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tri Tales

BACK TO THE SPRINGS

MORGAN ARTS COUNCIL
Berkeley Springs, West Virginia

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Morgan Arts Council

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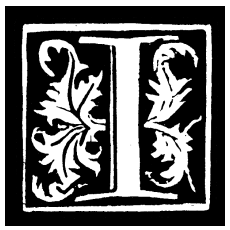

INTRODUCTION

The books are getting larger. The roster of authors has nearly doubled. With the publication of *Tri-Tales*, the third volume of Morgan County stories from local authors, the count is now a total of 52 stories from 26 writers. As with the first two volumes, some of the authors are old hands, others are being published for the first time. The age range of writers in *Tri-Tales* is from 21 to over 60.

Tri-Tales took longer and followed a more circuitous path than the first two volumes.

In 1999, the Morgan Arts Council (MAC) sponsored a another writing workshop with Dr. Robert Walker similar to those that produced the original *Tales* in 1993 and *Tales, Too* in 1995. It resulted in ten publishable stories, not enough for a third volume. The project was shelved waiting for more stories. In 2003, an opportunity arose. The Morgan County Library and MAC worked together to produce *Yesterday's Tomorrows*, a traveling exhibit from the Smithsonian Institution. There was a community-wide effort to create ancillary projects. I proposed a writing competition hoping to garner the stories needed to complete a third volume.

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MAC was delighted to receive 19 entries, four of them from students. Certificates of Excellence were awarded to four; seven were juried into the book. Now there were 17 stories, more than the dozen included in the original *Tales* but not as many as the 18 in *Tales, Too*. I set out to find a few more stories. Several writers already included submitted additional stories and three new writers were recruited including newspaper editor and award-winning mystery novelist John Douglas and award-winning poet, Kate Shunney. *Tri-Tales* marks Douglas' first participation in the series; Shunney had a story in *Tales, Too*. They join three other award-winning writers in the book.

Tri-Tales also introduced a new designer to the project, Julia Robey.

Once again funds for the project were provided by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the West Virginia Commission on the Arts. With the publication of *Tri-Tales*, MAC now has sufficient literary product for a boxed set.

Jeanne Mozier
December 2004

***Jeanne Mozier**, an award-winning writer of fiction and non-fiction, is the author of "Way Out in West Virginia, a Must-have Guide to the Oddities and Wonders of the Mountain State." She writes frequently for magazines and newspapers about travel, the arts and local history. Jeanne's stories appeared in "Tales from the Springs" and "Tales, Too!" She has been a resident of Morgan County since 1977 where she and her husband own and operate the Star Theatre. Jeanne has degrees from Cornell and Columbia universities.*

PREFACE

When I was growing up in Washington, D.C in the 1950s and 60s, the towns of the Eastern Panhandle were no more to me than signposts on a road that seemed to lead into a heart of sadness and loneliness surrounding the town of Parsons, West Virginia. There my mother and I drove to stay with my mad gargantuan aunt and gloomy forester uncle who on Sundays became an evangelical Presbyterian minister.

I remember winding endlessly through the town of Winchester trying to stay on Route 50 and then winding through the mountains trying to keep our Volkswagen Bug on the narrow roads. I recall long days trying to shoot squirrels in the woods around Parsons, a tiny spa where Coca Cola cost five cents, and my uncle pressing me into service to teach the Book of Job to the children who attended the local Sunday school. Most painfully I remember the visits to my grandmother, Bom, who had been staying with her daughter and son-in-law when she had a stroke that put her in a nearby rest home for five years until she died. Her room emanated a stale odor and her mind seemed permanently back in the past since she continuously

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mistook me for my uncle Mulford who had died in the early 1940s.

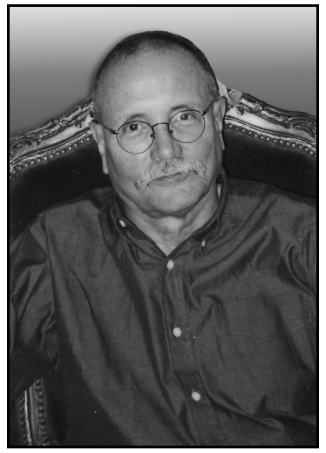
It was a refreshing contrast to those memories when I started visiting friends in the Eastern Panhandle in the 70s and 80s, and even more wonderful in the 90s when Jeanne Mozier invited me to begin conducting the creative writing workshops for local residents that have now resulted in three volumes of short stories rooted in the geography of this very special area. What I discovered was an ongoing community of literary artists who love the place they find themselves in, but more than that, on every visit I felt that I was with a group of old friends who helped each other discover what they wanted to say and derived inspiration from their common endeavors.

The first volume created a momentum that generated the second. In my preface to Volume Two, I said the books had done their job by launching the people of Morgan County into various creative projects beyond the scope of short stories and consequently there would be no volume three, but I was wrong, and here it is. As Jeanne says in her introduction, the third set of workshops did not result in a sufficient number of stories for another volume, but they did produce a number of very finely crafted pieces and, more importantly, they regenerated an energy that eventually resulted in an outpouring of creativity that can barely contain itself within the covers of this book. The most recent submission, one that that came in just a short time ago, links the abundant and magically healing waters of the Berkeley Springs area to the act of artistic and literary creativity itself in a metaphor which so powerfully captures the spirit of the whole process that I have placed the story at the beginning of the collection.

The result is a heady blend of light and dark, short and long, humorous and serious writing that includes memoir,

gothic, fantasy, occult, mystery, crime, detective, adventure, historical, mainstream and science fiction mixed in such a way that no one person or genre dominates and the diversity of the group is evident. *Tri-Tales* provides a fitting capstone to the collection. Even stronger than the first two, it is a good, thick readable book of tales that captures the flavor, strength and range of the region and its people.

Robert L. Walker
January 1, 2005



Robert L. Walker *lives in an eighteenth century farmhouse in rural northeastern Connecticut and commutes to Worcester, Massachusetts where he teaches literature, journalism, creative writing and creative nonfiction at Worcester State College. He is the Director of the Central Massachusetts Writing Project, a site of the National Writing Project located at the college, and he is currently completing a book-length memoir about his experience as a Foreign Service dependent in Beirut, Lebanon.*

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