



# NEWSLETTER

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## Our Next SOCO Meeting

Our next SOCO meeting will be in September October 13, in St. Matthias' Reading Enrichment Room. St. Matthias is located at 1582 Ferris Rd. in Columbus. David Cohen will share a Thousand Years of Memories a compilation of stories of ten people over the age of 100. David will share his selection and interviewing process, and how he put the book together. You will be able to ask questions and talk with him.

### Roy is active as always

Tuesday I missed my morning volleyball games at Blendon Senior Center, and my usual Tuesday afternoon of genealogy research at the Family History Center. Why? It was a Special Election day, and I'm a poll worker. The Special was made necessary by Congressman Tiberi's resignation to accept a position as head of the Ohio Business Round Table. (Don't know if the offer was too good to pass up, or if he was just fed up with Washington.)

I took a good book with me, anticipating a slow day, since there was only 1 race on the ballot. However, business was pretty brisk. Still, between my two half-hour breaks and the periodic lulls I managed to get through the first three chapters, and into the fourth, of ***With Malice Toward None***. I had heard the author speak at the Westerville Library, and bought his book. Dr. Peter Rogers was a medical student in Memphis in 1968, and was working at the hospital the night Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was shot. His story about the racial tensions in Memphis at that time is very gripping.

Thursday afternoon I went to my monthly Underground Railroad Study Group meeting, then to the Village at Westerville Retirement Center, where I have a standing monthly gig as Storyteller. Since it is August, the theme was Dog Days. I shared a photo of me with my dog Ginger (pic was taken by my sister-in-law JoAnna over 9 1/2 years ago; Ginger still looks the same as in the attached photo; I do not.) Then I shared a variety of dog jokes, riddles, poems and stories, including my own story *Selling the Dog* (from my Alaskan boyhood) and ending with the late James Thurber's classic story (from his Columbus boyhood) of his dog Muggs, *The Dog that Bit People*.

Friday, like most Fridays of late, was spent helping with the overload at my old law office. I was done with my project by 3:00 p.m., but couldn't leave because I had left my umbrella in the car, and it was pouring. When it finally let up, I made a mad dash for my car, tucking my file under my arm to keep it dry. It looked like I was leaving the storm behind me, so I called my lady friend to see if she was back from her Cincinnati trip and wanted to join me for dinner and possibly go line-dancing. Alas, her departure was delayed 'til Tuesday,

so I dined alone at TeeJaye's Country Place, and skipped the line dance.

Saturday I had to miss my monthly Buckeye Santas luncheon bc I was needed as a guide at Hanby House. It was the day of their "Tea with Mr. Lincoln" - Abe is played by my friend Bob Brugler. After his departure, I stayed for the regular Saturday afternoon public hours.

Had fun Saturday Night appearing as an 1890's English Bobby (helmet & all) at the "Breathe Easy Speakeasy" fundraiser in the Statehouse Atrium for The Breathing Association.

1st time I ever danced in my Bobby costume. Arthur Murray Studio dancers put on quite an exhibition. I danced with one of the instructors, but not as part of their rehearsed routines. Many hijinks throughout the evening. Good food as well.

At Evening's end I had to brandish my night stick and "arrest" 4 hapless - what shall I call them? ...'surprisees' - for unspecified offenses, whereupon an auctioneer 'raised bail' for them, like taking auction bids. Fat Cats were

shelling out anywhere from \$400 to \$1000 to "free" them. Quite a novel way of 'raising bail' - all proceeds going to the Breathing/Lung assn.

What a hoot!

**Roy Nichols**



## Applications open for J.J. Reneaux Mentorship Award!

Are you – or do you know – a talented younger storyteller who could benefit from a year's work with an experienced professional mentor?

If so, NSN wants you to know that we are now accepting applications for the 2019 J.J. Reneaux Mentorship Award – a grant that provides \$1250 to enable a year's work between a storytelling mentor and a gifted younger teller (18-30 years old).

Check out the award description and application instructions at <https://storynet.org/about-nsn/awards/j-j-reneaux-award/j-j-reneaux-mentorship-award/>.

DEADLINE for applications: MIDNIGHT (EDT), OCTOBER 26, 2018.

Please share this announcement far and wide! Applicants need not be current members of NSN.

For more information, email Jo Radner at [jradner@american.edu](mailto:jradner@american.edu).

### All Hallows at Ohio Village.

Good Evening all,

It is that time of year to prepare for All Hallows Eve in the Ohio Village. This year's dates are Saturdays, Oct 13 and Oct 20 from 5:30 - 9:30. I am sending this email to see if you would be willing to help out at the event. For this event we do provide training sessions and you must attend one session only. The trainings are Thursday, Sept 20 at 6 pm (American House Hotel)

Saturday, Sept 22 at 9 am in the village Town Hall

Thursday, Sept 27 at 6 pm in the hotel

Saturday, Sept 29 at 9 am in the hotel

Please let me know if you are willing and able and I will send you a training packet

before the training. You must sign up through our sites volunteer page please [www.ohiohistory.org/volunteer](http://www.ohiohistory.org/volunteer) I hope that you can join for a great event  
Best  
Susan

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### Rebecca would like our input

I am looking for program ideas, so who comes to mind when you think about storytelling? What would you like to know, learn, discover? Who do you know who has skill, talent, or an interesting take on reality, who might like to share with us. Our fall-back is sharing our own stories, and if you guys like, we could have a different topic for each meeting. No one in our group is shy, so let me now what you would like.

**Rebecca Coleman**

## **Dialogue in the Dark**

Dialogue in the Dark is a social enterprise that exists in 21 different countries to provide visitors with an experiential introduction to a world without sight. “With the help of a white cane and guide, you get a chance to explore the unseen, and learn to see in darkness.” The tour guides, who are visually impaired, lead visitors through the exhibit and introduce them to their local city through sounds, tastes, smells, and touch. The tour, which lasts 75 minutes, is done completely in the dark. No flashlights, no dimly-lit doorways, no exit signs. My first experience was while visiting Hong Kong.

At the beginning of the tour, I was led to a dimly lit area where I was handed a cane and informed that my guide’s name would be Henry. I was reminded not to forget this name so that if I became stuck or afraid I could call out to him. A door was opened and I hesitantly walked through, dragging the cane back and forth in front of my feet. My eyes strained to make out the faintest of shapes but all efforts were unsuccessful. I heard Henry’s voice; it was surprisingly soothing. He introduced himself and spoke about the exhibit while he coaxed me forward through the dark. He spoke to me in melodies, his sentences hitting my ears as though in song. I smiled to myself as he sang my name, “So HOW do you LIKE Hong KONG, A-ron?” We walked through the dark until Henry instructed me to stop. “Can you SEE where we ARE, A-ron?” I heard birds and smelled water, and a damp cool breeze hit my skin. Beneath my feet, the ground had changed from concrete to a spongy grass. I explored the park, reaching out for the leaves on the trees and pressing my hand against the stone wall where a waterfall was flowing down its surface. Then he asked me, “What do the birds look like? What color are the birds, A-ron?” I am still to this day ashamed that my first instinct was to inform him that I did not know because I could not see.

In my moment of panic, I hadn’t even considered what kind of birds they might be, let alone what color. I was too focused on trying to identify this world with truth and logic, that I forgot I could create my own. I quickly realized that my fear of being incorrect was invalid in a world where the visual truth could not be known. Unless I was an expert in bird calls and could identify the types of birds by their voices, my imagination WAS the truth, and I could see whatever color or kind of bird I wanted to envision. In the end, I think I said something like, “They’re all different colors.” And Henry

praised my incredibly dull response, “Ohhh YES, A-ron. YES they are ALL different colors.”

Together we rode Star Ferry where I felt the wind and water sprinkle against my face, visited the market where I identified fruits by their smells and shapes, and listened to a musical performance in the theater. Slowly but surely this world became very real to me. I began to complete my world with visualizations of the crowded street corners and tall buildings. At one point we crossed a street together, and I envisioned us in a crosswalk near my hotel. After the walk signal had ended Henry asked me to identify the object to my left. I reached out into the dark expecting to touch the fencing that lines most streets but winced with terror to instead find the front of a car just inches from my hip. I thought for certain I’d made it off the street and, even though I knew it wasn’t a real car, the brief moment of fear struck me with surprising force. This dark world was challenging at times, especially when I couldn’t understand Henry’s broken English or the sounds were much too loud to tell from which direction his voice was coming. But I kept asking for extra guidance, hitting everything with my cane (including Henry), and exploring this new environment with a hesitant curiosity. At the end of my tour, we visited a cafe. Henry told me what it’s like to be visually impaired in such a bustling city. He shared his experience in learning to communicate with his hearing-impaired friends by phone. And then he told me something I never would have expected; he loves photography.

I felt ignorant as I sat there and wondered why a man who is completely blind would enjoy taking pictures. He began telling me how happy his photos make his friends and family, and how much joy he feels when someone describes his pictures back to him. I felt guilty as I realized that what I so thoroughly enjoy about sharing my work is the same thing that Henry experiences despite not being able to see his creations. My surprise at his passion was misguided and misunderstood. When Henry takes a photo, he creates a work of art that can not only be enjoyed by others but can also be repainted every time it’s described to him, and that is a profoundly moving piece. It makes me wonder what I am missing with my heart when I instead rely so frequently on my eyes.

**Erin O’Neil**