

# Story collector seeks to tell world tales

By Judith Berne  
Staff writer

Story-telling is a lost art form but Rachel Foxman is reviving it.

Ms. Foxman, a 1971 graduate of West Bloomfield High School, dons her Celtic-inspired story-telling costume to tell folk tales from many countries to the pleasure of children and adults. She counts herself a modern-day troubadour with a theater arts degree from the University of Idaho and experience ranging from presentations in Oregon and Idaho to theatrical festivals in the British Isles.

In the area to visit her parents, Daniel and Miriam Foxman of Keegoon Harbor, she told her tales last week at Open, Roosevelt and Abbott schools in the West Bloomfield School District.

She will weave Celtic tales for the Detroit Historical Museum during its presentation on Ireland later this month. "I'm a story teller," she called the museum to say.

"You're just what we want," was the response.

MS. FOXMAN shuns puppets, masks

and background music which might add "bype" to the tales she tells.

"I try to present a story in its more basic manner," she says, as travelling story tellers did in the middle ages. "There's not a lot of flash — there's just me."

"Story-tellers were the original entertainers," she reports. They declined with the introduction of movable type about 1440, as reading replaced listening.

These days, television has replaced reading for many children, leaving little to the imagination, according to Ms. Foxman. "If somebody tells a story, you must use imagination. You have to concentrate to hear a story."

But she personally hasn't met "anyone else who is a story teller."

She blames television in part for the demise of the "oral tradition" and live dramatic performances.

"There's a need for story-telling," she insists.

STORIES ARE both entertainment and instruction, Ms. Foxman says. She focuses on tales which have been told

for hundreds of years in America, England, Afghanistan, Morocco, Poland, China, France and Haiti.

"Sometimes they're humorous, sometimes they teach, sometimes there are a lot of nice images," she explains. She knows more than 100 from memory, and has easy reference to others which she collects from folklore books.

On a given program, she likes to mix stories from different countries "to provide sort of a cross-cultural exchange. The country that the stories are from are as important as the stories," she says.

Nine months abroad showed her "the performing arts are more respected in Europe as a whole. People there are not so threatened."

MS. FOXMAN found an audience at English and Scottish performing arts festivals. The tales most requested were those of the American Indian.

Her goal is to become a full-time story-teller. Although she has told tales at museums and school districts, she must supplement the \$10 per half hour charge with other work.

She plans to head west, then perhaps back to England to pursue her vocation.

Farming or taking care of children will supplement her income. She is willing to do variety of things "to allow me to tell stories."



DWIGHT CENDROWSKI/staff photographer

Rachel Foxman, wearing a old-fashioned dress designed by her former classmate Julie Burt from West Bloomfield High, tells her stories collected from around the world.

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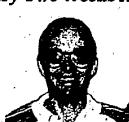
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