

## Flatwater Tales goes virtual in a most unique way!

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column the week of May 17, 2021)

(Many thanks to Pat Postma for her help with these opening paragraphs!) Of the many things about Oak Ridge history that are so special, one is the wide variety of culturally entertaining opportunities usually found only in much larger cities. We are indeed fortunate to be able to avail ourselves of such things as the Oak Ridge Playhouse, the Oak Ridge Civic Music Association, and the Art Center. These date back to the early days and they have one significant thing in common. They came about because a group of individuals wanted Oak Ridge to have those things and they just set about to make it happen.

The Playhouse was started in 1943. In 1944 Waldo Cohn, a biochemist and talented cellist, began a chamber music group which blossomed into the Oak Ridge Symphony Orchestra. In 1954, Alex and Joan Ellen Zucker were leaders in establishing the Art Center.

Ideas that spring from the passionate interest of an individual or small group can transform a town and shape its history. We are so lucky that tradition continues in Oak Ridge and can be seen now in the efforts to establish a most intriguing downtown concept through the Wilson street vision and the citizens' role in making it happen.

Our iconic International Friendship Bell was proposed to the Committee of 50 by Shigeko and Ram Uppuluri. Their efforts and contacts in Japan made it a reality. The idea that created the Lavender Festival sprang from Barbara Ferrell and the energy of the Jackson Square merchants. The Friends of the Grove Theater had a conviction that Oak Ridge needed a performance space where every kind of entertainment can be presented by performers with no charges for using the space, so they made that happen.

Most recently, Martha and David Hobson and Emily and Charlie Jernigan found themselves in the middle of the main street of Jonesborough, TN, where they were attending the famous International Storytelling Festival. They looked at one another and said, "Why can't we have a storytelling festival in Oak Ridge?" The answer they arrived at was "let's do it!" And they certainly have made it happen with resounding success!

Saturday, June 5, 2021, brings world-class and internationally acclaimed storytellers to your home with a most unique and amazing improv included. This opportunity will be like nothing you have experienced before, and you can do it for as little as \$15. But you will want more than just the evening show! Interactive and live Zoom workshops (one for \$20 and three for \$45), a live Zoom afterparty (\$10), or all day for \$50 per person. It is a steal! So much fun for so little cost and all brought to you personally in your home.

Andy Offutt Irwin, Bil Lepp, and Kim Weltkamp, all among the most renowned storytellers who have appeared at the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, TN, will bring their wit, wisdom, and abilities to make audiences laugh, cry, and reminisce to you while presenting a live show performed before a small audience exclusively for Flatwater Tales Storytelling Festival. You will virtually be there, yet comfortable in your home.

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A new feature in the storytelling world is planned for this special show. An unrehearsed improv segment, hosted by emcee Paula Gordon Lepp, will included in the 8:00 p.m. evening show.

Not only is this performance available on Saturday, June 5, 2021, it will be recorded and available for two weeks after the virtual live show. So, if you purchase tickets and cannot attend the program during the virtually live performance, you can experience it later.

Tickets are available at the Flatwater Tales Storytelling Festival's Eventbrite webpage:  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2021-flatwater-tales-virtual-storytelling-festival-tickets-77387180139>

Additionally, tickets can be purchased at the Ferrell Shop, 232 Jackson Square in Oak Ridge, or by emailing, [flatwatertales@gmail.com](mailto:flatwatertales@gmail.com)

The workshops included in the virtual program are:

Bil Lepp will present his "Chaos Doesn't Happen on Its Own?" at 11:00 a.m. Bil will let you in on his approach to storytelling that presents itself as spontaneous conversations. How does he do that? How does he manage to appear if he is just coming up with the stories on the spot? You can learn the techniques from the professional who practices successfully to do just that.

Kim Weltcamp will show you how she blends humor and heartache, seriousness, and silliness, all linked together by music. "Tongue and Pen" will be presented at 1:30 p.m. This workshop will consist of conversation, lecture, and writing. You will learn how to expand your thinking and turn your creative thoughts into something tangible.

Andy Offutt Irwin will help you connect between emotion and the ability to remember and learn. His live interactive workshop, "Laughing Makes You Smarter" will be presented at 3:00 p.m. Andy is an arts educator, keynote speaker, theatre director, songwriter, comedian, newspaper columnist, camp counselor and Shakespearian actor. Let him make you smarter!

The Flatwater Tales Storytelling Festival, sponsored by the three Oak ridge Rotary Clubs with additional support from 91.9 WUOT Public Radio, and produced by technical artists Six Feet Apart Productions, has fast become known as a premier storytelling festival. In just a few short years Oak Ridge is among the nation's most well-known venues for storytelling. Our audiences have grown to truly appreciate the fine art of storytelling well done.

So, make your plans now, mark your calendar for June 5, and purchase your tickets NOW, you will be glad you did.

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Bil Lepp, Kim Weitkamp and Andy Offutt Irwin are three world-class storytellers whose storytelling magic will captivate your imagination on June 5 right from the comfort of your own home!