

Follow-up



SPRING 1998

Do you remember those stories you were told as a child? From “Once upon a time” to “... and they lived happily ever after.” Did you feel those moments were special?

When I was small and TVs weren’t invented(!), each weekday afternoon at 1:45, we were asked, “Are you sitting comfortably? Then I’ll begin?”¹ I would settle down with my favourite stuffed animal “Horace” and listen to the story of the day. Stories would range from the old familiar ones to new ones offering windows on a world filled with imagination and possibilities.

Fifteen minutes each day was set aside for “Listen with Mother,” with a distinctive signature tune that I can still hear in my head, though I cannot recall its title.

Also, beloved Grandparents would add to these magical moments by sharing stories from their childhood and giving wise explanations as to why the milk soured when thunder was in the air and why you needed to turn your money over when the moon was full.

In those days, listening to someone tell a story was very much part of life. It still is in many places in the world. Oral history is one of the oldest ways in which our traditions, morality, and sense of who we are is passed down through the generations. Before

Gutenberg invented the printing press and books began to become generally available, storytelling was the way we learned about the past, tried to comprehend the present and predicted the future. Every culture in our world has an oral history tradition — a resource most of us take for

we can miss important parts to our total understanding. We need to look back throughout history to garner a fuller meaning and appreciation for different cultures. Stories, folktales, myths, legends, allegories and fables can be a valuable addition to our knowledge.

*Are you sitting comfortably?
Then we'll begin.*



granted that can be tapped and made into a delightful and important part of our life.

With the advent of the study of Scientific Management in the early 20th Century, much of the earlier explanations of why things and people were as they were was discounted. Our century has seen a relentless search for scientific and psychological reasons for individual behaviour. While these have value,

We hear and remember folktales — consequently, there are often many versions of the same theme, passed down through generations, such as how the creation of the world occurred.

The main kinds of folktales are myths, legends and *Märchen* or fairy tales. These terms are often interchangeable but carry an implication of falsehood and incredibility.

Today folklore has come to be regarded as part of the human learning process and an important source of information about human life. Great interest was created in the early 19th Century by the publication of *Household Tales*

(2 volumes 1812-1815, translated in 1884) by the German philologists Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Their work encouraged many others, including Hans Christian Andersen, to publish and retell similar materials from their own cultures.

Stories carry the shared beliefs, culture and history of groups. As human beings we all have many similar life experiences, and stories

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For up-to-date info, check the Web site regularly — we update it at the start of each month.

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from different cultures speak to those similarities. Stories do not have to be “old” to be valuable. Much of literature provides us with the ability to relive the story and relate it to our life in a meaningful way. In fact, one might postulate that every successful book, film, soap opera and drama is successful to a large part because of the connection of the story to the audience.

What stories can you tell? Your story is your interpretation of what happened. People outside you interpret “your story” using “their story,” and they may understand a different story from the one you tell. Sometimes we do not fully understand our personal stories. Many of the old legends talk about this journey of discovery — the Hero’s Journey, the Odyssey, the Lord of the Rings — the search for meaning. We are on such a journey, and the stories we tell can exercise a peculiar sort of power on us and our listeners. My experience is *my* experience, not *the* experience — but often my experience is your experience, and then we have synergy and meaning.



“Story is living and dynamic. Stories exist to be exchanged, they are the currency of human growth.”

Jean Houston, *The Search for the Beloved*.²

1 A workshop using stories will be presented by Jane at the 27th IFTDO World Conference in July in Dublin, Ireland — a land well-known for its folklore and legends.

2 Houston J. 1987. *The search for the beloved; journeys in sacred psychology*, Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher

IFTDO’s 27th World Conference and Exhibition – Dublin, Ireland, July 20-23, 1998



The theme is “Revitalizing HRD — A Vision for the New Millennium.” Jane will be presenting a workshop on “Using Stories to Explore HRD Issues.”

The idea for IFTDO was conceived during a United Nations conference in 1971; the first conference was held in Geneva in 1972 and attended by 19 organizations from all over the world. Currently, the IFTDO’s worldwide network includes human resource practitioners in small and large training and development organizations, universities, government agencies, multi-national corporations, and consultancies.

IFTDO’s membership consists of about 150 organizations in 47 countries.

IFTDO’s mission is to develop and maintain a worldwide network committed to identifying, developing and transferring knowledge, skills and technology to enhance human performance, productivity and sustainable development. Visit IFTDO’s Web site at www.iftdo.org to find out more.

Spring/Summer Happenings!

- Workshops in UMDS — Effective Management and Personnel Retreat, May
- Dublin, July 1998 — Jane invited back to IFTDO (see Profile this issue) and will be presenting a workshop on “Using Stories to Explore HRD issues”
- Continuous learning to be a Granma to Micaela Jane
- GVRD — Level 2 program
- Are You a Gorilla, Heart, Spider or Clown? — Professional Women in Travel of Northern Alberta
- New brochure out soon — in the best tradition of Singapore and Heathrow Airport. Curious? Ask for a copy

Follow-up is published two or three times a year for clients and friends of Jane Durant. We hope it helps you get better results for yourselves and others. If you would like the opportunity to be part of a future issue, or if you would simply like to receive a copy, please call, e-mail or write me at:

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Country Code for North America is 1-604-872-7761

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Creative design by Janice Harvey



PRINTED IN CANADA ON RECYCLED PAPER