Guide to Quality Story Telling

Basic Techniques to keep in mind:

• The story should not be memorized word for word. The story should flow when told; the teller should not have to stop to think about what comes next.

• However, memorize the first and last lines of the story for a comfortable start and a smooth finish.

• If you goof, keep going. Just pause, take a deep breath, and continue. Don't interrupt the flow of the story by apologizing or starting over.

• If you skip part of the story, just work it in when it fits.

**Projection:** The storyteller must be heard by the entire audience, even the back row, in order to be effective.

**Clear speech and proper enunciation:** The audience must understand what the teller is saying.

**Memory:** Events need to be recounted in order and to the end for the story to make sense.

**Body movement:** Helps the audience visualize the story. However, remember that storytelling is NOT theater; do not act out the story. Choose those parts of the story with the most important and appropriate images when adding movement. Each movement should have meaning. Movement that is overdone or with which the storyteller is not comfortable can be a distraction. A rule of thumb is do not move more than three feet, do not pace, and do not turn your back toward the audience. The arms should be relaxed — don't flail.

**Eye contact:** The teller should interact with the audience. Looking at the floor, the ceiling, or the wall at the back of the room shuts out the audience. However, the teller should not "stare down" the audience.

**Developing characters:** Posture and voice enhances the story. For example, is the witch stooped and is her voice crackling?

**Sound effects:** Sound effects make some stories more interesting. Noise puts interesting cadence into the story and it often offers opportunities to involve audience participation. Of course, remember that not all stories have plot lines that accommodate things like creaking doors, wind howls, and animal sounds.

**Mood and tone:** These create the atmosphere of the story. Is the mood one of fear, romance, comedy? All the elements of the story help to create the mood. Help the audience "feel" the story.

**Rate/speed:** The character and situation often dictate how fast or slow a particular part of a tale should be delivered. Often we have a tendency to speak too quickly, so that it seems we are racing through the story. Have a variety of speeds within the story, appropriate to the mood.

Finally, remember that memorizing a sequence of events is only a very small part of storytelling. Quality Storytelling involves using some of the techniques listed above to give the story a personality of its own. It is personality that makes a story vital and alive and not just a rote telling of events.