

So many books

The Greedy Sparrow: An Armenian Tale as retold by Lucine Kasbarian, illustrated by Maria Zaikina (Marshall Cavendish press, 2011) www.lucinekasbarian.com. Free downloadable Teacher's Guide: <http://www.cobblestonepub.com/resources/cob0005t.html>

This is a formula tale about a sparrow who tricks one person after another into letting him fly off with a succession of bigger and bigger things, from a loaf of bread to a bride! But his greed gets the better of him in the end, a satisfying conclusion for kids and adults alike. Kasbarian is a press agent as well as an author of books about Armenia and Armenian-Americans. Her love of her family's heritage shines clearly in this original retelling of a traditional folktale she used to hear from her grandfather. Fortunately the publisher, Marshall Cavendish, allowed her to work with the illustrator to further deepen the cultural significance of the book by including images of genuine locations, buildings, and costumes. The Bride's face and dress are based on Kasbarian herself! And I love the expression on the flying sheep on the cover...

Marshall Cavendish reminds storytellers that if we wish to tell THIS version of the story, we need to write for permission. However if we wish to craft our own version, as Kasbarian did, we're advised to consult a bare-bones text recorded in 1907 by Armenian poet Hovhannes Tumanian (English translation at http://www.armeniapedia.org/index.php?title=Hovhannes_Tumanian:_The_Sparrow). In any case I recommend looking at the Tumanian text: it made me really appreciate Kasbarian's modern spin on the tale.

reviewed by Fran Stallings

Tales from a Free-Range Childhood by Donald Davis. (John F. Blair, Publisher, 2011) ISBN 978-0-89587-507-5

Move over Norman Rockwell. The painter's love affair with Americana has inhabited the soul of another artist, this time storyteller Donald Davis. *Tales from a Free-Range Childhood* has all the attention to detail and gentle humor that used to grace the covers of *The Saturday Evening Post*.

Donald Davis has been one of the stars of the storytelling world for more than thirty years. Those who've had the good fortune of hearing him live will hear the easy pace, the uncanny sense of timing, and the underlay of warmth that are part of his performances. Readers coming to his stories without the benefit of oral delivery will still catch the fun and the acceptance of human frailty that weave through his childhood memories.

Tales from a Free-Range Childhood is full of vivid details from a childhood spent in a loving

family. Something of Davis's training as a minister comes through the stories, which invariably include the gem of a life lesson. Actions have consequences, but parental punishments show more acceptance of children's foibles than angry reactions.

The world of Davis's childhood will be familiar to those who grew up in the first post-World War II generation. In the age of smart phones and e-readers, we can still remember the first television sets, ducktail hair cuts, the Pontiac Chieftain, and the first truly terrifying movie of our lives, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*.

Even children growing up in an electronic age will relate to the mischievous young Donald's shearing his younger brother's curls, persuading him to stomp in cow pies, or scheming to get rid of a babysitter. And anyone who's experienced or witnessed the sting of isolation will shed a tear reading about Willie Freedle's empty Valentine's box and her fourth-grade teacher's creative response.

Tales from a Free-Range Childhood is like healing balm. Woven through the laughter is an optimism too often in short supply. Davis's stories stir the memory pot and fulfill the goal he sets for them: "My hope is always that they will serve as memory dusters for readers, and that readers will end up telling stories of their own about which they would not have thought without reading these."

reviewed by Cathryn Wellner <cjwellner@gmail.com>

Odds Are Good, Bruce Coville, Magic Carpet Books, A Division of Harcourt Publishing Group Inc., Orlando Florida, 2006, ISBN -0-15-205716-1.

In her introductory comments to this intriguing and most enjoyable collection of eighteen tales, taken from two previously published Coville collections (1994 and 1999), Jane Yolen tells us that the true worth of Coville's narratives is not just their oddity--often brilliant, beautiful, and mysterious--but the inner truth of stories that often go beyond the everyday world. These stories range from the ironically satirical to the amusing, and from the truly poignant to the utterly terrifying. Some are part modern allegory, as in the case of "Old Glory" and "With His Head Tucked Underneath 'is Arm," which resound like today's headlines and will disquiet the reader's mind. I defy anyone, after reading "Blaze of Glory," not to shed a tear or three with its poignant treatment of the approach of death for an elderly person.

"There Is Nothing Under the Bed" is one of the most horrific tales I have ever encountered.

Continued on page 5

Member news, notes and events

Territory Tellers at Tejas

Several TT members attended and told at the Tejas Festival in Denton TX. The following presented stories at various concerts: Tony Hardman, Marilyn Hudson, Jacquelin Rush, Fran Stallings and Nancy Lenhart Matthews. A drawing was done at the Tejas Festival for six Fringe Performance slots at the Tejas "Year of the Regions" conference on July 8-10 in San Antonio, TX. From the sixteen applicants one TT member was chosen: Nancy Lenhart Matthews for *Lady Lineman*.

A Whopper of a tale in Choctaw

It got mighty deep at the Choctaw Library on Saturday, March 26, during the first Whopper Festival sponsored by the Wayword Tellers. Participants chose from one of three categories:

- ❖ Family Stories, You Won't Believe This Really Happened.
- ❖ Fractured Fairy or Folk Tales
- ❖ Tall Tales, The More Exaggerated, The Better.

Each category was judged by a team of three judges. Then first, second, and third place winners in each category were awarded certificates and a highly coveted box of Whopper Candy.

And the winners were (drum roll please):

Family Stories - 3rd Place - Valerie Kimble, 2nd place - Alvin Rodgers, 1st place - Molly Lemmons.

Fractured Fairy or Folk Tales - 3rd place - Carol Roberts, 2nd place - Katherine Thurman, and 1st place - Liz Parker.

Tall Tales - 3rd place - Connie Fisher, 2nd place - Suzie Beasley, and 1st place - Greg Roberts.

Those first place winners didn't get to rest on their laurels! They flexed their storytelling muscles and presented a group impromptu story. The audience voted on the overall winner. Greg Rodgers was ultimately crowned the King of the first Whopper Festival with a Tall Tale that ended with Greg being the long lost King of Moravia!

Wayword Tellers already have plans in the making to host this festival again next year. You've been warned, start brushing up on your powers of exaggeration now to present your own Whopper next year.

So many books Continued from page 4

Read "Duffy's Jacket" and giggle hilariously at its O'Henry-like ending. In such tales as "Homeward Bound" and "The Stinky Princess," Coville takes the literary fairytale to new heights, as he also does with a truly heavenly ghost tale, "Biscuits of Glory." Other personal favorites include "The Golden Sail," "The Passing of the Pack," and "The Box", each of which have a simple and haunting beauty of its very own.

Even though these are not traditional folk narratives, story lovers and story crafters will find many familiar folk motifs embedded in Coville's narratives. Read these delightful stories and be amused, vexed, slightly terrified, but most of all, know that you have entered a story landscape where Coville has few equals. Odds are more than good that this collection will become a favorite of a lot of folks, just as it has become a favorite of mine.

reviewed by Robert Rodriquez



\$2 Bill Campaign
Let's get noticed by Seminole Businesses

As a way to get noticed we are suggesting that all participants in the Spirit of Oklahoma Festival get a couple of \$2 bills and spend them at a business in Seminole. Going to lunch, picking up gum at the convenience store, pay part of your bill with \$2.

Don't have any? We will have some at the registration desk for exchange. If you want some early, Chester Weems has worked with his local bank to get a few. Contact him at vweems@cox.net to make arrangements.