

Article Last Updated: 7/28/2005 11:12 AM A spinner of smiles Storyteller shares love of language through fables, tales and 'spoonerisms' By Lynda Percival -Close-Up Correspondent



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Salt Lake Tribune She didn't use a television or a computer. In fact, without the aid of any type of electrical device, Carol Esterreicher recently held a group of children spellbound, using nothing more than a drum and carefully weighted words.

The professional storyteller from Draper isn't surprised the spoken word has such an appeal.

"I think there's been a [storytelling] revival because people are becoming sensitive that we're so electronically based," she said. "We're missing the hugs, the three-dimensional face to face and sharing of emotions."

Esterreicher has a long personal history with language. She spent 30 years as a speech and language pathologist. In fact, the 19 years she worked in the Jordan School District sparked her interest in storytelling.

"Working with children with communication problems, a lot of times their language is such that they don't know how to tell a story," Esterreicher said. "I used to make appointments with my student's classroom teachers for [the student] to come in and tell a story in their own classroom. That was fun."

That experience with her students, coupled with her teacher workshops gave her the material to write a book. Esterreicher is the author of "SCAMPER Strategies - FUNDamental Activities for Narrative Development."

Esterreicher has a varied story repertoire. She especially enjoys telling Aesop's fables and familiar fairy tales that contain spoonerisms - when sounds are transposed in a phrase. Esterreicher uses the technique for comic effect. One of her favorites is "Beeping

Sleauty."

In the cackling voice of a wicked fairy Esterreicher says, "When Beeping Sleauty turns 16, she'll frick her pinger on a winning speel and die!"

Her audiences love the funny nonsense words, but no more than Esterreicher herself. When she's writing the stories, she says that if a line makes her laugh, it stays in.

"If I have trouble saying it, it's a good one," said Esterreicher. "I try to keep a straight face, but sometimes I can't."

Esterreicher always explains the background of spoonerisms beforehand if she uses them in a story. The term comes from the Rev. W.A. Spooner (1844-1930) who actually had this type of speech impediment. Legend has it that he began a toast to the queen of England by saying, "Quear deen."

Once when telling a "Tairy Fale" in this manner, a child did not make the connection from the history of the Spooner and the way Esterreicher was telling the story. He sat there quietly and didn't laugh along with the others.

"I found out later that he thought I was having a problem [speaking.]," Esterreicher laughed. "This little sweetheart was just being really polite."

Esterreicher's audiences range from preschoolers to senior citizens. She has performed at a variety of venues, including the Timpanogos Storytelling Festival, Weber State Storyfest and Thanksgiving Point. She is actively involved with the Sandy Senior Community Center.

Joy Hartmann, director of the senior center says the seniors enjoy Esterreicher's talents.

"There are a lot of people that would like to tell stories, but very few people tell them with the inflection and excitement she uses," Hartmann said. "She just puts you right there."

In addition to storytelling at the senior center, Esterreicher also teaches bi-monthly Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) seminars. NLP is both the art and science of managing your mind and your language. Hartmann is a huge fan of Esterreicher's NLP seminars.

"Your body believes everything you think or say," says Hartmann. "She has done a wonderful job helping people look at how they self-talk."

Whether Esterreicher's stories are fables, personal stories, seasonal tales or "Tairy Fales," they have one thing in common. They are always entertaining - for the audience and the storyteller.

"Playing with language is just so much fun!" said Esterreicher.