

Worldwide Folklore N3F Round Robin

When you receive this, read the enclosed letters, remove your previous letter, write a new one, and put it behind the others. Contributions should be no more than two sheets of paper typed or handwritten. Make all address changes on this sheet. Let your RM know when you mail this RR. A postcard or message is greatly appreciated. It is helpful if you also keep a personal record of when you mail a RR in case your RM needs to find it.

Please send this packet on to the next person on the route in 10 days at most. If you are too busy to contribute in this time period, just send it on with only a note of explanation. If you have this RR "resting" at your place, due to life's little twists and turns, please don't be embarrassed! ~~Just~~ let your RM know, so he/she will not restart it. Placing enough postage on the RR's is very important. Some Post Offices will not deliver mail that does not have enough postage. To be safe, if an RR has four pages or more, you should use a 45 cent stamp and a 28 cent stamp.

ROUTE SHEET

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First of all, I would like to apologize for the lateness of this contribution. It was not my intention to let this go for so long, but writer's block among many other things has played havoc with me lately (and by 'lately' I mean the past 15-20 years... hopefully participating in this Round Robin will break the clog).

With regard to folklore, I'm reminded of my late grandmother, who grew up in Georgia more than a century ago and spent much of her time in Tennessee. The folklore of the Deep South and the Appalachians was a big part of my upbringing.

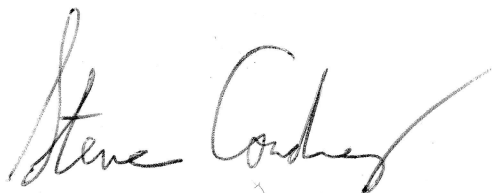
When my grandmother met my grandfather, he was working as a revival preacher throughout the South as part of the Latter Rain Revival, a Oneness Pentecostal movement that saw the height of its popularity in the 1920s and 1930s. Without weighing judgment upon the validity or the specifics of the faith, it does seem evident that a lot of folk practices of the region became incorporated into worship, if not actual doctrine.

One such practice was 'Scripture casting'. As I understand it, the practice entailed saying a prayer with one's eyes closed while holding a Bible. The Bible is then allowed to fall open to a random page; the answer to your prayer is related somehow to the pages that are open. In some variations you put your finger on the Bible with your eyes closed and whatever verse your finger lands on is the answer to your prayer. I can see where this could lead to some unfortunate misunderstandings, but the practice is not intended to deliver a precise answer, but a suggestion as to a course of action.

From what I can tell, this tradition is probably rooted in Appalachian folk magic, which in turn draws its origins from a combination of ancient Scottish and Irish practices brought by the European settlers who first entered the region in the early 1700s and Native American practices. Digging deeper in time, both the Celts and the Norse who were the ancestors of the Scots and Irish who settled the Appalachians practiced rune casting. Like Scripture casting, rune casting involves the interaction of a large number of variables and doesn't necessarily give a precise answer. The answer is dependent upon the practitioner and the circumstances.

Did this folk tradition evolve from a far more ancient ceremony, substituting Christian Scripture for pagan runes? Given the amount of cross-fertilization between the Celtic, Norse, and medieval Christian societies I think it's a distinct possibility. But I wouldn't dare tell Grandma that 😊

Until next time, friends!



Hi Folks!

So sorry that this is a bit “tardy.” I wrote my essay about King Arthur & company -- for the “World Folklore” theme. I spent several hours composing. Then, oh no, oh crap, this document suddenly got erased! And I don’t know how! I could retrieve it! Oh well. Welcome to the sometimes fickle world of “back in the earlier day & modern computers!”

King Arthur

Thanks to my dad, Richard (now passed), I grew up with a love of King Arthur, Camelot, knights of the Round Table, Guinevere, Lancelot -- the works! =-0)

The legendary world of Camelot is presented as “the Light on the Hill.” Knights in shining armor, ready to defend their own honor, and that of beautiful ladies from Camelot (and maybe women in surrounding areas?) Arthur -- the true & fair & handsome & gorgeous & honorable king. His bride & co-ruler, the lovely & witty Queen Guinevere, devoted to her husband. & their country. Alas, they did not have a son to rule after them. This caused them great sorrow. However, maybe she will bear a male heir someday? Hope can be eternal.

Hey! If one of King Arthur’s Round Table knights is brave — and motivated enough — he’ll go on a momentous adventure -- in hopes of finding the Holy Grail! Neat-o! If the dude finds this relic, he will be heralded as a hero! This will bring MUCH glory to Camelot! (If all goes well, that is!)

But, alas, Guinevere has a “hot fling” with the erstwhile & handsome knight, I present to you -- Sir Lancelot! Oh no. Our dear Lancelot is no longer pure & (maybe?) no longer celibate! Oh my, oh my. Their tawdry affair is soon found out by Mordred (lousy snitch.)

This affair begins the unraveling of Camelot; Many of us know what happens next!. (Shivers & shakes head. This couple is exceedingly dumb about the consequences of this so-called “love affair! Actually, more like a “lust affair!!”

While I don’t think King Arthur, et al, existed, still, he & his cohorts perhaps present a special shining light & intricacies of medieval romance— for all who love this kind of fantasy tale. No matter the time frame & and a variety of people, Something the common man/woman could look up to & maybe emulate the shining people & the pomp & ceremony of court life. — and of magical Camelot. Another reason why the citizens perhaps loved & respected about Arthur & Guinevere: they did their very best to treat each citizen fairly. No matter what station in life the those people had. They could be (reasonably sure) that Arthur & Guinevere would rule justly.

Perhaps this story of a just Camelot ruling system resonated with medieval (and other time frames) folks. Because their own rulers were so very cruel.

Maybe due in part to Camelot -- the people, down through the ages. -- believed in something much better. Maybe the mystery swirling around Camelot presents a lifelong goal — to find out exactly what is so unique about how well Camelot treated its people & how they lived & loved.

John Thiel, 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904, email kinethiel@mymetronet.net .

I was pleased to get the first Round Robin I've gotten on in thirty-seven years.

Some might wonder what relation folklore has to fantasy, but many stories out of folklore are fantastic tales. Paul Bunyan was a real person, but he was made out to be bigger than he actually was in stories about him. He was a lumberjack, but tales had him being too big to climb a tree. The actual stories about him have some prodigious feats in them. Other folklore personalities have been Old Stormalong, Buffalo Bill, Billy the Kid, Calamity Jane, Jesse James, Judge Roy Bean, Joe Maggerac, Casey Jones and John Henry. All of them were real people, but given nicknames, and all of them had fantastic tales told of them, like Stormalong riding a cyclone. John Henry never had a contest with a steam drill. Davy Crocket was said to have "fought single-handed through the injun war, till the Creeks were beat and peace was in store, and while he was handling this risky chore, made himself a legend for evermore." Exaggeration, he had a band of men helping him in those skirmishes. One can read true stories of these men and still find them fantastic. Casey Jones jumped twelve feet from a train on a sidetrack into the water car of a train on the main track.

Greek mythology could be considered folklore. A lot of those myths are obscene, but others of them are amusing. They have gods in them, you get your fantasy right there. Folk music is often fantastic, for example, "The Devil's Nine Questions", "The Coo Coo Bird", "Stacker Lee" ("Stacker Lee went to Heaven, they sent him down to Hell, saying 'We don't want no gamblin here and we don't want you as well'"), "Strange Fruit", "Drill Ye Tarriers" (a mile in the air went Big Jim Goff, he complained of his pay, got this reply, "You're docked for the time you was up in the sky").

Steve Condrey: the areas where folk music originates are full of superstitions. There's more magic than science around there. When we're accustomed to civilization, the superstitions seem irrelevant to life, but there they have some form of relevance. One folk song that cites superstitions in a big way is Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A-Changing." He predicts future happenings in that one, somewhat citing astrology and predestination. It has fate and doom in it. I imagine the Deep South and the Appalachians have been pretty much invaded by civilization. How'd you happen to move from there to Nebraska?

Joy Beeson: Your story has a strange, uncanny feeling to it that puts it in the folklore tradition indeed. Scientifically that might be a tale of fright to an archaeologist. I'm reminded of some of H.P. Lovecraft's writings by it.

Jeffrey Redmond: You shouldn't skip your place on a round robin. Be more communicative than that.

John Thiel

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Wednesday, 17 May 2023

To: World Wide Folklore Round Robin

Cover sheet

My letter:

Current reading: "Jigsaw Assasain" by Catherine Asaro. I am, by good luck, not making much progress -- I just had to renew it at the library. Luckily one can do that at home these days. I must take it out of my go bag; my next appointment is in June.

Steve Condrey:

Opening a Bible to a random page seems to be fairly common. It may date back to pre-human customs.

A preacher once included an interesting variation in one of his sermons. ("A", not "the". WLFMC was up to its neck in preachers long before we merged with another church to become WLCC and kept both preachers.)

Prisoners feel that they are putting one over on the missionaries when they accept india-paper testaments with pages that are just right for rolling cigarettes. One day a prisoner noticed that his rolling paper said something along the lines of "God loves you no matter what", and was saved on the spot.

2023 May 24

I could blame sciatica for the delay, but more of the time I spent with my foot up could have been spent in front of the computer. I just plain forgot about the robin.

I did finish reading *Jigsaw Assassin*, and now I'm sad because I can't go to the library to get another book. (I don't dare drive before I un-relapse.)

Unsigned: assumed to be Denise Fisk

"Oh no!" -- at this point I paused to copy this file onto another computer and Filezilla it to <http://wlweather.net/LETTERS/FOLKLORE/>. Though this file wouldn't be as big a loss as Denise's.

Got nothing to say about Camelot, but I'm the moderator -- I don't have to have an opinion.

John Thiel

I vaguely recall reading an article in which John Henry was quoted as saying that he did help test a new steam drill. Mighty oaks from little acorns grow.

Some urban legends get started as hangovers from forgotten customs. There used to be a story going round that food would go rancid if put into the refrigerator while boiling hot. It was **very** important to refrain from melting the ice in an ice box; the prohibition lingered on after the reason was forgotten.

I remember ice boxes, though they were used only in summer cabins by the time I sat up and took notice. And in travel trailers. We had an electric ice box in ours. The melt-water tray extended under the frost coils, so that one could defrost it by running it as an ice box until the frost fell off, and when one was parked in a place where one could plug the trailer in, the rack for the ice was just the right size for a gallon of milk. It would still be a good design if it were possible to buy blocks of ice.

I think I'll print this out before scanning, so as to have everything in one PDF file. In the morning, when I'm bright enough to figure out how to run the scanner.

And bright enough to print on both sides of the paper. As in all modern conveniences, there's a certain amount of tricking the machine required.

Thursday, 25 May 2023

I'll probably mail this on the way back from the doctor tomorrow, or the next day on the way to the farmer's markets.