. Their son Buddy, a vice-president of a bank branch, and daughter-in-law Vivian, a school teacher, lived in Columbia and were constantly emphasizing the advantages of the weather and economic conditions of the warmer South. The grandchildren, Pam and Chris, were growing up and wanted their grandparents nearby to share their childhood pleasures. Further inducement for the move came because Gordon and Augusta had made many new friends during the years they had visited their son and his family. Professional interests were also considered when Augusta was approached by Dean William Summers of the University of South Carolina School of Librarianship and Information Science to accept a position as Storyteller-in-Residence.

⁵¹Interview with Augusta Baker, Denton, Texas, 6 August 1978.

The decision was not an easy one to make. The Alexanders would be leaving many friends and neighbors, Augusta would be leaving her lovely flowers and giving up many of the cultural and professional aspects of living in the New York area. She would not be able to travel into Manhattan whenever a new play was in town, attend the new season of concerts for the New York Symphony, continue to serve on the UNICF committee, have luncheon dates with her various friends in publishing, attend the Children's Book Council meetings, or help set-up the Council's next auction of children's literature memorabilia. Then there was the thirty-three years of accumulated household articles and personal effects to go through and decide which items to keep or discard.

It was Buddy Baker who finally convinced the pair that they should leave the North--he found the Alexanders a house just a block and a half from his own home that was highly suitable for their needs. No more excuses could be used, the Alexanders sold their home in St. Albans and moved to Columbia in January 1980.

Augusta had a personal collection of children's books on the black experience that was far too large to be housed in the new home in South Carolina. She knew that NYPL children's rooms already contained copies of the same material and would not need her titles. Therefore, with

Queens being her home for so many years, she donated her books to the Queens Public Library. The Library did not have a collection on black history and culture and Mrs. Baker's books were the beginning of the Augusta Baker Collection in that library system.

In 1981 Augusta Baker received the Regina Medal, and in an article on the Award Rollock wrote, "A legend in her own time, Augusta Baker certainly exemplifies the ideals for which the Regina Medal was established."⁵² The Regina Medal, given by the Catholic Library Association, was established in 1959, and honors an individual who has had a continuing and distinguished dedication to children's literature. The Association wanted to honor those persons who exemplified the words of Walter de la Mare, and his words appear on every citation awarded, ". . . Only the rarest kind of best in anything can be good enough for the young. . . ." Anyone, without restriction of religion or origin of birth, and whose life's work has been in the field of juvenile literature, is eligible for the Medal. Some of those receiving the Award in the past were Anne Carroll Moore, Padraic Colum, May Hill Arbuthnot, Ruth Sawyer Durand, Frances Clarke Sayers, and Morton Schindel.

⁵²Rollock, "Augusta Baker: Storyteller and Librarian," p. 337.

It was also in 1981 that Mrs. Baker had the opportunity to write a new introduction to a book long out-of-print, and one that had been fondly remembered by Augusta. The book was Margery Williams Bianco's A Street of Little Shops (Gregg Press, 1981).

In 1982 Augusta took part in the Second Charlemae Hill Rollins Colloquium held at the School of Library Science, North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina. Mrs. Baker held a workshop on "African Folklore in Caribbean Materials," and was part of a Storytelling Festival along with Ashley Bryan and Spencer Shaw.

Her [Augusta Baker's] two most admired mentors were Arthur Schomburg and Charlemae Rollins, Augusta Baker continues to provide the kind of inspiration to others she claims these two librarians gave her.⁵³

Mrs. Rollins had been a children's librarian in the Chicago Public Library for over thirty years, an author of many books and articles, and a teacher of children's literature.

During August 1982 Augusta was asked to speak at the Fifteenth Annual Loughborough International Seminar on Children's Literature sponsored by the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Tennessee at Knoxville. Her topic for the Seminar was "The Black Experience in Children's Non-fiction: Past, Present and Future."

On April 16, 1983 in NYC Mrs. Baker was honored at the

⁵³Ibid., p. 337.

opening of the Schomburg Children's Collection at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the NYPL. The Children's Collection will preserve and document the children's books about the black experience. The nucleus of the collection contains books that have been a part of the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection. As the books go off the Memorial list, they will be retained in the children's research collection. Current material, that meet the criteria established by Mrs. Baker, will remain in the Memorial collection.

As a research library, the Schomburg Center cannot limit itself to acquiring books solely with positive black images. A broad spectrum of books is necessary in order to adequately meet the demands of researchers. This means that the center of current controversy, Jake and Honeybunch Go to Heaven, as well as the classic Little Black Sambo are included in the Collection. Schomburg Center will selectively collect children's books from Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and other foreign lands that publish materials relative to black children. Selected textbooks designed specifically for black children and audiovisual materials will also be part of the Collection.

The Schomburg Center will strive to have a comprehensive children's collection, available for all persons interested in examining the history of the black experience, both current and retrospective, as it is reflected in children's literature.⁵⁴

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture is one of the most important and extensive repositories in the world

⁵⁴Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations, "The Schomburg Children's Collection" Program, New York City, 16 April 1983.

for the documentation of the history of peoples of African descent.

While in NYC for the Schomburg ceremony Mrs. Baker was asked to tell stories in the Central Children's Room located in NYPL's Donnell Center. It was a surprised and moved Mrs. Baker when she beheld the sight before her. There were the children, but standing in the background were more than two hundred friends from publishing, other libraries, and persons from the community. Mrs. Baker had returned "home" and they wanted to hear her tell one more story.

Mrs. Baker was and is a professionally involved person. Her agenda contains speaking engagements in all parts of the United States, and she continues to teach in Texas and Nevada during the summer months. Augusta Baker's position as Storyteller-in-Residence at the University of South Carolina takes her into the school districts and libraries of the State as a consultant, as well as conducting workshops. She is also actively involved in educational television programming for the State. Yet, she still finds time to be with her family, to tend to her flowers, and take vacation trips with her friends in search of an owl for her collection, to buy a new turquoise bracelet or ring, to go discount clothes buying, and to sightsee in Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee, North Carolina, and various other places.

"Throughout her [Mrs. Baker] career, she has retained an intense sense of commitment to presenting the best for children--tinged with a measure of mirth and humor."⁵⁵

There is no question that AB has, in retirement, gone from distinguished librarian, distinguished storyteller, distinguished bibliographer, distinguished teacher, and distinguished administrator of children's services at New York Public Library to Ranking Library Goddess. . . .

The awed reactions AB's name elicits are justified by her career, but the fact is that nothing much goes forward in an atmosphere of awe and AB still has much she intends to accomplish. I hope this once-over-lightly helps those who have yet to meet and hear AB on her busy lecture and teaching circuit to get past the paralysis that so often surrounds those who become legends in their own lifetime so that they will not hesitate to engage in direct discussion with one of the rare commonsensical, mischievous, Ranking Library Goddesses in our Pantheon--still capable of rocking both her pedestal and library service forward.⁵⁶

The previous pages have only touched briefly on the life of Augusta Baker, and in no way presented an in-depth biographical study. The highlights of Mrs. Baker's life were presented in order for the reader to have a clearer picture of Augusta Baker and pave the way for the following chapters in which storytelling style and techniques will be discussed.

⁵⁵Rollock, "Augusta Baker: Storyteller and Librarian," p. 337.

⁵⁶Gerhardt, "AB Biographers, Please Note," no paging.

CHAPTER IV

NURTURING THE SPIRIT-SELF

. . . Many a story stays alive precisely because there was or is a gifted individual telling it frequently and well. Those stories no longer told with artistry and style die out for lack of interest on the part of listeners.¹

In the two preceding chapters there was an attempt to introduce those storytelling personages who may have provided the inspiration, the guidance, and formed the foundation from which numerous storytellers have based their own styles and techniques. There was not an attempt to introduce all the storytellers of note, such as Sara Cone Bryant, Anne Pellowski, Charlemae Rollins, Frances Clarke Sayers, Spencer Shaw, Ruth Tooze, Ella Young, et al, but the purpose was to limit the presentation to those who played some role in the NYPL style of storytelling and may have brought some bearing on Mrs. Baker's own style. A point of information may be called for by those who are wondering why Sayers was not included in the portion devoted to NYPL storytellers in chapter two. It was because she held the position as Coordinator of Children's Work and was never a Supervisor of Storytelling at NYPL.

¹Anne Pellowski, The World of Storytelling (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1977), p. xv.

Chapter five will be devoted to Mrs. Baker's own style of storytelling and her philosophy on the subject of storytelling. There will be an attempt to ascertain if there is a correlation between a storyteller's personality or style and the types of stories that the teller selects for telling. These same discussions will be utilized in writing the script and will be the nucleus for the video presentation.

In order to discuss Mrs. Baker's style and philosophy a background discussion on the reasons for telling stories and the various techniques needed for telling stories will be considered.

Every art has its technique. The art of storytelling, intensely personal and subjective as it is, yet comes under the law sufficiently not to be a matter of sheer knack. It has its technique.²

There is no shortage of ideas in the storytelling literature on techniques and for that reason there will be no attempt to cover the entire writings on the subject, but only to aid as an introduction to the central theme of chapter five.

In their book Storytelling: Art and Technique, Augusta Baker and Ellin Greene have presented various reasons why stories should be told.

Storytelling brings to the listeners heightened awareness--a sense of wonder, of mystery, of reverence for life. This nurturing of the spirit-self comes first.

²Sara Cone Bryant, How to Tell Stories to Children (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924; reprint ed., Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1973), p. 89.

It is the primary purpose of storytelling, and all other uses and effects are secondary.

Storytelling is a sharing experience. When we tell, we show our willingness to be vulnerable, to expose our deepest feelings, our values. That kind of nakedness that says you care about what you're relating invites children to listen with open minds and hearts. Enjoying a story together creates a common experience. Storytelling, properly done, produces a relaxed, restful feeling. It establishes a happy relationship between teller and listener, drawing people closer to one another, adult to child, child to child. This rapport carries over into other areas as well, for children tend to have confidence in the person who tells stories well.³

They go on to discuss such details as: (1) sound and rhythm of words can bring delight to the listener; (2) storytelling can lead the child to worthwhile books; (3) storytelling helps in developing good listening habits; (4) storytelling can introduce various language patterns and extend the vocabulary; (5) storytelling can foster and help develop a creative imagination; (6) storytelling provides an insight into human behavior; and (7)

Storytelling is a way of keeping alive the cultural heritage of a people. . . .

Folklore is living proof of the kinship of human beings and the oneness of peoples. . . .

These are only a few of the . . . reasons for telling stories. The best reason of all, however, is the dramatic joy we bring to children and to ourselves.⁴

To further emphasize Baker's and Greene's ideas as presented

³Baker and Greene, Storytelling: Art and Technique, p. 17.

⁴Ibid., pp. 23-24.

in number seven, Harold Courlander has been quoted as saying,

. . . I see folkore and oral literature as a way towards understanding thoughts and values of non-Western peoples. . . . Archeologists can tell you what the people did, but the myths, tales, and legends tell you what the people thought.⁵

A study of storytelling literature reveals that there are many other writers who also have expressed their reasons for telling stories, as will be seen in the upcoming quotes, and as Baker and Greene have indicated, it appears to be one of sharing. When teller and listener come together, and when the story is well-told, there is an opening of a door and the two--teller and listener--have stepped through together.

From Stewart's article comes,

Storytelling . . . is a rare and intimate touching of people's minds and memories in a special way. . . . In storytelling the listener is very actively involved creating the images from the words. . . . In storytelling there's immediate interaction between the person telling the story and the audience.⁶

Ruth Hill shared these thoughts with her readers,

[The storyteller] . . . is the medium between children and literature, she can wave the magic wand that kindles imagination and creates visions. She must make her accounts to the future as well as the present, for

⁵Diane Wolkstein, "An Interview with Harold Courlander," School Library Journal 20 (May 1974):22.

⁶Barbara Home Stewart, "The Folktellers: Sheherazades in Denim," School Library Journal 25 (November 1978):19-20.

she is interpreting for the future the richness of the past.⁷

Ruth Tooze writes,

The storyteller is the medium through whom the story comes to life, the transmitter, the reflector, the catcher of the spark between man and man, God and man.⁸

In Hardendorff's article we read,

It has always been difficult to explain to non-storytellers . . . what transpires between the storyteller and the children. The intangibles, nonmeasurable in circulation statistics, can be felt by the storyteller watching the children as they begin to feel at home in the children's room. On the children's part, it is knowing that what they may be unable to express is understood. A proprietary air prevails when children know they are understood.⁹

Nesbitt believes that it is important to have,

. . . storytellers who know the power and charm of the spoken word; who know how to move the hearts and stir the imaginations of their listeners; who can transmit to their audiences experience which transcends ordinary existence, and thereby lift their hearers to moments of perception which can radically change the depth and extent of their thinking.¹⁰

Harold Courlander has said,

I think of the oral literature as true literature, and it deserves the best it can get. . . .
It's an oral art and everything depends on the

⁷Hill, "Story-Telling Around the World," p. 288.

⁸Ruth Tooze, Storytelling (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1959), p. 17.

⁹Hardendorff, "Storytelling and the Story Hour," p. 57.

¹⁰Nesbitt, "The Art of Storytelling," p. 443.

narrator.¹¹

Leland Jacobs the poet has written, "Storytelling is communication between a possessor of a tale and a listener who wants to be possessed by the tale and the telling."¹² Also included in his article was a poem about storytelling. Some of the words he used to describe what storytelling is were: "captivation, relaxation, refreshment, enrichment, involvement, kinship, electric circuit of the familiar, illumination of special times and happenings, a bridge to the unfamiliar, and a gallery of memorable pictures."¹³

Fenner wrote,

[Storytelling] is a most satisfying experience, since it gives pleasure to the teller and the listener alike. . . .

There is something about watching the faces of the listeners as a tale is told that makes telling more satisfying than reading the story. For one thing, the audience is included in the story.¹⁴

Rollins once wrote,

¹¹Diane Wolkstein, "An Interview with Harold Courlander," pp. 21-22.

¹²Leland B. Jacobs, "Story Telling, The Captor," in Creative Writing and Story Telling in Today's Schools, edited by Paul Witty, reprinted from Elementary English (March 1957):24.

¹³Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁴Phyllis Fenner, "Why Tell Stories?" in Creative Writing and Story Telling in Today's Schools, edited by Paul Witty, reprinted from Elementary English (March 1957):26-27.

. . . Story-telling is a living art which should not be confused with elocution or dramatics. It differs from reading to children or adults in that there is not the barrier of the book between the listener and the story-teller. It has been described as the "breathing of life into literature." Primarily, its function is to entertain and give joy. . . . It is one of the fundamental ways of transmitting ideas. It develops imagination and deepens the child's appreciation of beauty, not only in art and literature, but in all life around him.¹⁵

Sayers has written, "That quality of confiding intimacy is one of the greatest of the storyteller's gifts. It may prove the rarest gift of all."¹⁶

And Frances Clarke Sayers also shares her thoughts on the importance of one form of literature and its effect on the listener,

Folklore is a universal form, a great symbolic literature which represents the folk. . . . From the folk tale, one learns one's role in life; one learns the tragic dilemma of life, the battle between good and evil, between weak and strong. One learns that if he is kind, generous, and compassionate, he will win the Princess. The triumph is for all that is good in the human spirit.¹⁷

It is interesting to note that the reasons for telling stories have not changed that much from the early writings on the subject. For example, in 1913 Miss Gertrude E. Andrus,

¹⁵Rollins, "Story Telling--Its Value and Importance," pp. 33-34.

¹⁶Sayers, "From Me to You," p. 2011.

¹⁷Frances Clarke Sayers, "Walt Disney Accused," Horn Book 41 (December 1965):603.

superintendent of the children's department of the library in Seattle, Washington, had these reasons for library storytelling:

- 1) To give familiarity with good English.
- 2) To cultivate the power of sustained attention.
- 3) To establish friendly relation between the child and the story teller.
- 4) To cultivate a literary standard by which a child may judge other stories.
- 5) To develop a right sense of humor.
- 6) To cultivate the imagination.
- 7) To develop sympathy--an outcome of imagination.
- 8) To give a clear impression of moral truth.
- 9) To lead to books.¹⁸

How does the storyteller reach that time of sharing?

The literature on storytelling contains a myriad of writings on the topics of: (1) how to select the right story to tell; (2) how to prepare for the telling; and (3) how to conduct the presentation. In the following discussion there will be an attempt to present those ideas that appear to be repetitive, that is, those techniques that more than one writer has written about in books and articles. The discussion will present the techniques as explained in the book Storytelling: Art and Technique by Augusta Baker and Ellin Greene, and are then re-enforced from the writings of other selected authors.

Selection

"The power to choose involves knowledge of self,

¹⁸Gertrude E. Andrus, "Why to Tell Stories," Library Journal 38 (March 1913):169.

knowledge of storytelling literature, and knowledge of the group to whom one is telling."¹⁹

Pretzlow writes,

It helps a great deal for . . . storytellers to choose stories that appeal to themselves as well as to their intended audience. The importance of this lies in the fact that the storyteller transmits her emotions to her audience. It will become evident to her audience how the teller feels about the theme and characters by her tone, expressions and apparent mood while telling the tale.²⁰

The selecting of a story to tell will more than likely take more time than the actual learning of the story. The selection of material requires that the teller be familiar with all types of literature--folktales, fairy tales, myths, fantasy, fiction, nonfiction, poetry, et al. Time is the main factor when it comes to selection, as it will take a great deal of the teller's time to develop a repertoire, and one must be willing to devote that time if success as a storyteller is to be attained.

Ruth Sawyer wrote,

Unquestionably a large measure of the success of the storyteller depends on his selection of stories, his power to discriminate, his growing ability to evaluate. I think an instinct for selection goes with the art of storytelling. One may base one's choice of good stories on a fair proportion of appreciation, on familiarity

¹⁹Baker and Greene, Storytelling: Art and Technique, p. 25.

²⁰D. Z. Pretzlow, "Storytellers: Born or Trained," Virginia Librarian 17 (Fall 1970):14-15.

with a wide range and diversity of literature as well as on a building of the critical sense.²¹

Sylvia Ziskind writes,

. . . the range of your own background is singularly important. As a storyteller, you should cultivate an appreciation of literature in all its forms. . . . If you have been moved by profound poetry, great drama, or other forms of creative expression, you will bring a richer self to the story hour.²²

Jane B. Wilson has written,

The good storyteller is one who has spent years reading, participating in the arts, and knowingly or unknowingly, preparing to share literature with others.²³

Ruth Hill discusses the qualities of the storyteller and writes that,

. . . one of her strongest assets is her power to select the story that will appeal to her audience. A wise knowledge and a lively appreciation of the folktales from all countries and of the stories that come from the mind and imagination of creative writers is the most important part of a story-teller's equipment.²⁴

Nesbitt shares these thoughts with her readers,

[Storytelling] . . . is good only when it is told out of a depth of background, created on the part of the teller by literary knowledge, appreciation, and sympathy. Only so will she avoid mechanical repetition, and become a re-creator, causing a thing of truth and beauty to live again. . . . We should retain intact the response to

²¹Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, p. 151.

²²Sylvia Ziskind, Telling Stories to Children (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1976), p. 6.

²³Wilson, The Story Experience, p. 7.

²⁴Hill, "Story-Telling Around the World," p. 288.

that which is fine and good and true in thought, to the exquisite distinction between adequate expression and literary quality.²⁵

Hardendorff's article contains the following:

Storytelling necessarily demands a great deal of reading in order to find a story which fits the teller as well as to provide background and language, and in so doing, to cultivate and deepen the teller's appreciation of literary values. Storytelling . . . leads the storyteller into keener awareness of the infinite possibilities which lie in all works of literary merit. . . .

Storytelling requires of the storyteller interest and enthusiasm for the literature worthy of presentation. It demands preparation through careful study and hard work. . . . The developing of a storytelling ear--that ability to recognize even as one reads a particular story as one's own--does not come overnight. It is through much reading, through trial and error and repeated tellings of the story . . . , that the nuances are finally developed which create a living thing from the printed page. . . . Storytellers are developed as well as born with the gift.²⁶

A central theme appears to be paramount in the above quotes--the importance of the storyteller having an appreciation and a knowledge of the literature. It weaves in and out of what these writers are conveying. Baker and Greene stress knowledge; Sawyer uses appreciation, as does Ziskind and Hardendorff; and Hill and Nesbitt use both knowledge and appreciation. Thus, the storyteller will need to be well versed in all forms of literature in order to select the right story for the right audience. The teller will need to

²⁵Nesbitt, "Hold to that Which is Good," p. 11.

²⁶Hardendorff, "Storytelling and the Story Hour," pp. 58-59.

read and constantly search for the best.

This knowing whether or not a story is right for you and your listeners is attained through trial and error--through the experience of telling and listening. But it also implies an enjoyment of storytelling literature and a wide knowledge of its background. A folktale is more likely to feel "right" if the storyteller has a thorough knowledge of the literature and the characteristics, customs, and ideals of the people or country from which the story has come. A literary fairy tale, on the other hand, requires that the storyteller empathize with the author. It is this genuine appreciation on the part of the storyteller that brings an intangible, personal quality to the telling of the story.²⁷

To select a story to be told is not an easy matter. One does not go to the library shelves and pick out a collection, open the book, and choose the first tale. It takes hours of reading and trying to discover

. . . a story we like and want to share with others. When you find such a story, you'll feel its power stir deep within. You'll have the feeling that you've been in this territory before. It will speak of conditions, convictions, aspirations, and fears that you have known in your own life. . . . Somehow, the old fairy tales and folk tales embody in their depths an unexpected fidelity to real experience. The creations in them dance with life in front of our eyes.²⁸

Edwin writes in her article,

In the main, a good story should appeal to those emotions that are felt to be both true, and desirable in childhood: humor, love of adventure, desire for courage, compassion, a sense of good fellowship,

²⁷Baker and Greene, Storytelling; Art and Technique, p. 26.

²⁸Ross, Storyteller, p. 41.

joyfulness, and fresh untrammelled imagination.²⁹

Once again Nesbitt shares these thoughts with her readers,

A story to be tellable must be a product of the creative imagination, and therefore inevitably imbued with dramatic action, emotional power, and beauty of expression. If it is folk-literature, it has a freshness of wonder, a lovely wealth of symbolism, a keen sense of joy and tragedy, an awareness of realms beyond the physical, a constant expectation of imminent visions, which appeal to the childlike mind.³⁰

Knowing the literature allows the storyteller to recognize those other criteria used in selecting stories to tell and add to one's repertoire. Baker and Greene say, "A good story for telling is one that has something to say and that says it in the best possible way."³¹ The storyteller will need to analyze the story for theme, plot, style, characterization, appeal, appropriateness, and adherence to the original source. A wide variety of stories will be needed if the teller is to appeal to all age levels and to fulfill the needs of various occasions. There are stories that may be shared with a wide range of ages, and these stories will be needed in the teller's cache of stories.

²⁹Natalie Mayo Edwin, "Anyone Can Tell Stories," Wilson Library Bulletin 34 (May 1960):658.

³⁰Nesbitt, "Hold to that Which is Good," p. 12.

³¹Baker and Greene, Storytelling: Art and Technique, p. 27.

The teller will need to become keenly aware of the best versions or translations of the folktales, myths, epics, et al, chosen for telling. "The storyteller is someone who appreciates literature as a whole and knows good language, form, and substance."³²

Preparation

"Storytelling is an art and, like all arts, it requires training and experience."³³ It is also an individual art and each individual must determine what will be the best procedures to follow when preparing a story for telling. Baker and Greene write about two basic approaches--the visual and the auditory.

In the visual approach, the storyteller sees the story in a series of pictures, much like the frames of a film-strip. . . .

In the auditory approach, the storyteller is conscious of the sound of words and their arrangement.³⁴

Some storytellers find it helpful to stand in front of the mirror to practice; or tape-record the telling; or videotape the telling; or type the story; or use an outline; or make up cue cards. The choice of approach is again up to the individual.

A necessary ingredient of preparation is again time, just as it was with becoming knowledgeable in the literature. Take the time to make the story yours--become the

³²Ibid., p. 34. ³³Ibid., p. 40. ³⁴Ibid., pp. 40-41.

living part of the story.

Marie Shedlock wrote,

. . . I maintain that capacity for work, and even drudgery, is among the essentials of story-telling. Personally, I know of nothing more interesting than watching the story grow gradually from mere outline into a dramatic whole. It is the same pleasure, I imagine, which is felt over the gradual development of a beautiful design on a loom. I do not mean machine-made work, which has to be done under adverse conditions in a certain time and which is similar to thousands of other pieces of work; but that work upon which we can bestow unlimited time and concentrated thought.³⁵

Chambers writes that, "The story and the teller must belong to one another."³⁶

Ruth Tooze wrote, ". . . no one tells a story well that is not part of himself."³⁷

Ruth Sawyer adds her bit of wisdom,

This intimate relationship between story and teller must be reckoned with. It is as personal a matter as the clothes one wears. Some become one, and some do not; and what storyteller, her personal liking to the contrary, would present herself to any group of listeners with an unbecoming story?³⁸

Bryant shares her feelings on the matter when she wrote the following:

The first demand of the story-teller is that he possess the story. He must feel the story. Whatever;

³⁵Shedlock, The Art of the Story-Teller, p. 28.

³⁶Dewey W. Chambers, Storytelling and Creative Drama (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1970), p. 27.

³⁷Tooze, Storytelling, p. 32.

³⁸Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, p. 152.

the particular quality and appeal of the work of art is, from the lightest to the grandest emotion or thought, he must have responded to it, sensed it, felt it intimately before he can give it out again. Listen, humbly, for the message.³⁹

.
 Know your story. . . . One must know the story absolutely; it must have been so assimilated that it partakes of the nature of personal experience; its essence must be so clearly in mind that the teller does not have to think of it at all in the act of telling, but rather lets it flow from his lips with the unconscious freedom of a vivid reminiscence.⁴⁰

.
 . . . The dramatic quality of story-telling depends closely upon the clearness and power with which the story-teller visualizes the events and characters he describes. . . . You must see what you say!⁴¹

Edwin writes,

Master the style of the author by making his expressions your own. At all costs retain the mood of the story. . . .

. . . Make the story your own by visualizing the happenings; imagine the sounds, tastes, scents, colors, etc. Think yourself into the situations as though you were seeing and experiencing them. . . .

. . . We know that storytelling should not be confused with acting. The storyteller must interpret, express the ideas, moods, and emotions of the author, but should never identify herself with any character. Suggestion, not imitation, is the goal.⁴²

And from the writings of Baker and Greene comes,

Live with your story until the characters and the setting become as real to you as people and places you know. You must know it so well that it can be told as

³⁹Bryant, How to Tell Stories to Children, p. 84.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 90-91. ⁴¹Ibid., p. 103.

⁴²Edwin, "Anyone Can Tell Stories," pp. 659-660.

if it were a personal reminiscence.⁴³

Another ingredient of preparation is practice. The maxim "practice makes perfect," could very well be the motto of storytellers, and when Publius said it for the first time, he could just as well been talking about some storyteller and the story he was telling. Practice allows the storyteller to live inside the story and know it intimately. The characters and incidents are analyzed. During the practice sessions the teller is involved with timing, phrasing, and most important of all the words themselves. The teller learns about his voice and what can be accomplished with correct usage. Exercise the voice, as well as the body-- learn to relax.

Ruth Sawyer has written,

There are two indisputable facts about this art of storytelling that may be considered carefully and with profit: that our instrument is our voice; that we work with, and by means of, the spoken language--words.⁴⁴

The essence of the story are the words themselves and with practice the storyteller will become involved in "feeling" the words, in understanding their meaning, in hearing them, and in turn, being faithful to them. The words will be the clay that the teller uses to mold the story.

⁴³Baker and Greene, Storytelling: Art and Technique, p. 43.

⁴⁴Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, p. 131.

Storytellers are word people and as such they need to possess a vocabulary that is rich and full. The enriching experience of beautiful words--words that describe and allow the child to develop the story through his own imagination--cannot help but develop his own language too. If not help develop it, it will at least give him the experience of hearing words used in the best possible way--that is if the storyteller is being faithful to the way the words were written or handed down from generation to generation. Those folktales, legends, fairy tales, et al, will provide word experiences untold.

Baker and Greene write, "The storyteller must take the story from the printed page and blow the breath of life into it."⁴⁵ They go on to say, "Language should be beautiful, colorful, and descriptive."⁴⁶

Ziskind has written,

You tell a story through language; therefore, you must be attuned to it. In telling stories, you have the privilege of sharing this phenomenon of language with children and of arousing their interest and delight in its rich fabric; its changing hues; its facets, depths, and varieties.⁴⁷

In Chambers book we find the following:

⁴⁵Baker and Greene, Storytelling: Art and Technique, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 36.

⁴⁷Ziskind, Telling Stories to Children, p. 32.

The storyteller has . . . only himself and the effective use of words to build his imaginary world . . . He must depend upon an effective, expressive voice and clear diction in order to present a rich vocabulary capable of image building. . . . A good storyteller is very much aware of words. He knows the value of words and how words can affect a listener. . . . The main tools the teller uses to convey his story are his voice and the words it utters.⁴⁸

De Wit has written that, "Nothing replaces picturesque, well-chosen words drawn from a rich word bank."⁴⁹

From Edwin comes, "True storytelling should have the qualities of spontaneity and freshness. Use the language of the story. . . ."⁵⁰

Chalmers writes, "Only through listening to words in print being spoken does anyone discover their colour, their life, their movement and drama."⁵¹

In Bauer's book we find, "Characterization emerges through descriptive language. . . . Let the language tell the story."⁵²

Tooze has written, "Storytelling is not dramatization.

⁴⁸Chambers, Storytelling and Creative Drama, p. 28.

⁴⁹Dorothy de Wit, Children's Faces Looking Up; Program Building for the Storyteller (Chicago: American Library Association, 1979), p. 59.

⁵⁰Edwin, "Anyone Can Tell Stories," p. 659.

⁵¹Aidan Chalmers, Introducing Books to Children (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 34.

⁵²Caroline Feller Bauer, Handbook for Storytellers (Chicago: American Library Association, 1977), p. 53.

It is shared vital experience in which words are the means of communication."⁵³

One of the sages of storytelling, Nesbitt, has written

[Storytelling] enables [the storyteller], through the magic quality of the spoken word, to reveal to the child the charm and subtle connotations of word sounds, all the evanescent beauty emanating from combinations of words and from the cadence, the haunting ebb and flow, of rhythmical prose.⁵⁴

In Bellon's article we find,

Storytelling and picture book programs do make a contribution to language development. . . . This appears to happen as the child is involved in the story as an act of communication--the child is immersed in a sea of language.⁵⁵

Hill has written,

. . . a story to be tellable and to be worthy of the time and effort of the story-teller must be creative work, must contain elements of drama or poetry or humor, or all three, must be expressed in language that is apt or beautiful and always in keeping with the spirit of the tale.⁵⁶

English wrote in her article that, "A storyteller must respect children, bringing to them a sense of the classic in literature, the universality of the spoken word."⁵⁷

⁵³Tooze, Storytelling, p. 37.

⁵⁴Nesbitt, "Hold to that Which is Good," p. 14.

⁵⁵Elner C. Bellon, "Language Development Through Storytelling Activities," School Media Quarterly 3 (Winter 1975):150.

⁵⁶Hill, "Story-Telling Around the World," p. 287.

⁵⁷Gladys English, "A Storyteller Visits California," Horn Book 21 (November/December 1945):471.

Ruth Sawyer writes in her book,

In the stories we tell let the spoken word be strong in itself, of a compelling and imaginative nature. Let it be put with other words in a manner to charm the ear and arrest the mind, to build with perfection and delight that story which in itself is worth remembering. But let there be substance equally good.⁵⁸

And again from Sawyer we read,

Back of a good vocabulary supporting a free, wide range of words, I think there must be as well that personal awareness of words, that delight in the sound, the color, the variety they afford. To pluck at them as a player plucks at the strings of his harp. To create with them.⁵⁹

Jacobs writes, "Storytelling is a bond, an invisible agreement, a transaction of great worth between a weaver with words and one who treasures the weaving."⁶⁰

Sayers shares her thoughts with her readers,

. . . For the storyteller [is] working with words, words that clothe and change and charge all the emotion the heart endures, or is capable of enduring--the storyteller deals with the stuff of the spirit.⁶¹

The previous quotes all emphasize the importance of words--of language. The need for conveying the language of the tale cannot be over-stressed. The storyteller relates the story and the listener visualizes the picture framed in its beautiful language.

⁵⁸Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, pp. 156-157.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 141.

⁶⁰Jacobs, "Story Telling, the Captor," p. 26.

⁶¹Sayers, "From Me to You," p. 2010.

Learning the story and feeling as one with the words will not be enough to guarantee success as a storyteller. The novice storyteller will be learning about timing, gestures, articulation, breath control, and tone of voice, to mention just a few items of concern. One cannot place too much emphasis on the importance of the storyteller's voice. Knowing the story will not be enough if the voice does not fall on the listener's ear with pleasure and comfort, "You should not assume a story voice--use your natural voice with enough volume to be heard easily, and with enough clarity to be understood."⁶² All the components mentioned above will need to be practiced until they become natural. Naturalness and good storytelling go together. Through practice storytellers determine their own styles of presentation, but there are numerous, well-thought-out suggestions in the storytelling literature to aid storytellers on the road to successful storytelling. There is no need to keep "re-inventing the wheel" if it is not necessary to do so.

Baker and Greene in their chapter on "Preparation," have given the beginning storyteller a number of useful ideas on how to learn a story, and in their discussion they

⁶²Edwin, "Anyone Can Tell Stories," p. 660.

write about timing, gestures, the voice, exercise, et al, thus far mentioned. They have written that,

Timing is the dramatic part of storytelling. Each story has its own pace. . . . Good timing makes the difference between the neophyte and the accomplished storyteller. .

. . . Gestures should be natural to the story and to the storyteller. The art of storytelling should not be confused with the art of acting. The storyteller interprets and expresses the ideas, moods, and emotions of the author, but never identifies with any character. . .

. There should be no studied gestures, no gimmicks, no tricks of changing voices to suit each character in the story. . . . Storytelling is a folk art and does not lend itself to the grand gestures of the stage. . . .

Tone of voice should relate to what is going on in the story. The storyteller develops a sensitivity to words.⁶³

From Ziskind we read that, "An essential of good storytelling is an expressive voice. . . . Your speech . . . should be correct, distinct, precise, and polished."⁶⁴ She goes on to write, ". . . a storyteller should have poise and a pleasing presence."⁶⁵ Still further on in her book she suggests that, "A storyteller tells a narrative in his own voice and manner and can only suggest through skillful use of tone and inflection the real sound of his characters' voices."⁶⁶ And then we read, "The story is the important

⁶³Baker and Greene, Storytelling: Art and Technique, pp. 46-47.

⁶⁴Ziskind, Telling Stories to Children, p. 26.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 30. ⁶⁶Ibid., p. 33.

thing, and it should stand on its own merit. If it is a good story and if you have learned it well, you will not need to rely on gestures."⁶⁷

Wilson writes this about the voice, "The teller's voice awakens dreams and spins stuff for thought; incites to contemplation."⁶⁸

De Wit writes that,

Timing is a tool of the storyteller, used to interpret what is being told; pacing is concerned with the flow of the narrative. . . . The stance or pose of the storyteller is important in presenting the story. . . . Voice is concerned with pitch, articulation, voice texture, control and breath support, and the clarity of word production. . . . Anything which detracts from the words of the story is out of place.⁶⁹

To Ruth Sawyer timing was an important aspect in telling stories, she has written,

Some [storytellers], I think, come by this sense naturally; but even then it can and must be carefully watched, developed. For the rest it means giving careful thought with the preparation of each new story. When to hurry, when to go with slow deliberation; when to pause, to hold the word, that that which comes after may make its imprint of beauty, of wonder, of strength felt, in the minds of the listeners. I rather think that this sense of timing is to those who work with a living art what a sense of design is to a painter: it gives proportion and balance, it makes things to be in the right relationship, one with the other.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 36.

⁶⁸Wilson, The Story Experience, p. 2.

⁶⁹De Wit, Children's Faces Looking Up, pp. 58-60.

⁷⁰Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, pp. 146-147.

In chapter two it was stated that Ruth Sawyer had studied voice and desired to be an opera singer. She felt that the storyteller's voice was a very important ingredient to good storytelling. Storytellers may gain insight into the importance of the voice if they read Sawyer's views on the subject. She appeared to have no pity for those storytellers who demonstrated poor voice control when she wrote the following:

For my part I think it is too much to ask children or adults to listen, from ten minutes to an hour, to a lazy, imperfect, unpleasant instrument, when something can be done about it. . . .

I think what has been an often repeated experience for me is habitual with most North Americans. I think the majority of people in this country are lazy-eared. Otherwise how can it be possible for so many of them to speak with such excruciating and ineffective voices, to enunciate so badly, to slur their words? I beseech all storytellers to cultivate the listening ear, to learn to hear their own voices, to be alert to the voices around them, to compare. And if their own voices do not satisfy them, to do something about it.⁷¹

Presentation

Selection plus preparation equals presentation. If the time has been well spent, the presentation is the "pot of gold at the end of the rainbow." Storytelling should be a pleasant experience and a time in which the storyteller captures the listener's fancy and turns it into an imaginative experience. The storyteller should not intrude upon

⁷¹Ibid., p. 133.

the listener's privacy and should not ask the listener to prove anything. The storyteller can only ask the listener to listen, to enjoy, and to make the story a part of himself. In order to provide the atmosphere thus described, the storyteller should possess a creative imagination, have the ability to evoke emotion, radiate a sense of conviction, and draw upon an innate gift of selection--these are the components of good storytelling. The presentation can be in a library, or sitting around a campfire, or standing in front of a classroom, or sitting on the floor with a circle of children. The presentation may be formal or informal. The situation will govern how the presentation is conducted,

. . . for the ultimate goal is to tell a story so simply and directly that it appears to be told "from yourself." All the emphasis should be placed upon the story rather than upon the storyteller, who is, for the time being, simply a vehicle through which the beauty and wisdom and humor of the story comes to the listeners.⁷²

The story hours conducted at NYPL are examples of the formal presentation, and their style of presentation has now become a tradition. NYPL's first Coordinator of Work with Children, Miss Anne Carroll Moore, had conducted a formal story hour when she had been librarian at the Pratt Institute Free Library, and she requested that Miss Tyler establish the same for NYPL. Miss Moore once wrote how she felt

⁷²Baker and Greene, Storytelling: Art and Technique, p. 58.

about the story hour,

I have given emphasis to the presence of flowers, pictures, lighted candles and other things which might be considered non-essentials of a story hour, because they seem to me to be essential both to story-teller and to children. If to another they seem trivial I can only say "I see it so," for I believe the final test of every story hour will be, not whether the story was perfectly told, but whether it was told in a way to create associations in the minds of the children that will abide with them forever.⁷³

The informal telling of stories is usually done spontaneously--when the need arises. The teacher may tell a story to provide relaxation after a vigorous playtime. Or the children's librarian is requested to tell a favorite story--just one more time. But regardless of the informal situation the story is told with the same effectiveness as would be done in a preplanned situation. In order for the storyteller to tell a story on the "spur of the moment" a repertoire that contains a variety of stories will be needed, but building a collection will take time. Take the time to build a collection, and remember a teller need not worry about repeating well-prepared, well-told stories.

In her book Shedlock wrote,

Do not be afraid to repeat your stories. If you did not undertake more than seven stories a year, chosen with infinite care, and if you repeated these stories six times during the year . . . you would be able to do

⁷³Annie Carroll Moore, "The Story Hour at Pratt Institute Free Library," Library Journal 30 (April 1905):211.

artistic and, therefore, lasting work; you would give a very great deal of pleasure to the children who delight in hearing a story many times. . . . The habit of doing one's best instead of one's second-best means, in the long run, that one has no interest except in the preparation of the best, and the stories, few in number, polished and finished in style, will have an effect of which one can scarcely overstate the importance.⁷⁴

There will be times when even the planned story hour will have to be changed, and the storyteller will have to be prepared to adjust to the present need. Ruth Sawyer has written that,

Storytellers are often faced with situations where any right and reasonable choice must be abandoned on the moment, and something entirely foreign to the usual story hour program must be snatched for and used. Herein lies a point not to be treated lightly. A story hour is a fluid thing--it may take on anything that is good, with color, emotional appeal, and living interest. It may include almost anything that has a bearing on what young people are thinking about, curious about, actually doing or merely dreaming about. It is not right that a story hour should become static; on the other hand it would be deplorable if a story hour should become commonplace.⁷⁵

Baker and Greene have devoted a fair portion of their book to this matter of presentation. There are ideas enough to fit most situations and will fulfill the needs of teachers, librarians, in-service groups, and others interested in this art--this living art of storytelling. They also address themselves to: (1) reading aloud; (2) reaching

⁷⁴Shedlock, The Art of the Story-Teller, pp. 29-30.

⁷⁵Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, pp. 158-159.

children with special needs; (3) planning programs; (4) outdoor storytelling; (5) family storytelling; (6) storytelling on radio and television; and (7) ways of working with library administration in regards to maintaining a story hour.

The storyteller has completed the cycle--the story has been selected, prepared, and presented. The listeners and teller have shared that time together. If all has been accomplished to the best of one's ability, then success as a storyteller may have been attained.

The story-teller is bound by nothing; he stands or sits, free to watch his audience, free to follow or lead every changing mood, free to use body, eyes, voice, as aids in expression.⁷⁶

Later on in her book Bryant writes, "The expression must . . . remain suggestive rather than illustrative."⁷⁷

Let the story lift and flow; let it laugh and cry. Take the best tales; take pride in your human possession of such wealth; take joy in the delight of giving it away.⁷⁸

Good storytelling, on a one-storyteller, one-group basis, is a highly creative personal experience. It is an experience that develops and glows for a brief period and then disappears. It is an experience that can never be, or ever should be, exactly the same again. Story time is a time of mutual creation, the storyteller and the listener creating together a world built on words

⁷⁶Bryant, How to Tell Stories to Children, p. xvi.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 102.

⁷⁸Wilson, The Story Experience, p. 3.

and imagination. It is a wonderful, almost secret, private time. Storytelling cannot be mass-produced and still retain its flavor and magic.⁷⁹

Imagination, perception, insight, enthusiasm, spontaneity, concentration--these are the qualities of any creative artist. Add to these the desire to share experience with listeners, sensitivity to the needs and moods of those listeners, sincere joy in the sharing process, and you have the makings of a good storyteller.⁸⁰

. . . For all elements seen and unseen go into the tale and its telling. The richer the life of the storyteller the richer his images and the finer the telling and the listening.⁸¹

Storytelling is a natural approach to books. . . . Creative storytelling . . . can break down the wall of shyness between the children and the library and build a warm sense of friendliness between them and the librarian.⁸²

The adult who tells to children should approach this art with a willingness to invest respect, sincerity, and skill in it. The rewards it offers will far exceed the original investment.⁸³

It is to be hoped that some day stories will be told . . . by experts who have devoted special time and preparation to the art of telling them. It is a great fallacy to suppose that the systematic study of storytelling destroys the spontaneity of narrative.⁸⁴

⁷⁹Chambers, Storytelling and Creative Drama, p. 10.

⁸⁰Tooze, Storytelling, p. 17.

⁸¹George Shannon, "Storytelling: Finding the Treasure," Catholic Library World 52 (September 1980):83.

⁸²Viguers, "Over the Drawbridge," p. 56-57.

⁸³Chambers, Storytelling and Creative Drama, p. 37.

⁸⁴Shedlock, The Art of the Story-Teller, p. xvii.

I have found in the many years of telling stories that while some may offer a background too foreign or formidable for some groups, thereby demanding too many explanations beforehand to make the telling practical, there was no story too good, too fine in its appeal, to reach the imaginations of any group--be they boys in reformatories, women in prison, families gathered at some rural crossroads, children in asylums, men in Kiwanis and Rotary, students in university or library, women in their federated clubs. A good story never fails to kindle something that may not have burned for years--laughter for those who have forgotten how to laugh, excitement for those whose lives have dulled down to monotony, awe for those who have forgotten what wonder was, and reverence again for those who have abandoned churches. It is the ordinary, the mediocre story that one cannot afford to tell.⁸⁵

. . . But in every case the story is the thing. No devices, no planned participation or added attractions should overshadow the main objective of listening pleasure.⁸⁶

End with the ending of the story. When the story is over, its spirit remains. Honor the story with a moment or two of silence. Do not ask questions about the story or try to elicit comments. Let the children leave the story hour with their own private thoughts. Do not invade their privacy.⁸⁷

Elizabeth Nesbitt has written artistically and aesthetically on storytelling as an art. She has conveyed through her writings the importance of good storytelling and implores storytellers to keep true to their art, as is noted in the following passage:

⁸⁵Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, p. 161-162.

⁸⁶Ruth Hewitt Hamilton, "'From Drawbridge to Castle'--Stories Reign Supreme," Library Journal 81 (September 15, 1956):2018.

⁸⁷Baker and Greene, Storytelling: Art and Technique, p. 69.

Story-telling provides the opportunity to interpret for the child life forces which are beyond his immediate experience, and so to prepare him for life itself. It gives the teller the chance to emphasize significance rather than incident. . . . It is through the medium of interpretation that all of us, adults and children, come to genuine appreciation. We approach the great, the significant, the infinite, through some mind more perceptive, more articulate, than our own. That is the function of all art. It goes beyond the truth of fact to an all-embracing, unchanging truth, and it clothes this in a beauty which heightens its poignancy and which gains new beauty with the praise of each succeeding age. Story-telling, rightly done, is such an art. As an art, it cannot be hastily or carelessly done. In its creative, its interpretative aspect, it stands apart from all other methods. It cannot be condescending because it reproduces, inviolate, great literature, and greatness and condescension are incongruous. By reason of its oral nature, it overcomes the handicap of insufficient knowledge and experience and throws open the door to unlimited vicarious experience. The oral quality does more than this. Where literary quality is present, by reason of sound and association, words are underlined with an implication and a beauty that surpasses mere definition. This hidden significance, this inner meaning, is conveyed more readily through the ear than through the eye.⁸⁸

The discussion on techniques has been presented in order to introduce one storyteller's style and techniques. There was not an attempt to cover the entire field of story-telling. Readers interested in a more in-depth coverage may consult the storytelling literature itself. There are numerous routes one may take to ascertain the necessary information, such as consulting: (1) Library Literature and other indexes containing related material; (2) storytelling bibliographies, such as Storytelling: Readings/Bibliographies/

⁸⁸Nesbitt, "Hold to that Which is Good," p. 14.

Resources prepared by an ad hoc committee of the Association for Library Service to Children, ALA, 1978; (3) other dissertations, such as the one done for the Folklore and Folklife department at the University of Pennsylvania by Richard Gerald Alvey, entitled "The Historical Development of Organized Storytelling to Children in the United States" (Ph.D. dissertation, 1974), or "A Study of Existing Practices and Principles of Storytelling for Children in the United States," by Rose Loretta Abernethy (Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1964); and (4) books and articles on the subject of storytelling, such as those written by Shedlock, Sawyer, Baker and Greene, et al.

CHAPTER V

THOUGHTS THAT BREATHE, AND WORDS THAT BURN

Thomas Gray

The discussions thus far presented have: (1) introduced storytellers of the past and NYPL Supervisors of Storytelling; (2) introduced Mrs. Baker via a biographical description; and (3) discussed various techniques used in the selection, preparation, and presentation of stories. With this background established the discussion now turns to Mrs. Baker's specific style and her philosophy on storytelling. The information utilized for this section came from the literature and interviews with Mrs. Baker. In formulating the script for the video presentation much of the information gleaned from the interviews went into the scripting (see chapter six for the script).

Personality and Style

What are personality and style? Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary gives the following definitions for each of the words:

Personality - 1) the quality or fact of being a person.
2) the quality or fact of being a particular person; personal identity; individuality.
3) habitual patterns and qualities of behavior of any individual as expressed by physical and mental activities and attitudes; distinctive individual qualities of a person, considered collectively.

- 4) the sum of such qualities as impressing or likely to impress others; as, she has personality.
- 5) a person; especially, a notable person; personage.
-
- Style - 3), (a) manner or mode of expression in language; way of putting thoughts into words; (b) specific or characteristic manner of expression, execution, construction, or design, in any art, period, work, employment, etc.
- 4) distinction, excellence, originality, and character in any form of artistic or literary expression.
- 5) the way in which anything is made or done; manner.

When tracing the two words in Roget's International Thesaurus (fourth edition), other descriptive words for personality are found, such as, authority, being, body, charisma, charm, distinctiveness, eminence, enchantment, entity, individual, individualism, individuality, influence, magnetism, mastery, person, psyche, self, singularity, soul, and uniqueness. The word style produces such words as: actions, adeptness, approach, artistry, bearing, behavior, carriage, character, command, competence, custom, diction, fashion, feeling for words or language, finesse, folkway, gestures, guise, manner, mastery, means, methodology, mode of expression, modus operandi, motions, nature, pattern, personal style, pose, procedure, proficiency, skill, specialty, technique, and way.

There are descriptions of personality written by literary personages, such as, Whitman who writes, "A single separate person." From Heine comes, "Aristocrat amongst the animals." Protagoras calls it, "The measure of all things."

Pascal writes, "A thinking reed." Shakespeare wrote, "The choice and master spirits of the age." And from Addison, "The Divinity that stirs within us." Regarding style, Dickens wrote, "The dress of thoughts." From Walter Pater comes, "A certain absolute and unique manner of expressing a thing, in all its intensity and color."

In order to determine if there is a correlation between a storyteller's [Mrs. Baker's] personality and style, and the types of stories the teller [Mrs. Baker] selects for telling, there is a need to present what others have written, and to present specific storytellers' personalities and styles.

There is a phrase that occurs often in the literature on storytelling techniques and style which states that the story must be one the teller likes and wants to tell. The teller will need to ask himself several questions: Does the tale in question personally excite and interest me? Do I have a desire to share the tale with others? Are the tales' content and mood compatible with my personality, in other words, does the tale fit me?

Bauer has written that,

Perhaps the most important element in good storytelling is finding the right story for you. Each of us has a distinct personality which should be capitalized

on.¹

De Wit put it this way, "Storytellers must in many ways match their personality to their stories. . . ."2

Chambers wrote this on the subject,

He [The storyteller] builds his repertoire from tales that are suited to his unique personality and style. . . . The story fits the uniqueness of the teller. They belong together, this tale and the teller. Storytellers know when it happens.³

From Bryant comes,

When you make a story your own and tell it, the listener gets the story, plus your appreciation of it. It comes to him filtered through your own enjoyment. . . . It is the filter of personality.⁴

Bauer, De Wit, Chambers, and Bryant have all used the word personality, and have used it in conjunction with the stories selected for telling. There are those storytellers that can tell any type of story--folktales, literary stories, fairy tales, et al, and tell them equally well. But most storytellers must tell the stories that suit their own personality and style.

Ruth Sawyer, for example, was greatly influenced by her Irish nurse and almost daily heard the Irish tales. She

¹Bauer, Handbook for Storytellers, p. 48.

²De Wit, Children's Faces Looking Up, p. 56.

³Chambers, Storytelling and Creative Drama, p. 15.

⁴Bryant, How to Tell Stories to Children, pp. xvi-xvii.

listened to the rich and melodious language of her nurse and then further advanced her love for the Irish tales by visiting Ireland and listening to the locals tell their tales. Sawyer had a gifted singing voice and was able to utilize the techniques of voice training with those of storytelling. She had a sense of language and was able to make the words of the tale flow. Ruth Sawyer was an outgoing and friendly person. Thus it might be said that Ruth Sawyer's personality and environment influenced the types of stories she told. Even though she told stories gathered from all over the world, she was best known for her Irish and Christmas tales, which are rich in language and music. Who is to determine what type of tales she would have been best at if she had had a German or French nurse or an English nanny. But it can probably be assumed that her Irish nurse had a great influence on her and the types of stories she would tell as a professional storyteller. Sawyer's book not only includes ideas for the novice storyteller, but is a self-description of Sawyer's own journey to becoming a storyteller.

Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen was Norwegian and she excelled in telling tales of Scandinavian origin, particularly those of Asbjørnsen and Moe. Thorne-Thomsen's mother was an actress and a great interpreter of Ibsen, thus Gudrun grew up with poetry and hearing beautiful language. She too had a feel for language and its importance to the tales she

told. Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen was a shy, quiet person and let her beautiful voice carry the tale. Her personality and environment influenced the type of stories she told. It cannot be imagined that Mrs. Thorne-Thomsen would tell an American folktale or an Irish tale.

The premise here might be that Thorne-Thomsen told Scandinavian folktales because she was Norwegian. Yet, Marie Shedlock, who was English, specialized in performing interpretations of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales, and he was Danish. But Andersen was a writer of beautiful, descriptive words, and Shedlock, like Sawyer and Thorne-Thomsen, was a word person. She had performed on the stage, and used a literary-dramatic style to interpret her stories. In a sense Shedlock resembled the stories she told. Miss Shedlock was small in stature, and has been described by others as being petite, beautiful, and charming. As has been stated she was English, but having been born in France her English accent carried traces of the French tone. Although her repertoire was large, Miss Shedlock was best remembered for the Andersen fairy tales and the beautiful, delicate French tales.

As with many storytellers childhood played an important role in their later careers as professional storytellers. But Miss Shedlock was an exception, she trained herself in the art, having also trained for the stage. She enjoyed

relating stories and could do so on a moments notice. She did not care if she had an audience of one or one hundred. She was always prepared to tell a story in any situation, and much of her storytelling was done in front of adults. She was friendly and out-going, and could relate anecdote after anecdote. As Alvey has written,

. . . , Shedlock's style was the dramatic style of the particular story told, but in all cases her style reflected artistic and sophisticated expertise in use of language and gesture, and other communicative devices, and in her response to her audience. . . .

Shedlock held so high in regard--and was so polished in--the oral mode that she adamantly insisted that it was the only way to tell a story.⁵

Eulalie Steinmetz Ross is another good example of what childhood and environment can do to influence a person in their later professional career. Mrs. Ross was from a German background and from her grandparents she heard the Grimm tales. When she became a storyteller her favorite stories were from the Grimms, and she was able to bring her background to bear on her telling. To repeat Bryant, "It [The story] is the filter of personality."

Pellowski has written that, "Storytelling is dependent on personality as well as on intelligence and experience."⁶

⁵Richard Gerald Alvey, "The Historical Development of Organized Storytelling to Children in the United States," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1974, pp. 152-153.

⁶Pellowski, The World of Storytelling, p. 159.

Mahony writes,

Among peoples with a spoken literature, the story-teller was a special person, is a special person, must be a special person. Today when the story-teller in America may choose from the literatures of many people, he must have background knowledge, judgment and taste for that choice. He must also have the proper voice, speech, manner, personality. We need more story-tellers, but only those story-tellers who are at the same time artists.⁷

The storytellers discussed in chapter two were varied in their personalities, but one criterion weaves its way through their careers as storytellers--they were all well-versed in the literature. Each one of them spent hours searching for the tales that best suited their style and their personality. It was not a matter of pulling the book off the shelf and then learning the first tale they found. Most of the storytellers discussed were collectors and published their collections. They were familiar with tales from all over the world. They read the literary stories, the epics, the legends, the modern story, as well as the folktales and fairy tales. They were keenly aware of beautiful language and were true to the original words. As storytellers they brought their own interpretations and as

Martin writes,

Interpretations of any story are as varied as the personalities of the individual story-tellers. . . . Every story told thus may be permeated with the

⁷Bertha E. Mahony, "Editorial," Horn Book 10 (May 1934):135.

story-teller's personality.⁸

These storytellers were not satisfied with just learning a story for telling, they were constantly searching out the origin, the background, and the historical aspects.

Ruth Sawyer writes about the importance of building a firm foundation for storytelling,

It is a matter of years, of a lifetime, this building of background for storytelling, for it is a matter of growth. Something one must never hurry through but be continuously aware of and eager for. Something to which one must bring a keen appetite, fresh enthusiasms, an integrity of attitude, a clear-burning zeal. To be ever ready to discard that which one can no longer use with honesty. To put together all one gathers that there may be a final authority in the telling and a dignity and truth in what one has to tell--this is of the utmost importance. For as storytellers we are concerned not alone with amusement, or with education, or with distraction; nor is it enough to give pleasure. We are concerned with letting a single stream of light pass through us as through one facet of the gem or prism that there may be revealed some aspect of the spirit, some beauty and truth that lies hidden within the world and humankind.⁹

As varied as their personalities were, so were their techniques and styles. Chambers wrote that,

Technique or style seems to evolve as a natural part of personality manifestation when the teller is at home with a story or has varied experiences with the art of

⁸William Martin, "Some Stories Should Be Memorized," in Creative Writing and Story Telling in Today's Schools, edited by Paul Witty, reprinted from Elementary English (March 1957):31.

⁹Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, pp. 106-107.

storytelling.¹⁰

These storytellers had developed a sixth sense when it came to the use of gestures and the pause. Through years of observing audience reaction they were able to "polish" their styles, but always keeping faith with the art of storytelling. Ruth Sawyer writes,

. . . , we never for a moment fool the children. They know on the instant of hearing that which springs from true art; they can tell the notes of the real nightingale from that of the mechanical bird.¹¹

Personality and style appear to be the underlying factors which determine what a storyteller selects to tell. The storytellers discussed and the literature quoted have reiterated the same premise. It can also be assumed that the personality of the individual does influence the style chosen for presenting the stories. As Chambers writes,

The telling of a tale is really an expansion of a personality in a dimension that is somewhat different than the usual. . . . The teller's face is often the mirror of that story.¹²

Shannon writes that,

Storytelling done honestly and well is an emotionally intimate and sensual interaction. The storyteller's world abounds in images, sounds and smells. It must. To tell a story well one must see it and share it completely by voice, gesture, eyes and spirit. It

¹⁰Chambers, Storytelling and Creative Drama, p. 30.

¹¹Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, p. 107.

¹²Chambers, Storytelling and Creative Drama, pp. 27-28.

must come completely from one's self both emotionally and physically. . . . A storyteller cannot truly share a tale until he is able to lose himself in it. And to then find himself in the tale--for the two to become one. As this occurs the storyteller is sharing both the tale and self. Every time one tells a tale he must look at it anew. . . .¹³

Ruth Tooze wrote,

If the story is to live for you, you must care about the characters and what happens, and always the main action must keep going. . . . Actually you must not just know it, you must be it.¹⁴

Bryant has written that,

From the very start, the mood of the tale should be definite and authoritative, beginning with the mood of the teller and emanating therefrom in proportion as the physique of the teller is a responsive medium.¹⁵

From Ziskind comes, "Storytelling is a delicate and personal art."¹⁶

It would appear that professional storytellers have much in common. Chapters two, three, and the discussion in this chapter have brought out a storyteller profile. What do Shedlock, Sawyer, Thorne-Thomsen, Tyler, Davis, Ross, and Baker all have in common? They are: (1) appreciators of of the written word; (2) collectors of tales; (3) masters in the use of gestures and the pause; (4) sharers of only the

¹³Shannon, "Storytelling: Finding the Treasure," p. 82.

¹⁴Tooze, Storytelling, p. 36.

¹⁵Bryant, How to Tell Stories to Children, p. 97.

¹⁶Ziskind, Telling Stories to Children, p. 34.

best, never second best; and (5) generators of enthusiasm for the world of imagination.

There has been an attempt to show that the personality of the teller does influence the selection of stories chosen for telling, but as Chambers writes,

The development of the technique of telling, or the development of storytelling style, is so personal, so individual, so unique in each teller that it really defies exact explanation.¹⁷

Storyteller Par Excellence

At the festivities on Tuesday, June 19th (1956) the day dedicated to Mary Gould Davis, the first storyteller introduced was Augusta Baker. As she was presented some of the audience saw and heard, for the first time, the new leader-to-be. Baker is perhaps the one greatest force in the futherance of storytelling throughout the country.

Augusta Baker is widely known as a master storyteller, and she is honored often for her artistry and leadership. She is a designer of workshops and lecture series; she continues to write and to record, to inspire, and gently to remind those in authority to maintain and to enrich the story experience. With children and parents demanding a return of the oral tradition to schools and libraries, it is evident that she has told her story well. She has kept the faith.¹⁸

When Augusta Baker describes a nice cool, tall glass of honey you can taste it. When she details a word picture of the sun beaming down you can feel the heat. Augusta Baker practices the ancient art of storytelling.¹⁹

¹⁷Chambers, Storytelling and Creative Drama, p. 27.

¹⁸Wilson, The Story Experience, p. 75.

¹⁹"Young Minds Captured by Storyteller's Artistry," Richardson (Texas) Daily News, 11 May 1976, p. 11.

Chapter three contains quotes about Mrs. Baker and many have touched on her personality. Throughout the quotes words and phrases, such as the following, appear: zest for living, infuse enthusiasm, an inspiration, warm understanding, innovative leadership, brought joy, practical idealist, speech pungent with wit and crackling with common sense, calm voice, good humor, engaging, perceptive, literate, thoughtful, good sense of humor, professional competence matches personality, intellectual mentor, common sense, and wit and humor. It will be noted that two words have been repeated--wit and humor. These two words personify the type of stories Augusta Baker enjoys telling, but this was not always the case.

As was brought out in chapter three Augusta had been told stories by her grandmother. Then while she was in college at Albany she had been an English major and had been interested in reading and good literature. Also, Dr. Thompson had exposed her to folk literature. But it was not until she became a NYPL children's librarian that storytelling became a part of her life. Mrs. Baker was asked when she first realized that she was able to tell stories.

I began to tell stories because it was part of the job of being a children's librarian. Then as time passed I grew to love it. I liked the way the children reacted. I also enjoyed reading the literature that folktales came from and wanted to share this enjoyment

with children who came to the library.²⁰

Therefore, the controversial statement "storytellers are born" is not true in Mrs. Baker's case. Mrs. Baker's response to the statement was,

There are people who have a natural aptitude or tendency for telling stories, but I believe that a person can become a storyteller through study and hard work.²¹

Since Mrs. Baker's storytelling began with her job, she was greatly influenced by the Supervisor of Storytelling, Miss Mary Gould Davis.

I started out telling the Danish folktales and the humorous Finnish tales. There was a natural tendency to tell the type of stories Miss Davis herself told. It wasn't until I met Harold Courlander and he introduced me to the Haitian stories did I begin to search out the tales and stories of Africa, the Caribbean, and South America. You must remember that when I started as a librarian, it was during the late thirties and storytelling material on blacks and Africa were not readily available in our libraries. Upon discovering the Haitian tales I found them to my liking--they were funny. Many of these tales are the "trickster stories," which have a high quality of wit and humor, and I felt very comfortable with them. I also began to realize I was more attracted to those stories with humor. Usually in a trickster tale the weaker character wins out.²²

An interesting side note on training under Miss Davis came in an article on Augusta, she was quoted as saying,

I remember years ago when I was being trained as a

²⁰Interview with Augusta Baker, Columbia, South Carolina, 27 April 1983.

²¹Ibid. ²²Ibid.

storyteller, the head of storytelling always told us to remember that when we were telling a story, no Broadway talent scouts would be sitting in the audience. Your main reason for telling the story is to get the story across to the children because hopefully if the child is interested in the story you're telling him, he'll want to read some more stories like it.²³

It was presented earlier that Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen was Norwegian and told Scandanavian folktales. Therefore, could it then be presumed that Mrs. Baker tells black folktales because she is black?

I think it definitely does influence the types of stories I tell. Some storytellers, other than those with a black heritage, may find it a little more difficult to relate to the humor in the black folktales. The blacks have had to depend alot on their humor, our humor has sustained us in many a difficult situation.²⁴

No two storytellers are alike, as they are each individuals and have each developed their own style of telling stories. Did Mrs. Baker consciously develop a storytelling style?

I did not. It is when you consciously develop a style that artificiality creeps in. As you settle into the telling, as you become comfortable with the telling, then your style takes over. My first reaction is to say that style and technique are pretty much the same thing, but technique and presentation are closer together. I did work on certain aspects of "my" style,

²³Marshall Swanson, ". . . Happily Ever After," Carolina Alumni Quarterly 3 (March 1981):20.

²⁴Interview with Augusta Baker, Columbia, South Carolina, 14 May 1983.

such as perfecting the pause.²⁵

In Mrs. Baker's book that she co-authored with Ellin Greene, there are several quotes that lend credance to the premise that personality and style do affect the choice of stories told. For example,

[1] Although the storyteller may be recreating a traditional tale, it is his or her experience of life that enters the telling and makes the story ring true.

[2] The storyteller . . . must enjoy the content, mood, or style and must have a desire to share this enjoyment.

[3] Stories from one's own national or regional background are usually a happy choice.

[4] Whatever the particular quality and appeal of the story, the storyteller must have responded to it, sensed it, felt it intimately before giving it out again.

[5] Only when you see the story vividly yourself can you make your audience see it.

[6] . . . storytellers must believe in and enjoy the stories they select for telling.

[7] The storyteller's manner should be dignified but friendly. It should say, "Listen deeply, for I have something special to share with you."

[8] . . . Storytelling is an individual art, and that each storyteller will bring a special kind of appreciation, imagination, and interpretation to the telling. . . . All creative artists share the same qualities--enthusiasm, spontaneity, imagination, perception, insight. A good storyteller is also a vital human being who finds joy in living and who can reach the heart and mind of a child. Taste and appreciation grow as the storyteller is exposed to art, to music, and to dance; the entire range of feelings, intellect, and

²⁵Ibid.

spirit come alive. Good storytellers, like good wine, age well. The words of the story may not change, but what the storyteller brings to the story changes with the experience of living.

[9] All that matters is that the style fit the teller.²⁶

It therefore appears that there is a correlation between personality and style, and the types of stories Mrs. Baker selects for telling, and Presberry's statement about Augusta bears repeating, "All of her [Baker's] own life experiences enrich her interpretation of the story." (see chapter three, page 114).

In chapter four of this dissertation various storytelling techniques were discussed, but what techniques does Mrs. Baker utilize in selecting, learning, and presenting her own stories?

I really cannot add anything to the format presented in the book I co-authored with Ellin Greene. When the person interested in storytelling reads the chapter on "Preparation," they will be introduced to my own personal techniques. In selecting a story, I utilize the general criteria developed in the chapter on "Selection," and after the story meets the criteria it then becomes purely a personal choice. I try it out on an audience and observe their response.²⁷

During her years as children's librarian, Storytelling Supervisor, and Coordinator of Work with Children Mrs. Baker invested many hours reading, selecting, and

²⁶Baker and Greene, Storytelling: Art and Technique, pp. 25-71 passim.

²⁷Interview with Augusta Baker, Columbia, South Carolina, 27 April 1983.

learning stories. Her repertoire was extensive. What then are Mrs. Baker's recommendations on how varied a repertoire is needed by storytellers?

First of all let me say there is no definite number of stories needed in one's repertoire, it will vary with the person and the situation. Naturally the collection should include stories that the teller loves best--stories that the teller feels at ease with and enjoys telling. Then add special occasion stories such as those for Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and so forth. The teller will need to have stories that vary in length, stories for different age levels, and stories that both boys and girls enjoy. Don't build a repertoire to just have a large repertoire, take the time to learn a few and learn them well. Children really don't mind hearing a story again--that is if the story is told well and they know that you love telling it. The love for storytelling will greatly influence how many stories are in your repertoire. Good storytelling is a personal commitment to hard work and time--time to read and search out the best and time to learn the story. Because through time and hard work the story becomes a part of yourself, and years later with a little polishing you can once again tell that story you haven't told in ten years.²⁸

In looking back over Mrs. Baker's statements it can readily be seen that she loves telling stories, but why?

First of all I respect children and enjoy the time we share together. Second, library storytelling brings together children and books. We have an obligation to bring more than entertainment to children. It is hoped that by using beautiful words and painting imaginative pictures, we can motivate the children to seek out the printed page so they may discover for themselves the knowledge, the beauty, the magic on that printed page. As we said in Storytelling: Art and Technique, "The storyteller has the pleasant responsibility of leading children to books. By making the connection between books and storytelling--by telling a story from a

²⁸Ibid.

collection and saying more stories can be found in the book--the storyteller introduces books as a source of pleasure throughout life."²⁹

At the beginning of this chapter the words personality and style were traced in a dictionary and thesaurus. By combining some of those words and phrases a definition of Mrs. Baker's personality and style might read as follows: A particular person with habitual patterns and qualities of behavior expressed by physical and mental activities and attitudes, who is distinctive in putting thoughts into words; who has a specific and characteristic manner of expression. One who is distinctive and original in manner, who displays artistry in her techniques and mastery of her art.

The description of a storyteller given by Ruth Sawyer might well have been written about Augusta Baker, who has been telling stories for over forty-five years, "To be a good storyteller one must be gloriously alive."³⁰

²⁹Interview with Augusta Baker, Columbia, South Carolina, 14 May 1983; Baker and Greene, Storytelling: Art and Technique, p. 19.

³⁰Sawyer, The Way of the Storyteller, p. 28.

CHAPTER VI

VISUALIZATION AND PICTURIZATION

The scripts presented in this chapter represent the original working script which was written for the videotaping, and the final script after the taping was completed. The first script contains the video and audio requirements, but does not include the responses of Mrs. Baker. It was felt that restricting Mrs. Baker to prewritten responses would not allow for free flowing conversation and the addition of side comments. The interviewers questions, for the most part, were adhered to, but there were times that the interviewer interjected certain responses. Therefore, the final script is included in order for the reader to have a complete transcription of the actual presentation. In this way the reader will have an opportunity to compare the differences between the two scripts, and better understand that changes, responses, and situations can alter a preplanned working script.

Live Audience Premise

One of the purposes presented in the introductory chapter was to examine the premise that a live audience had bearing and impact on the quality and effectiveness of the

telling of stories.

During the taping of the video presentation Mrs. Baker was taped telling stories to a group of children in a library setting. Another storytelling session was conducted in a studio setting where only the video personnel were present. The two settings were compared and analyzed in regards to certain aspects. The interviewer and Mrs. Baker looked for differences in eye contact and movement; at her facial expressions; at her use of gestures; at her use of the pause; at her body movements; listened to her voice quality; and judged the overall setting of each session.

It was noted that very few differences were evident, but those differences proved to be important. It was noted that the use of the hands and the voice were basically the same in both settings, but the eye contact did vary. In the no audience situation the camera proved to be a static audience and Mrs. Baker did not move her head and eyes to take in the various listeners. In the library setting her eyes and head tended to move to different listeners. The telling of the stories were again basically the same, with more vitality being apparent in the library setting. The major differences came in the facial expressions. There was more animation shown in the library setting, the face showed more expression, and there was more smiling. There was also more body movement as she leaned toward the audience and turned

from one side to the other. Facial animation was indeed more evident. It was therefore assumed that even though Mrs. Baker was a professional storyteller with over forty-five years of experience and had had numerous experiences before the camera, a live audience does make a difference. One camera and a cameraman cannot respond in the same way that a group of children can respond to the delights of the story. To quote Arbuthnot,

So it seems the art of storytelling is far from dead. It may have moved from the firelit cabin to the fluorescent-lighted classroom or the marble corridors of a museum or some other equally unlikely spot, but the old, old art of storytelling still has power to charm. To practice this art is sheer delight for the teller, and to observe the profound impression it makes on the listeners is a gratifying bonus.¹

Script I

Video

Title:
Augusta Baker: Exponent of
the Oral Art of Story-
telling
(white letters on a blue
background)

Rolling quotation:
I believe storytelling to
be not only a folkart but
a living art. . . . Music
in all its forms is a liv-
ing art in that it becomes
a reality only when it is
played. Dancing is a

Audio

Music up full

Music continues up full

¹Arbuthnot, Children and Books, p. 377.

living art, for it lives only while you watch the movement, grace, interpretation of the dancer. So is it with storytelling: it lives only while the story is being told.

Ruth Sawyer

Stills (photographs) of early man, man in ancient times, early Europeans, Native Americans, etc.

Music down under

Narrator: Storytelling is an art as old as man's oral language of expression. As soon as man was able to convey meaning to his grunts and gestures, the tale began.

Man used the tale to express his own pride in performing some act of bravery and accomplishment.

As man's world broadened, storytelling became a form of entertainment, as well as a way to preserve the cultural history of a society.

And down through the ages there were minstrels, jesters, troubadours, nannies, and others who enthralled adults and children with their tales.

Still of an early children's library

By the late 19th century children's librarians were seeking ways to bring children and good literature together--to develop an art of storytelling.

Stills of early storytellers such as Sawyer, Shedlock, etc. Then to a candle burning against a dark background and then dissolving to a still of Augusta Baker

Thus from those early days there were storytellers who honed and sharpened their styles and techniques until they formed a foundation that is still solid today.

Marie Shedlock--Ruth Sawyer--
 Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen--Anna
 Cogswell Tyler--Mary Gould
 Davis--Eulalie Steinmetz Ross
 they lit the candle of inspi-
 ration and passed it on to
 the next guardian of the
 flame--Augusta Baker.

Various stills of Mrs.
 Baker from the early
 days to the present

Augusta Baker was born on
 April 1, 1911 in Baltimore,
 Maryland--grew up there--went
 to the University of Pitts-
 burgh at sixteen--finished
 her degree at Albany State
 Teachers College--and moved
 to New York City in 1934.

Augusta Baker worked at the
 New York Public Library from
 1937 to 1974 as librarian at
 the Countee Cullen Branch--
 Supervisor of Storytelling
 and Assistant Coordinator of
 Work with Children--and as
 Anne Carroll Moore, Frances
 Clarke Sayers, and Frances
 Landers Spain before her,
 Augusta became Coordinator of
 Work with Children in 1963.

Mrs. Baker conducts workshops
 and in-service training in
 storytelling and children's
 library services. She has
 taught at numerous universi-
 ties and is presently Story-
 teller-in-Residence at the
 University of South Carolina
 and adjunct faculty at Texas
 Woman's University School of
 Library Science. She also
 holds the Honorary Doctor of
 Letters degree from St. John's
 University in New York.

Throughout her career, she

Dissolve to live setting
 --subject and inter-
 viewer are sitting. Two
 cameras will be used
 during the taping--one
 will focus on Mrs.
 Baker and one will do
 close-ups and cutaways

has retained a dedicated
 sense of commitment to pre-
 senting the best for chil-
 dren--and always with a mea-
 sure of mirth and humor.

Music out completely
 Interviewer: Mrs. Baker it
 is a pleasure to have this
 opportunity to discuss the
 art of storytelling and its
 techniques, and more specif-
 ically your own philosophy of
 the art. Your career as a
 storyteller has spanned over
 forty-five years, how did it
 all begin for you?

Mrs. Baker:

Then the statement "story-
 tellers are born" does not
 apply in your case. Are
 there "born storytellers?"

Mrs. Baker:

You were fortunate to have
 one of the leading story-
 tellers as your supervisor--
 Miss Mary Gould Davis. What
 was she like and what influ-
 ence did she have on you as a
 young beginning storyteller?

Mrs. Baker:

You were also acquainted with
 Ruth Sawyer, what impressed
 you most about her story-
 telling art?

Mrs. Baker:

I believe we could say that
 no two storytellers are
 alike--that storytellers are
 individuals and have devel-
 oped their own individual

styles. Did you consciously develop a style?

Mrs. Baker:

Mrs. Baker do you think there is a correlation between personality or style and the stories one selects for telling?

Mrs. Baker:

Mrs. Baker does the storyteller incorporate his culture's beliefs and values into the tales he tells?

Mrs. Baker:

What role does the storyteller's environment play in the types of tales he tells?

Mrs. Baker:

You have co-authored a book with Ellin Greene entitled Storytelling: Art and Technique and it represents your recommendations for selecting, learning, and presenting stories. Would you share with us your ideas on selection techniques?

Mrs. Baker:

How do you go about learning a story?

Mrs. Baker:

In regards to presentation-- is there such a thing as the New York Public Library style

of storytelling?

Mrs. Baker:

Mrs. Baker if I was an aspiring storyteller and I came to you for advice, what would you say to me?

Mrs. Baker:

Public libraries--as with all libraries--are faced with cuts in services. One of the areas being cut are those services for children. The public library story hour is one of the services that many library administrators wish to eliminate--its value is difficult to evaluate. Why have story hours, are they really of value?

Mrs. Baker:

Mrs. Baker if you had the opportunity to alter your career, would you have done anything different?

Mrs. Baker:

In closing what are your ideas on the future of storytelling--especially as it pertains to libraries?

Mrs. Baker:

Music up full

Fade out on the two subjects and bring in a rolling quotation:
. . . The ultimate goal is to tell a story so simply and directly that it appears to be told "from yourself." All the emphasis should be placed

upon the storyteller, who is, for the time being, simply a vehicle through which the beauty and wisdom and humor of the story comes to the listeners.

Baker and Greene

Bring in Mrs. Baker standing in front of a group of children. One camera will stay on Mrs. Baker and another camera will take cutaways of the children

Music out completely
Mrs. Baker tells two stories

Fade out of the storytelling and bring in the rolling credits:

"Augusta Baker: Exponent of the Oral Art of Storytelling; Utilizing Video as a Medium" A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Library Science in the Graduate School of the Texas Woman's University School of Library Science by Maxine Modell Merriman, B.S., M.L.S. Denton, Texas August 1983.

Music up full

Grateful Appreciation to the librarians and staff of the Fort Worth Public Library West Branch--Mary Doebbeling, Branch Librarian, and Merry Covington, Children's Librarian; and to the Children of West Branch

Special Thanks and Appreciation go to Gerald K. Burns and his Multimedia Staff at General Dynamics Fort Worth Division

Nick Alvarado, Cameraman
 Scott Davis, Cameraman,
 Editor, and Co-Director
 Vickie Folsom, Cameraman,
 Grip, and Scriptgirl
 Jerry Price, Sound and
 Technician
 And General Supporters
 George McDonald
 Rick Oestricher
 Bob Simons, Music and
 Narration

Music fades out

Script II

Script two reflects the interview portion of the taping. In script one the beginning segments, up to the interview, were utilized as written; as were the segments after the interview.

Dissolve to live setting
 --subject and interviewer are sitting. Two cameras will be used during the taping--one will focus on Mrs. Baker and one will do close-ups and cutaways

Music out completely
 Interviewer: Mrs. Baker it's a pleasure to have you with us today so that we can discuss the art of storytelling and its techniques, specifically more about your own philosophy of storytelling. I know that your career has spanned over forty-five years. How did it begin for you?

Mrs. Baker: I think storytelling for me really began when I was a small child, a very small child. My grandmother was a good storyteller and you know how parents shush their children off to the grandparents and so forth. My grandmother told me stories to keep me occupied and to entertain me and I loved hearing them and then of course when I went on to

school I heard stories in school. But I didn't at that time ever think of being a storyteller I was a great listener, but I didn't think about storytelling until I went to work for the New York Public Library. I went there in 1937 and to be a children's librarian one had to be a storyteller. Anne Carroll Moore who was head of Children's Work was not a storyteller herself but she believed that one of the best ways of bringing together children and books was through the sharing of stories. So if you could not work on storytelling and perfect it to the best of your ability you were transferred to the adult department. Now can you think of anything worse than having to work in the adult department. So when Miss Moore told me that the only thing I had was potential, and she didn't have anything good to say about my storytelling, I began to work.

Interviewer: In the literature sometimes you run across the phrase "born storyteller." Are there born storytellers?

Mrs. Baker: I think you have to be born with maybe a love for stories, enjoying stories, but I don't think so, because I'm convinced that if this were true I would not be a storyteller today. I was absolutely horrendous the first time I told stories and Miss Davis listened to me and she said, "You work." But I

had the desire by then to do it and I think that was the important thing. Now we're all storytellers, we all tell stories--two, three, four times maybe more than that a day. But the kind of storytelling that we're talking about, the relationship of books and children--using that storytelling to bring together children and books, which is a whole different approach to storytelling--I frankly believe that you can work at it.

Interviewer: And this becomes just part of hard work.

Mrs. Baker: I think your love for it helps you then to become a better storyteller than the next person who maybe doesn't have quite that love for it.

Interviewer: You were probably very fortunate in who you had for your supervisor of storytelling--Mary Gould Davis, and she was one of the most well-known storytellers of that time. Since you knew her so well--what was she like?

Mrs. Baker: She was a very, very interesting woman. She came from a theatrical family--her brother was Owen Davis the playwright--and she was very tiny, very dramatic in her approach to things, but she did not believe that storytellers should be actors. She used to say to us, "When

you tell your stories your audience consists of those boys and girls in front of you, there are no Broadway talent scouts sitting in that audience so you needn't worry about getting your right side to them or anything of this sort. Your're main worry is to tell that story as well as you can--to the children." And so of course we were all trained to tell stories to the children and then we branched out and we told stories to adult audiences. But the other thing Miss Davis insisted on was that we make the difference between what she called literary fairy tale and the folktale and she defined that, she said, "The literary fairy tale is the work of one author--Hans Christian Andersen for instance--Rudyard Kipling." Now she said, "Those people are word stylists and you cannot take their work and put it in your ordinary language. Your purpose for telling these stories is to expose the children to beautiful language, so you learn those stories word for word." Folktales because they came from the folk, because they had been honed by the telling and the retelling over generations that's a different thing. But of course you still wouldn't take a Czechoslovakian folktale and tell it with modern American slang.

Interviewer: Well at the same time, about in the same generation, there was another well-known storyteller who

used to come and share her talents at the New York Public Library and was a good friend, I believe, of Miss Moore's--Ruth Sawyer. Did you ever get to meet her or know her?

Mrs. Baker: I knew Ruth Sawyer, two really two different ways, I knew Ruth Sawyer as the person who used to come to us and speak to us and give us lectures and this kind of thing--and to hear her, she had a voice like an organ--a great storyteller. But I was just thinking the other day, that I also knew her in another way because her daughter, who later married Robert McCloskey, was on my staff at 135th Street Branch--Bob used to court her up there. So I knew the Durands, see the girl's name was Durand, Ruth Sawyer Durand she was, I knew the family both ways. But Ruth Sawyer herself was generous with her talent and her training and her storytelling. Then we had the opportunity to hear Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen.

Interviewer: Yes, I imagine that was a pleasure.

Mrs. Baker: Oh yes, you should have heard her tell stories.

Interviewer: She was Scandinavian.

Mrs. Baker: Yes and she was out of Pittsburgh.

Interviewer: Out of

Pittsburgh and then she went out to California, wasn't she a principal out there? I guess we could say that no two storytellers are alike and that each develops their own style and individual styles. Do you think you consciously developed a style?

Mrs. Baker: I don't think so --I don't think so. I think in the development--now in the development of my style--I naturally was guided by the training from Miss Davis, this kind of thing. But then after awhile there are certain types of stories that are your stories, that you tell better than you tell others and they require a certain type of telling and then unconsciously a certain style develops. For instance I prefer a humorous story. I'm not very good at the beautiful, dramatic, moody, literary--the kind of thing Ellin Greene tells.

Interviewer: Like a Snow Queen, you don't think you could tell it?

Mrs. Baker: Never, because I am going to be so self-conscious you see, but not the humorous stories and I guess that's why I turned to Haitian stories and African stories and such because they're--they're alot of fun.

Interviewer: Do you think-- I mean, well like I'm thinking --Ruth Sawyer had such an influence from her Irish nurse and so she told Irish stories

quite well--Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen Scandinavian--she was Norwegian and she told Scandinavian stories well. Do you think there is a correlation between, say, personality of the person and style of storytelling and the reason why they select the stories they tell?

Mrs. Baker: Oh yes I really do--it is just what I was saying--if you are a person who likes humor, who likes humorous things, the funny story, the humorous stories unconsciously are going to appeal to you more. Now anything that you like so well you're going to tell it better. So I think eventually as you build up your repertoire you're going to find this out.

Interviewer: So that the saying "the story fits the storyteller."

Mrs. Baker: And I think it must. I believe the very first requisite is that you must like the story. Prerequisite--I think you have to like that story. I have in my day had to learn stories and to tell stories which really I didn't like, but I have been forced into it because of a project--you know I mean this sort of thing--and I couldn't wait to forget that story and I am sure I didn't tell it well. It was like a school assignment. I had to tell it, I had to learn it, I had to tell it, alright I've told it, forget it.

Interviewer: But those stories that really become, really just part of you--you can just tell at the drop of a hat so to speak.

Mrs. Baker: They become part of you.

This next question and answer was done twice. Due to a cue misunderstanding the response Mrs. Baker was giving was interrupted. Both the original and the redo are included in order for the reader to have both of Mrs. Baker's responses as they are not repeated verbatim. Also for reasons of preservation both responses should be noted. The second taping was the one included in the final production.

Interviewer: Do you think that a storyteller's--well I think this just stems right back to it--the environment and the culture that the storyteller comes from also must play a role . . .

Mrs. Baker: Not must . . .

Interviewer: Well not must, but . . .

Mrs. Baker: There's a possibility.

Interviewer: That it does.

Mrs. Baker: That it does, but

I don't really think it has too. I very often, when I'm teaching, when I'm working with seminars, I will suggest--you know you'll come across your students and they don't know where to begin and they say, "Well, I don't know what stories to begin with, you say build up a repertoire where shall I begin?" And I will very often say to them, "Well now think about your own background, your own racial background, your own cultural background. Are there stories in that, that you've heard that would come to you naturally, that you would want to share with people and perhaps this is a good starting point for you." I tell you what I'm finding, the younger, when I say younger generation of students, even graduate students, they are not coming out of a storytelling background. You see in my age and even younger than I am there was storytelling in the home and usually it came from the grandparents. Well, grandparents, you know I'm a grandmother but I tell stories to my grandchildren, I tell them now and then but its like when I can fit it in. Because the whole role of the home, the whole role of the grandmother has changed or the grandfather has changed, so I'm getting as students young people who have no storytelling background at all. They can be Irish, they can come from Irish homes and they've never heard an Irish

story.

The following is the
retake and then
continues with the
rest of the inter-
view

Interviewer: Do you think a storyteller's culture or environment have anything to do with the stories they select--like we were talking about personality and style--well how about the culture or environment that they come from. Would this have any bearing on the stories they tell?

Mrs. Baker: It could have, it could have some bearing but not necessarily so, not today. I mean generations ago, your grandparents really were the ones who were telling the stories. They told, really told, stories out of their own culture and out of their own racial background. My grandmother told me "Br'er Rabbit" stories for instance. But you see the whole role of grandmother has changed and the modern grandmother isn't staying home. The modern grandmother is a working mother, working grandmother is out, and I see this now with my young college students that when they come and I will suggest that they consider stories, you know, out of their own background, their own racial background, or their own cultural background, stories that they've heard and this kind of thing, this blank--they haven't,

they haven't heard anything you know and I'll say, "Well what are you--you're Irish, well what about the Irish stories that you've told." They haven't. I will begin naming off the likes of Ella Young--Seumas MacManus--and Padraic Colum and its a blank. You know you almost start to introduce them then to their own folk culture. So that the whole, that whole picture of the influence of environment and the influence of culture is changing.

Interviewer: I know that you have co-authored a book with Ellin Greene called Storytelling: Art and Technique--could we for a few minutes maybe discuss some of the recommendations that you have for you know selection, presentation, this type of thing, and preparation . . .

Mrs. Baker: Be happy to.

Interviewer: What about some of the sources--how important is selection?

Mrs. Baker: I personally, because now my answers are going to really be based upon my own personal feeling you understand that, and some upon experience. My feeling is that the most important aspect for us now as librarians and teachers, that the most important aspect of storytelling is selection. Now we're all going to tell differently, our quality of telling is going to be different, but the quality of

selection does not have to be--so that for me selection of material is the most important. I think it should be well-written--remember now that your children are listening so it should be something worth listening to. I think that it should be an introduction to good literature. I think that the storyteller should spend a great deal of time reading different versions of a story until that storyteller finds the best written version, the one which is best for the ears, the best to listen to, where the rhythm is good. Remember too, with storytelling you're not obligated to illustration the way you are with a picture book, so its always the text is the most important thing and then of course you must like what you're going to tell. So that for me selection is really . . .

Interviewer: The key to good storytelling.

Mrs. Baker: I think it is the key.

Interviewer: Do you have any little special hints or recommendations in preparing a story? How do you yourself prepare?

Mrs. Baker: Well for one thing I think you need to read and read and reread that story and read it from beginning to end. When you begin to learn the parts of the story, if you start that too soon, then the story in your

own mind is in little pots of stories rather than a sort of a complete story. When you begin telling the story for instance and you forget it, if you have read that story and read and really learned the story itself, maybe not the exact words, but the story itself as a whole, you can improvise to get on to the end of the story. So the thing I do is to read aloud. Now when I then start telling the story without the book-- first of all when I read aloud that story--I read it aloud the way I really want to tell it and I time it. Then when I begin telling the story without the book, I time it. If it's a twenty minute story and I tell it without the book in ten minutes I have either forgotten a great deal of that story or I'm speaking too fast, too quickly. On the other hand if I take forty-five minutes to tell the story I have too much of Augusta Baker in that story and I go back then and reread that story and see what I'm doing to the story. I also-- well now I know my mannerisms --but when I was really learning them and this kind of thing, I told my story in front of a full length mirror. Now that's where I learned that I wave my arms around like a windmill, you know. That's where I learned though I love jewelry that when I'm telling my stories and what not, I don't have all those jangly bracelets

and all this kind of thing, they're distracting to the children. Some people go to the tape recorder right away because they want to know how they sound and this kind of thing. I don't go to the tape recorder because the tape recorder does something to me.

Interviewer: What does it do?

Mrs. Baker: Well the tape recorder will pick out every tiny little, not just error, but every tiny little thing that's wrong with your voice, with--I mean in other words I say to my students, "Don't go to that tape recorder until you know you want to be a storyteller." Because when you hear yourself for the first time you're apt to say I will never in life tell another story. But when you are ready to say no matter how I sound I'm going to tell stories and then I'm going to use that tape recorder then to help me from lisping, to keep me from saying well ah er--well ah er--well ah er and this kind of thing.

Interviewer: Since your storytelling career started at New York Public and that's where you worked up until 1974, do you think there is such a phrase or a saying as New York Public style of storytelling--do you think there is? . . .

Mrs. Baker: Probably so--

probably so. You can almost pick us out across the country. Now of course the interesting thing about the New York Public librarians in children's work, especially was, that from the time it was set it was a training place for children's librarians who then went out across the country and set up children's programs and all this kind of thing. One of the stories I tell I heard at the first storytelling seminar, storytelling festival in the New York Public Library and that person went on to be coordinator of children's services in a large, large city and I learned my story from hearing her tell the story as a beginning storyteller. So our storytelling has really gone out all across the country.

Interviewer: If I was an aspiring storyteller and I came to you and asked you for advice--what do you think you would say to me?

Mrs. Baker: I would first of all--I guess the main thing I would say to you would be--fine I'm glad you want to be a storyteller. Let's immediately differentiate between a storyteller for the children and a person who swaps tales. A person who just sits down and off the top of his head. I hear these people now say, "Oh you know I heard a story a couple of times and I liked it and I just got up and told it myself." Well, I can

imagine what the telling is like. Now what we don't do, or what we do I mean, we underestimate children. And I think we have an idea that anything that we give them as adults, children will like and they will not only gain something from it, but they will like it because we as adults are getting up there telling them these stories. But let me tell you that they don't, they have their own way of judging you as a storyteller and perhaps the best way that they judge you is to not come back to the next story hour. Now there are those who will say, "Oh children today aren't interested in storytelling, they just want to look at movies, they're not interested in storytelling." Because we never, never look at ourselves, we never criticize ourselves. But we need to sometimes say, "I wonder why those children didn't come back to story hour next week --maybe I need to work a little harder, maybe I'm a sloppy storyteller." So I would say to you, you will have to work. You will have to do a great deal of critical reading, a great deal of reading where you--I can read a whole book of folktales, put together by a leading folklorist and not like one, and not learn one. I could hand that book to you, you'd love it and you'd learn it. So a great deal of reading goes into it.

Interviewer: So you have to be willing to sacrifice time.

Mrs. Baker: Time you must but its worth it.

Interviewer: Sure because you're sharing yourself with children and sharing good literature. Well if you had an opportunity to alter your career would you have done anything different?

Mrs. Baker: Oh heavens no-- no indeed. I professionally Maxine, I think I'm one of the most fortunate people in the profession because I always came along at just the right time. I not only had Mary Gould Davis to guide me and to train me in story-telling, remember, I had Frances Clarke Sayers.

Interviewer: Oh that's right --yes.

Mrs. Baker: And I mean she today is tops.

Interviewer: So that's a case of being in the right place at the right time.

Mrs. Baker: I certainly was and I think that I have been very, very fortunate.

Interviewer: I agree with you.

Mrs. Baker: And I have enjoyed every minute of it.

Interviewer: In our closing remarks what do you think the

future of storytelling is, especially since most, well nearly all of your work has been done in the public library setting. What is the future of storytelling in public libraries with you know cuts in budgets and like you were saying with this advent of television and children maybe not being interested or what?

Mrs. Baker: I think this all rests with the staff. You see many times we don't want to do something ourselves and so we blame the children. And this is what I keep trying to--as I move around and all, I keep trying to make this point--that if you truly want to do this you will work it into your schedule. Now storytelling per se has had a great, great interest--a burgeoning of interest but these are the people who are now like minstrels going all over the country--telling all kinds of stories, trying to make a living and making a living at it. You see so that kind of storytelling is growing. But our kind of storytelling with the teachers and the librarians doing it, this is something that really has to be worked at. But I would rather have a one story hour a month . . .

Interviewer: Than none at all.

Mrs. Baker: Than none at all.

Interviewer: I certainly have

appreciated your time and
have enjoyed discussing
storytelling with you today.
Thank you very much Mrs.
Baker.

Mrs. Baker: Thank you for
asking me.

Fade out on the two
subjects . . .

Music up full

CHAPTER VII

FROM THE CAMERA'S POINT OF VIEW

Why Video?

In chapter one the primary purposes of the study were presented. Four of those purposes were: (1) to examine the premise that a live audience has bearing and impact on the quality and effectiveness of the telling of stories; (2) to develop an alternative source of instructional materials to aid library science instruction in Children's Literature and Storytelling curriculum; (3) to preserve for future study and research Mrs. Baker's storytelling style, and her philosophy as related to technique and appreciation; and (4) to furnish a procedural scenario of producing a videotape in order that others may develop a similiar presentation, and to convey an understanding of the situations encountered during the process.

Choosing a subject to be studied had never presented a problem, the choice had always been Mrs. Augusta Baker. The question that had to be answered was: will the written thesis provide a clear picture of Mrs. Baker and her style of storytelling, or should a second medium also be provided? As the dissertation's title indicates video was the medium chosen. But why video?

In order to answer both questions there were decisions to be made on how the material included in the thesis would be presented and at the same time provide instructional material that would enhance and increase learning effectiveness. Should the material be arranged for individualized instruction, or for a small or large group presentation? If the subject material was to be considered general in nature then a group presentation would be suitable. But if the purpose of the material was for the learner to be able to do something specific then an individualized program would be more effective. Or, was the material going to appeal to both groups and individuals? It was felt that the subject lent itself to a medium that could be used in group and individual settings.

What type of information was going to be communicated? If the information was going to consist primarily of words, then the thesis, or the thesis and an audiotape would be sufficient. However, Mrs. Baker's voice was not the only factor to take into consideration. Her facial expressions, her use of gestures, and her body language would need to be observed thus an audiotape would not be able to present those features of her style.

What if the message consisted of words and materials that needed to be visualized? Then print, overhead transparencies, slides, or filmstrips might be selected if motion

was not necessary. Also, these formats were often used in an individualized setting. If frequent additions or deletions of visual material were likely to be needed, then slides were the best format since updates and changes could be made with relative ease. On the other hand, if large quantities of the program were to be distributed to audiences in various geographical areas, and changes were not likely to be made, then a fixed sequence medium such as a filmstrip might be used. Filmstrips are also more economical to produce in quantity than slides, and they take up less storage space and are easier to distribute.

Taking all the above factors into consideration the audiotape would allow Mrs. Baker's voice to be heard and slides or a filmstrip would show her visually. Also these formats would be relatively inexpensive to duplicate when and if duplication became necessary. But as has been determined there is a need to visualize Mrs. Baker's gestures and facial expressions, and these features of her style would not be shown as effectively in those mediums thus far discussed. It is true that her facial expressions and use of gestures might be observed in the static setting of the slides or filmstrip, but in order to capture her overall style and a portion of her personality--motion would be necessary.

Therefore, when a subject requires motion the choice

is then narrowed down between video and film. Decisions on which of the two mediums to use depends upon several factors: (1) what equipment or production facilities will be available? (2) what will be the time constraints? and (3) how will the presentation be used--individualized and/or group instruction? Video will provide immediate feedback, whereas film will need to be processed. Video and film both prove to be satisfactory for individual or small group presentations. However, for a large audience, film would be the preferred choice.

After taking the above information into consideration the immediate reaction would be to use film. Film uses motion and it reaches large audiences. However, there was another factor to be considered: what will be the expenses involved in film? in video? Both can be expensive ventures. However, if equipment and facilities are available then film proves to be the more expensive of the two. Film utilizes many outside services: (1) printing and processing laboratories; (2) production houses that specialize in animation, special effects, and like services; and (3) sound studios for mixing the narration and music, and providing an optical track.

Therefore, if budgets, equipment, and facilities are limited; and motion is necessary to the final product, then as Zettl has written:

With small-format television equipment, you can now produce, shoot, play back, and even edit your own television program. The small-format video cassette or cartridge makes it possible for you to watch a program anywhere, at any time, and as often as you wish; the option is no longer with the sender (the television station), but with the percipient. The introduction of relatively inexpensive, easy-to-operate equipment has, indeed, caused a quiet but significant communication revolution. . . . video, has become the province of the individual.¹

After considering all the mediums available, and having access to all the mediums described, it was felt that video would best fit the second medium requirement. Film was eliminated because of the cost factors. The access to three-quarter-inch video equipment, cameras, lighting, a studio, music, and professional technicians also made video a more favorable choice.

Preparation and Production

Stage one

The subject and the mediums had been decided upon-- Mrs. Baker, a written dissertation, and an accompanying videotape. During stage one the research and writing took place, and interviews with Mrs. Baker were completed. All of the data had to be collected in order for the videotape script to be written. It is interesting to note that when two mediums are involved--print and video--they depend on

¹Zettl, Television Production Handbook, p. 483.

each other to produce a finished product. The written material could not be completed until the videotape was prepared. For example, chapter five discusses Mrs. Baker's style, and it was not finished until after the videotape had been produced. Many of the premises were based on what the videotape portrayed. Thus, stage one was the writing of chapters two, three, four, and part of five.

Stage two

This stage was devoted to writing the script. The script depended upon the information presented in chapters two, three, four, and five. The writing of the script allowed the production to be visualized before proceeding to the taping. The script included the audio and video instructions that would be followed during the taping.

After a rough-draft of the script was completed, it was copy-edited by Mrs. Baker. When Mrs. Baker had furnished her input, it was then presented to the video technicians for their input. The use of technical assistance is highly important to a production. Their expertise in camera angles, lighting, and audio is the difference between an adequate or professional production.

After the input was completed a taping script was written and included in chapter six of this dissertation. Also included in chapter six was the interview portion of

the videotape, which was transcribed verbatim after the taping was completed.

Stage three

During this stage arrangements for the taping were accomplished. The numerous stills (photographs) that were to be used during the taping were gathered together. These stills were arranged in the order they would appear in the production, and any information necessary for title work was noted.

The script called for studio and library settings. The Fort Worth Public Library West Branch Head Librarian was contacted and permission was obtained to videotape in that library. The West Branch Children's Librarian arranged to have a group of children available for the taping of the story hour. Arrangements were also made to conduct the interview portion of the videotape in this same library. The taping of the interview was done before the library opened for regular business hours.

The selection of music was begun during this stage. Having access to a music library proved extremely beneficial, as there are numerous music companies who produce music specifically for video and film productions. The music was chosen for the beginning and end of the tape, and as an underscore to the narration. Music provides a

finished touch to a production, but it must enhance not detract. When selecting music several choices should be made available. The selection may sound fine in the music room, but when interfaced with the tape it may not complement the production.

Stage four

This stage was the heart of the production. The pieces of the puzzle were assembled and it was hoped that they would all fall into place. The script was ready, the settings were established, the stills and props were chosen, and the children and Mrs. Baker were ready--the taping could begin.

It was found that before the actual taping took place several steps should be followed: (1) read through the script; (2) have a technical walk-through and discuss camera angles and lighting; (3) inform the subjects of their roles and inform them of any technical instructions necessary to their accomplishment of the task; and (4) have a camera rehearsal. Everyone involved in the production must be aware of their role in order to achieve a smooth-running taping session. The object of a well-rehearsed taping is to reduce the number of retakes, both during the taping or later when the editing takes place. Retakes after the taping is complete may not be possible, especially when

people and an outside setting are utilized. An important thing to remember is to anticipate every need, especially the need for cutaways. Cutaways are necessary to have on hand in case they are needed to get the action from one place to another. In regard to retakes ask the following questions. Will it be possible to get the same groups together? Will it be possible to match the same setting? Planning and rehearsal are the keywords to avoid having to do retakes.

Another important aspect of the rehearsal and taping session is to keep careful notes on the location of cameras; types of angles used; placement of the furniture and props; the attire of the subjects; and the placement of the lights. Staying on top of the technical aspects of a production will aid in producing a product worthy of screening. Also keep records on such items as: scene content, scene takes, number of takes, length of each take, and the quality of the take--defining whether it was good or bad. The keeping of accurate records will become extremely important during the editing process.

The taping sessions relied heavily on the expertise of the video personnel. The better rehearsed and prepared the personnel are the more likely the session will be taped without confusion of their various assignments. The equipment verification is important to a production, but one must

be prepared to deal with equipment failure and where possible provide back-up equipment. Video taping must be approached as if the production were going on the air live and that viewers would be watching. A professional approach may mean the difference between a good and bad taping session. One should keep in mind that the lack of equipment and personnel does not mean that a quality production cannot be achieved. It is essential to know what the equipment and personnel capabilities are and then utilize them to their fullest.

Stage five

This stage was the heartbeat of the production and dealt with the editing process.

Postproduction editing means assembling shots and scenes that have been previously recorded on film or videotape into a meaningful whole. . . .

The basic aim of any editing process is to tell a story with clarity and impact.²

Before the editing can begin it is a good idea to review the tapes several times to "get a feel" for what has taken place during the taping sessions. In order to analyze the tapes it is necessary to make a dub of the original and use the dubs as working copies; thus, the original will be protected. The working tapes will be used to select the scenes that will be edited together. It is important that

²Ibid., pp. 276-277.

continuity, both audio and visual, be maintained. Again the keeping of accurate records by maintaining an editing sheet will be necessary. The editing sheet will indicate the scene, the length, the take, the description of the take, and the time code in and out indicators. The recording of this information is in preparation for the editing process.

Editing depends on the equipment that is available for the process. The less equipment the more it becomes necessary to be extremely well-organized during the taping sessions in order to limit extensive editing points. Where equipment is available the editing can be performed with electronic editors with assemble and insert modes. Editing can be done on off-line equipment and then finalized in an on-line situation; or it can be totally edited in an on-line situation. If scheduling permits the use of the on-line equipment, this form of editing saves time and preserves tape generations.

. . . You can insert new video and audio information into an existing videotape recording, or add various pieces of video and audio information in a desired sequence, all without cutting the tape [as was done in the early days of editing]. . . .

The electronic editor permits the simultaneous editing of video and audio, or of either track (video or audio) separately, without affecting the other.³

The music and narration had been previously recorded on quarter-inch audiotape and were now ready to be added to

³Ibid., pp. 283-284.

the master tape. The special effects were also added to enhance the final product. When all parts had been assembled and edited together, the master tape was reviewed carefully in order to determine if there was continuity throughout and that all editing points came clearly together.

The utilization of a second medium can be an enhancement to a dissertation, but it must be realized that it requires an additional time frame. The writing of a thesis can be accomplished on a continuous basis, but when a second medium is interplayed they both have bearing on each other. One cannot be completed in its entirety, and it means working in a segmented fashion. The words organization and planning cannot be over-emphasized and self-discipline is the keyword.

The producing of a videotape can be a learning experience that will prove beneficial in developing future media projects. There is a prerequisite to entering into a video production, the language--the jargon--must be known, and one must become knowledgeable in the video literature in order to become conversant with the video personnel that work on the project. Such periodicals and books as Audio-Visual Communications; Audio Visual Directions; Byte; Educational and Industrial Television; Electronic Education; Instructional Innovator; VideoPro; Video Systems; Single-Camera Video

Production: Techniques, Equipment and Resources for Producing Quality Video Programs by Barry J. Fuller, et. al. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1982); and Television Production Handbook by Herbert Zettl (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1976) are examples of material that can help develop a better understanding of video and its complexities.

There is no easy way to accomplish such a task as a videotape production. One must contend with equipment failures, scheduling, and personnel; but it is a worthwhile venture. The opportunity to observe creativity--both before and behind the camera--makes it all extremely satisfying. When one is fortunate enough to have professional people involved the headaches and tensions all disappear. It is therefore recommended that a second medium be utilized in more dissertation attempts.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN THE STORY IS OVER, ITS SPIRIT REMAINS

Baker and Greene

The previous seven chapters have discussed storytelling as an art, professional storytellers, personality, style, techniques, and production of a videotape.

One of the purposes of this dissertation was to develop an alternative source of instructional materials to aid library science instruction in Children's Literature and Storytelling curriculum.

The videotape was produced in such a way that it can stand alone, but it is recommended that chapters two and three be utilized as background material to accompany the tape. Utilization of the tape and background material in a classroom environment will best be determined by the person conducting the class. However, the use of both the tape and the written material was visualized as being an introductory lesson to the art of storytelling.

It was also felt that the dissertation lends itself to a number of avenues for further inquiry into video and the role it may play in academia. Some items that may be considered are: (1) video may have the potential for bringing the real world and its experts into the classroom on a

regular basis; (2) video may stand beside the written word as an informational tool; (3) video may be utilized as a reporting and/or publishing tool; (4) video may be a medium that will allow for perusal of material, as well as for in-depth study; and (5) video may be used as a lecture tool.

The personal use of video is becoming prevalent in our society, and as such, the students of our universities may be comfortable with the medium. Therefore, video may play a vital roll in the instructional programs of the future. Video may allow release time for the professor to conduct research, and with the publish or perish concept prevailing in many of our academic institutions, the question of video becoming a force in the instructional program might need addressing. Bank and Pett have written,

Past and present studies provide readers with insightful information on what makes learning effective. For example, it has been demonstrated that the brain accepts and processes information from either the audio or the visual channel. It does not accept data from both channels simultaneously. The channel which carries the most significant message, as determined by the learner, is the channel which is "listened to" by the brain. Therefore, the greatest learning from an AV presentation takes place when either the audio or the visual channel carries the dominant message and the other channel supports or cues the audience.¹

Another video format that will need addressing is the

¹Lucille Bank and Dennis Pett, "AV Production: Selecting a Strategy," Audio-Visual Communications 16 (November 1982):20.

interactive videodisc. The videodisc has a great deal of social potential in education because it enables the student to stop the program at any time and recap--to study what is being shown, to make notes, and then continue with the program. At this time videodiscs are being evaluated and in parts of the industrial and military communities they are actually being put to use. What their use will be in educational institutions is yet to be determined. Many educators have a resistance against purchasing new technology, but this does not negate the fact that the videodisc may play an important roll in individualized learning and retraining.

Technology is constantly changing and it cannot help but change the face of education. For example, computers may well change the way we learn and thus education as we know it today will be obsolete before the end of the century. It could well liberate the school to fully serve its true purpose. Computers will be used as tutors, as simulators, for graphics, as information and retrieval data bases, and as problem solvers (many of the same roles can be filled with the use of video and videodiscs). Computers could very well offer more self-paced courses, self-paced curriculum, changes in grading, and long distance learning (again many of these roles can be met by the use of video and videodiscs). Programming could well become easier for

the educator to develop his own software. There are systems already developed that allow the educator to design his own learning system.

Knowledge and all of its implications will dominate the last two decades of this century, We must recognize that computers are the assembly line for knowledge; they will crank out the information necessary for the future. Consequently, the man or woman who speaks the language of computers will command the universal tongue necessary to be a citizen of the world.²

Video and computers appear to be the way education will need to go to meet the demands of their students. With the traditional pool of graduate and undergraduate students shrinking, many colleges and universities across the country are looking for practical ways to expand their student populations by serving the educational needs of groups in surrounding communities. Thus universities expect video education to become even more popular in the future.

Training and retraining in all areas is the "name of the game" in order to meet the needs of those entering and/or returning to the university. Video offers education that vehicle through which rapid training can take place. Videotape can be a reporting device, whether reporting to all personnel at various locations or to just a few at a remote site. Important meetings can be taped and sent immediately

²"University's Goal is Total Computer Literacy by 1984," Electronic Education 2 (November 1982):28.

to all interested parties. Video can be used for general communication, e.g., new teachers orientation or as a way of presenting benefit packages to personnel. Video can be used in closed-circuit teleconferencing. Video is such a common part of our everyday life that it has become the most accepted media format we have today.

When a program is recorded for use by others, the instructor's pride is also involved and doing a quality presentation becomes a top priority. The instructor is also forced to evaluate exactly what is important and should be included, and to organize his presentation completely so that the points are made clearly and are reinforced. In video, the producer's task is to produce a program that presents content in a manner that contributes to the end use of the information. O'Rourke writes that,

If your educational objectives are unclear, if your instructional approach is ill-defined or badly organized or if your instructional staff is badly prepared to teach the material, the use of TV won't improve a thing. Television, after all, is just one more conduit for the human experience, and if the experience is flawed, so is the television. Television can magnify the microscopic, detail the illusory, repeat the infrequent, or juxtapose the incongruent. It can illustrate, embellish, explain, and expose, but it cannot fix a badly planned lesson. Bad lessons just don't get any better on television; some of them, in fact, get worse.³

³James S. O'Rourke, IV, "Principles for Good Educational Tapes," Educational and Industrial Television 15 (February 1983):68.

It is further recommended that the videotape done for this dissertation be considered as a first in a series of lecture tapes in librarianship and information science for Texas Woman's University School of Library Science.

The study lends itself to further research needs in the art of storytelling.

There is evidence from McLuhan and others that society is heading toward a broader concept of comprehension--not just reading comprehension but that involved in visual literacy and in oral expression. If this is the case, the art of storytelling will gain in reputation. Even in the midst of electronic wonders, storytelling is still one of the best ways of comprehending literature.⁴

This study may serve as a basis for research into other noted storytellers and their styles. Or as a basis for examining present day storytellers and comparing them with their predecessors. Have storytelling styles changed from the time of Shedlock to today's Freeman and Regan? Do the storytellers of today have their styles steeped in the traditions of Sawyer, Baker, Shaw, and others? It is recommended that other well-know storytelling figures be preserved in some form of media, whether it be written, visual, and/or audio.

Storytelling is tough fibered. Stories hold the reins of continuity and the consciousness of all

⁴Sam Leaton Sebesta and William J. Iverson, Literature for Thursday's Child (Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1975), p. 470.

cultures. Stories live on, even when history is forgotten. There can be no doubt that storytelling is strong enough to survive history itself.⁵

Even though this study examined the premise that a live audience has bearing and impact on the quality and effectiveness of the telling of stories, the recommendations for further study that Abernathy put forth in 1964 can still be addressed. Abernathy suggested further research in: (1) how does radio and television storytelling differ from storytelling in a face-to-face situation in regard to the storyteller's presentation? In regard to the listener's response? and (2) in comparison with a group face-to-face situation, to what extent is the listener's response altered when he receives the story by himself recorded on tape, disc, or video?

Since storytelling is an art form and is difficult to measure its true value, there is further need for research such as that conducted by Smardo and Curry at Dallas Public Library from September 1981 to April 1982. They approached story hours from a budgetary viewpoint in that they were able to demonstrate and measure the impact of story hours on children's language learning. In this day of budget cut-backs, research such as What Research Tells Us About Story-hours and Receptive Language (Dallas: Dallas Public Library,

⁵Ibid., p. 474.

1982) is needed.

Throughout the writing of this thesis the author has attempted to stress the importance of storytelling and that it can still have impact on the lives of our children today and those that come after. Mrs. Baker and those storytellers who preceded her were dedicated to preserving good literature through the art of storytelling. Their understanding of the literature and the beautiful language represented therein were reasons enough to want to share it with children. It is hoped that by their examples others will want to carry on the message.

In order to conclude this dissertation there are two statements regarding storytelling's future that need to be reiterated. One of the statements was written forty-three years ago and the other twenty-seven years ago, yet they could have well been written today. In 1940 Nesbitt wrote the following:

Granted that story-telling is no longer the unique function of the library, still the purpose of library story-telling is unique. Competition with radio and moving picture is not our field. The use of these mediums to introduce literature and the facilities of libraries is, of course, legitimate. But any effort to match their easy popularity inevitably will mean lowering of standards and failure of purpose. . . . Story-telling will consume time not commensurate with the results produced. We are straying from the real issue when we think of ourselves as competitors with popular forms of modern entertainment. It is not for us to cast ourselves in another role, but to hold to the good that is inherent in our own role. Public Library work with children apparently has come to a crucial point. We

have passed through the pioneer stage, with its fresh enthusiasm, its conviction of purpose, its incentive to action. We have emerged into a world confused by many theories in regard to education, in regard to the betterment of humanity, in regard to living in general. We are brought into contact with these theories by the very nature of our profession, and it is therefore incumbent upon us to be intelligent about them. It is not incumbent upon us to allow ourselves to be submerged by beliefs, methods, or aims foreign to our real purpose. If we do allow this, we shall lose our identity. We have yet to be shown that the reason for which we came into existence is invalid. So long as we believe in it, so long must we maintain that there is good in it, and that it is possible of attainment. The methods of attainment may be many. Chief among them is story-telling, with its faculty for true education by means of stimulation and inspiration, with its capacity for re-creation of beauty, with its gift of interpretation. By means of organized story hours, for older as well as for younger children, with well-planned programs embracing all kinds of literature and literary effects, children may be introduced to literature in the broad sense of the word. First their senses, and through their senses, their intellects, may be trained to distinguish between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the mediocre and the artistic. A basis for discrimination and appreciation may be established, bringing results infinitely more far-reaching and lasting than the introduction of any book or group of books.⁶

Sayers wrote the following in 1956,

The future contribution of storytelling may well surpass all that has gone before. In an age when all the world's, not a stage, but a screen, a picture, a delineation of the obvious object and the obvious symbol for emotion; in an age when the imagination is dulled and stunted by a surfeit of pictures in magazines, textbooks, billboards, busses, and newspapers; in an age when every hour of the day and night is filled with shadows of men and women moving fast, talking fast, lest they should lose their Hooper rating. In such an age, the art of the storyteller remains, giving his listeners the space, the time, and the words with which to build

⁶Nesbitt, "Hold to That Which is Good," p. 15.

in their imaginations the "topless towers," "the stately pleasure domes," the shapes and sounds none knows nor hears save each mind for itself. . . .

The time is ripe for storytellers to keep alive the word direct, by speaking it, and speaking for its worth at every opportunity.

. . . We must keep alive the fine old tales no longer in print, by telling them. We must unite to devise new ways of subsidizing the re-appearance of books no longer in print, the great books we have lost. We must even consider and explore ways of making the machines serve the concept of "From-me-to-you."

Meanwhile, the power remains; the power of the voice, and the words; and the ultimate reward--the judgement of the child who says, if you deserve it, "You tell good."⁷

Storytelling is an ancient form of communication and the appointed storyteller passes his heritage from one generation to another. The storyteller is the medium through whom the collective picture of past events is made visible to a living audience.

⁷Sayers, "From Me to You," p. 2011.

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