

Inland Valley Storytellers July 12, 2011

John St. Clair exceeded and John and Chris brought home-made and home-grown treats that disappeared very quickly.

We were 16 members: Chris & John St. Clair, Jayne Sjodin, Paul & Josh Bublin, Virginia Stark, Marlene Carter, Glen Garry, Karen Rae Kraut, Ron Evans, Andrew Bakhit, Angela Lloyd, John Schmalstig, Nick Smith, myself, Barbara Rugeley, and a new member (we hope), Anna Bedford, new to Claremont and to Pilgrim Place from Little Rock, Arkansas. We heard 5 tales.

1. John Schmalstig shared 2 short poems. I'm entitling them "Love so Vast" and "Searching for Blessings." He also reminisced about a family event that occurred at home, outside Harford, CN. The 2 sisters were to stay home and help Momma clean up, while the 3 boys (oldest, and John at 5 and his little brother at 3) were to "Go into the woods and not come back till dark." They got into some mischief, cutting down a tree, and getting totally covered in pine sap, so much so that his mother had to cut their hair very short to get it out. After such a fine Indian summer day, they were surprised to see snow the next day. John sailed out the door, unclothed!
2. Karen Rae Kraut shared a folktale from the USSR about a king who dreamed of a fox hanging from the palace roof. He expected all his subjects to come to the palace to offer an interpretation of the dream. Ivan, on his way, met a snake who spoke with a human voice. The snake offered to help him, if he would share the reward. Ivan eagerly agreed. "There is deceit and wickedness in the kingdom." The king believed Ivan's interpretation and rewarded him richly. Ivan chose to avoid the snake and keep the reward. A second and third dream forced Ivan to return to beg forgiveness from the snake, twice more. Karen's snaky hands stole the tale.
3. Nick Smith is practicing for a KPCC Webcast on July 29th with Michael McCarty. He told a true story about Fayette Nelson, a Civil War combat engineer, and soldiers who returned to Gettysburg for the reunions of soldiers in 1888, 1913, and the final, 75th reunion, in 1938. The 3 worst things that could happen to an engineer: dying was only number 3. Number 2 was getting maimed, so that you couldn't work.

But number 1 was failing to do the job right, especially when other men's lives would be lost due to that failure.

4. Ron Evans shared his story, "My Night at the Opera." The ministry, he says, requires minding your Ps and catching the clues: preaching, priestly rites, & pastoral care. With 2 free tickets to the opera and a wife who couldn't attend, he planned to offer the tickets to Mrs. Compton, a wheel-chair bound parishioner and lover of the opera, expecting her not to be able to accept, thus fulfilling the fourth "P": politics; to take the church organist and get "what-a-nice-guy points all round. But, low, she accepted. "Nothing to do but make the best of it." It was a black tie affair, an hour and a half into NYC, after a long day of ministering and teaching and commuting and meetings. Mrs. Compton was a 50+ year member of the Opera Guild and was treated with special care by all the regular attendants: special parking pass, personal wheelchair and attendant, Opera Guild pre-party, special attendant at the ready outside their private opera box. A wonderful evening and night to remember, happy to get her home shortly after 1:00 a.m. so I could go home and get to bed. After getting her safely in her home and ready to go to mine, she said, "Let's cap off the evening with a night-cap." Even at the opera, it ain't over when it's over!
5. Angela Lloyd brought her ukulele and shared one of several e.e. cummings poems she has set to music, "maggie and milly and molly and may". She told a story about her 1st grade class in Van Nuys, who completed a Basic Needs study through a project called "Wuzzies" (Pom Poms with cardboard feet whose voice can only be heard by the child they belong to). Angela shared the Wuzzies story (a set of dollies made from pantyhose, cotton and felt) offered to the first graders this spring modeling "telling spontaneously using comments and questions from the listeners." The Wuzzies tended the babies born in the cabbage patch. They enjoy travelling with their stage manager, (a Louisiana dolly with porcelain legs), and sharing home decorating tips using found objects: bottle caps, buttons, bits and bobs.