

Note from New Mexico's National Youth Storytelling Torchbearer



Dear Ms. Bergman, Ms. Edmundson, and all the Storytellers of New Mexico,

Thank you for your notes, your words of encouragement, and all your support to get me to Pigeon Forge! I had a really great time there! And I enjoyed all the different kinds of stories I heard there -- folktales, life experiences, ballads, poems. They were amazing! Plus I got to meet kids from across the country who love doing stories, just like me. Some of them I had met last year and it was fun to see them again. We had a blast together. Jeremy Evans and Chloe Clunis, who were former Grand Torchbearers, were both there to support us and that was nice.

We youth tellers participated as a panel in one of the workshops and told the audience how we got started and what some of our techniques were. For me, I see colors when I tell and the more multi-colored the pictures are in my head, the better and more exciting my telling is. For one part of "Paco & the Witch" I see the rain forest with all sorts of colors of plants and a little bright red crab coming up to Paco (who is crying). The crab's eyebrows are floating up above his head and he says in his little crab voice, "Porque lloras?"

The professional tellers (Jay O'Callahan, Ed Stivender, Bil Lepp, Waddie Mitchell, and Elizabeth Rose) were nice enough to sit down with us as a group and give us some tips the night before we performed. That meant a lot to me. I think I'll remember that forever. Elizabeth Rose put the whole thing together for us and she is awesome!

I was so nervous before I went on stage, but when I started into the story I was only thinking about Paco. When I was the Witch I locked eyes on someone in the audience and I just wanted to scare them. It was so fun. When it was all over I felt really good and I knew it was my best performance! I just wanted to scream when I found out that I had won the Torchbearer title for the elementary age division. I was SO happy!



We had a midnight party in the hotel lobby after the awards ceremony and it was really fun because we did all kinds of storytelling games with Kevin Cordi, Elizabeth Rose, and Rachel Hedman. One game was that we had to be a made-up character that we had to think of off the top of our heads. (I was a duck who wanted to be in the opera.) We had to pantomime the character for the group. Another game was making a fairy tale by doing only one action from the tale. One person started it, each member of the group joined the tale as they figured out what it was, adding a character doing only one action. Pretty soon all of us were out there each doing one motion from the fairy tale over and over. We did Sleeping Beauty. Will Sox, who was last year's elementary division Torchbearer (from South Carolina) decided to be the Prince and the action he chose (which he had to do

over and over) was KISSING THE PRINCESS!!!!!! It was so funny! The sleeping "Princess" was not that amused by it, but we all thought it was hilarious!

Thank you so much for sending me to Pigeon Forge! I had an incredible experience!

With stories to tell,

Emily Sartin

