

Storytelling Concert

For Immediate Release

March 29, 2017
East Tennessee State University
Campus Center Building
Black Box Theatre, room 205
1276 Gilbreath Dr.
Johnson City, TN 37614

Contact

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April 7 Storytelling Concert ANNOUNCED

Ridin' The Rails: Oral histories of the Clinchfield and Tweetsie Railroads

Johnson City April 7, 2017. Please join ETSU Storytelling graduate students for an evening of oral history stories and songs from the heyday of the railroad in America. The evening will commence on Friday night at 7:30pm in rm. 205 of the Campus Center building. All are welcome. Admission is free, but donations for the ongoing work of oral history collecting are appreciated.

Dr. Delanna Reed of the ETSU Storytelling Division and Storytelling graduate students within that program interviewed dozens of folks that rode, lived, or worked on the Tweetsie and Clinchfield Railroad. The oral histories gathered provide a glimpse of the two local railroads and the lives they affected from as early as 1915 – 1984.

Established in 1882, the narrow gauge ETWNC (Tweetsie) Railroad serviced East Tennessee and Western North Carolina as a coal train and steam engine passenger train. Until highways were established and cars common, the Tweetsie was the only mechanical mode of transportation for folks in the mountains between Johnson City and Boone, NC. Locals of the Tri-Cities area currently recognize the Tweetsie name for its newly established purpose as a multi-use recreation trail for biking, walking, and running that follows the former tracks from Johnson City to Elizabethton.

The Clinchfield Railroad ran from the coal fields in Virginia, Kentucky, and South Carolina with its headquarters in Erwin, Tennessee. Known as a feat of engineering, the Clinchfield wound for 262 miles through the Blue Ridge Mountains and fostered inspirational characters that have been the center of many films and written works. The oral histories you will hear during the production of *Ridin' The Rails* are sure to inspire the mind, body, and soul.

Under the direction of Dr. Delanna Reed, current graduate students of the Professional Communications Department make up the cast of storytellers and musicians in *Ridin' the Rails*: John Brooks, Paul Herrin, Charis Hickson, Betty Ann Polaha and Eutimio Talavera. The students selected stories to tell from transcripts of folks in Johnson City and as far away as Roan Mountain. The original interviews were conducted from spring 2011 to spring 2014 as a collaborative project between the George L. Carter Railroad Museum and the ETSU Storytelling Program, co-directed by Dr. Fred Alsop, Director of the Museum and Dr. Delanna Reed, Assistant Professor of Storytelling.

The April 7th event is a one-time opportunity to enjoy the concert in its entirety. Though individual students will be performing segments of the show around town, the only public presentation is Friday night at 7:30 PM in rm. 205 of the Campus Center Building at ETSU. Direct inquiries to the Department of Communication & Performance at 423-439-7676 or storytel@etsu.edu.

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