

## ASA Medal

*'An author must know how far to go too far'* **Why storytelling matters.**



*Acceptance of the 2009 ASA Medal by recipient Hazel Edwards*

One of the greatest compliments I ever received was after a web-chat with children from a remote NT school in the Katherine area.

'Us Mob like your stories: they make us laugh.'

Humour is often the way to share an idea or solve a problem. When things go wrong, black humour works... and that is NOT my politically incorrect use of the term. We need to laugh together, not at.

We all love high gossip...why someone did that... sometimes it's called history, other times literature or legend. I call it anecdultery. 'Tell us what happened to you when it all went wrong? Why did it happen that way?' Tall tales about human foibles cross cultures.

I was Antarctic writer- on- ice in an expedition with 34 blokes and 4 other women. My first bellydancing class in the beset polar ship in Antarctic (as a creative solution to boredom) was instant icy e-news which grew into folklore Down South. Antarctic expeditioners are the BEST tall story tellers, problem-solvers ,big book readers

(long winters) and risk-takers since they have an overdose of the adventure gene.

Storytellers have to be risk-takers too.

'An artist must know how far to go too far.'

Storytelling can be a risky business, especially if you show unpopular truths or minority viewpoints via satire, fantasy or mythology.

A deceptively simple story may illustrate a complex idea or a productive life.

Although I'm not a genealogist, I can pronounce and spell the word. I've been involved in 'Writing a Non- Boring Family History' workshops for 'genies' for years...ways of crafting the extraordinary ordinary stories of family who were too busy living to keep extensive diaries. Histories and herstories that are worth telling. A regional newspaper, which must remain nameless, wrote me up as gynaecologist Hazel Edwards. When I pointed out the error, and that I was not a genealogist nor a gynaecologist, she said, 'Oh it's the story of one end of life or the other.'

Crafting anecdotes into a story, help families who want to know why their ancestors travelled that far or that way.

Stories can be therapy for the creator or for the audience, but they must be crafted to work well. If the tone is genuine, compassion is evident and the story needs to be told, it will last. But autobiographical exercises in chronological boredom should be avoided.

A story may travel further than its creator. Like grown up children, book stories have to go out on their own. Sometimes they adapt well into other languages, media or times. Occasionally they don't.

A creator must judge 'success' by internal criteria, the gap between the aspiration and the creation. What was the goal? Was

it reached? How can it be done differently, and more effectively the next time?

Did they laugh? Did they ask questions? Did they leave and do something differently the next day. If so, was your story thought-provoking, entertaining or propaganda?

It has been said, *an artist must know how far to go too far.*'

Creators are our dream-makers, those who suggest new perspectives, which may influence government, politics, management, health or the arts.

To influence reality, dreams must be structured and shared in a format others can understand.

My grandmother taught me to read before I went to school. My father told me stories. I write a story for my grandson each birthday, but the format may change .Now it is electronic. I have several co-writers and many colleagues whose skills support me.

Today storytelling may be on Ipod, on web chat via interpreters or by as- yet- uninvented smellovision, but we all need to know what happened to others and why...preferably with a bit of a humorous twist.

'read one story per month from another culture.' That's my new aim. Recently I was in Nanjing as cultural exchange author and, given a beautiful book by a YA novelist, but I could read only her photo on the cover. That's why translations also matter.

Author as brand name...this brooch is a brand of storyteller across cultures, and I accept it, on behalf of all apprentice bards with awareness of the honour paid by the ASA and the creators of this work of art ...

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Established in 2003, the ASA Medal is awarded biennially in recognition of an outstanding contribution to the Australian writing community. The medal complements the ASA's main focus as an advocate for the rights of authors and illustrators.

**Design**

Each ASA Medal is fashioned from mother of pearl (guan) and silver, designed by Indigenous designer Darrell Sibosado and crafted by Garry Sibosado. The design represents Mirrloord “the olive python” from the stories of the Bard people of Lombadina on the Dampier Peninsula in the West Kimberleys, 300 kms north of Broome.

The medal design originates from an ornament used during traditional ceremonies celebrating different aspects of the Bard culture. These ornaments were made from guan and were worn on the waist, hung from hair belts. The design on the ornaments varies depending on the ceremony.

Descendants of the Bard people, Garry and Darrell have continued the traditional work of their people and now incorporate contemporary tools and Darrell’s designs into their work.

The beautiful medal is housed within a classic-shaped book.

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A recent Australian-Nanjing International Cultural Exchange Center author, Hazel Edwards is also a 2010 Astrid Lindgren Award nominee for the biggest international award for children's writers. She also writes for adults.

2010 is the 30th anniversary of her classic 'There's a Hippopotamus on Our Roof' series, recently translated into Chinese and being filmed by Pocket Bonfire Productions.

For further details, check

ASA Medal <http://www.asauthors.org>

Astrid Lindgren Award nominee [www.alma.se](http://www.alma.se)

[www.hazeledwards.com](http://www.hazeledwards.com)