



No. 8, March 2015

What's Happening in LG

A Free Local Newsletter
Sponsored by the Locust Grove Arts Alliance

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day March 17



One-woman show highlights poetry

ON Mar. 21, 2015, the premiere of the one-woman show "Poem Life" will take place at the Locust Grove VFW Hall at 7 p.m. "Poem Life" is an interactive, multimedia show detailing a unique journey through life with and in poetry.

The show involves the audience in seven crimes of poetry, while telling the story of living a life through writing and exploring poems.

"Poem Life" is a poetry show in seven crimes, with the first one being Possession with Intent to Distribute.

The show stars poet, storyteller and ROMP director Shaun Perkins, who also wrote the script. Storytelling, narrative, poetry and audience interaction are all a part of the show, which is both dramatic and comic.

The show material is suited for teenage and adult audiences but not children. Tickets are \$10 at the door and \$8 in advance at the ROMPoetry website. The show is a fundraiser for the



I DIDN'T CHOOSE THE POEM LIFE. THE POEM LIFE CHOSE ME.

Rural Oklahoma Museum of Poetry, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All proceeds to the show fund museum projects and expenses. Donations to ROMP are tax-deductible.

The Rural Oklahoma Museum of Poetry, two miles west of Locust Grove in Mayes County, began in 2012. Its mission is to bring poetry and people together, to encourage wordplay and literacy, and to provide a space where everyone can have an experience of poetry.

The Rural Oklahoma Museum of Poetry is not a traditional museum. It is, however, in the traditional sense of the word "museum," a place that is sacred to the muses, the muses of poetry in particular. ROMP celebrates the power of poetry in the daily lives of the people. ROMP

celebrates the first literary art in the world and its continuing need in the lives of people everywhere.

Instead of having the traditional stark and anti-septic displays found in most museums, at ROMP visitors will find ways to interact with and personal-

ize poetry. From the block poetry table where words on blocks are mixed together to the secret corner where poetry lives in images and words and ideas all around, the displays ask the visitor to be creative and have fun with words and life through poetry.

Perkins hopes to take "Poem Life" on the road and is actively looking for venues and interested groups wanting to bring an interesting show to their members.



CHILDREN'S THEATER. . .Members of the LGAA Children's Community Theater will present "A Pirate's Lost 'n' Found" Saturday, March 7, at 5:30 p.m., in the old gym on Grade School Hill, formerly the Early Learning Center. Admission is free, but donations are welcome.

Irene Koelsch celebrates 101st birthday

By Roxann Yates

Friday the 13th is not a day of misfortune. It's the day Irene Koelsch, Locust Grove's oldest citizen, was born 101 years ago in February. She celebrated this time with pastries and a passel of relatives.

"I like doughnuts, so that's what my family gave me for a birthday cake," Koelsch said.

Sweets are a rarity in her diet because she prefers garden foods.

"I used to have a big garden. I miss doing that."

She now plants tomatoes, squash, and okra in pots.

"My granddaughter Donna brought me some feed troughs to plant in this year," Irene said.

For her four children, 20 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren, Irene has often cooked and canned. Her son Jerry joins her twice a day for meals.

"One of my favorite recipes is a spiced okra that I canned and shared with

family," she said.

This convivial centenarian became a Koelsch when she married Joe in Oklahoma City.

They met through Joe's sister.

"We were at a skating party. I told him if he felt like he was going to fall to turn loose of me...and he did both," Irene said.

That started the attraction. He next asked her on a date to see a movie.

"I wasn't going to get ready because I didn't think he'd come, but his sister told me I'd better get ready because Joe would show up," she said.

They married in 1935 and dreamed of owning farm land.

"I didn't like the city. I said, 'Let's go east, Joe.' I don't know why he listened to me, but he did. We bought a farm in Locust Grove in 1968."

The Koelsches raised cows and sold milk. They also had a flea market and animal auction every



IRENE KOELSCH holds a framed copy of her and Joe's wedding picture taken in 1935. She was surprised with a doughnut birthday cake on Feb. 13.

Thursday in town. Although the auction is gone, Irene no longer works out of the home, and Joe died in 1977, the Sale Barn is still a weekly stop for bargain hunters.

"I worked in the Sale Barn office and wrote all the checks," she said.

The grandchildren did their share of work at the Sale Barn.

"Grandma would take each grandkid to work to sell popcorn and drinks. We learned how to count

money back," granddaughter Donna Davison said.

Irene has always wanted to be surrounded by family. This was one way to be with her grandkids.

"You added business sense to us. And we didn't know how to make coffee until we worked at the Sale Barn," Donna said.

Many townspeople worked with Irene at the Sale Barn.

"I never saw her mad; she was always laughing and cutting up. I wish I had her patience and energy. She is one of a kind," said Pamela Springer.

For locals passing by on their way to town, the rock home and big barn are a quaint sight and reminder of hard-working, friendly citizens.

"She let me photograph her barn for a photography project for the Mayes County Fair a few years ago," said Marea Breedlove. "I spent more time visiting with her than (Continues on next page)

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--Irene Koelsch: "I like to laugh."--

(Continued from Page 2)

I did taking pictures. She was very gracious and kind. I really enjoyed my visit with her."

She believes a good portion of her longevity comes from being surrounded by kin.

"I think it makes life long. When you're fussing around, that's bad," Irene said.

The enterprising Koelsches also owned a restaurant in town. At the Dari-Ette, she helped run the business and did the cooking.

"When I was in high

school I remember working with her. She was so patient with us. One unkind customer insisted that his hamburger was overcooked," recalls Becky Neighbors. "After three attempts, sweet Irene told me to just flip the patty twice and slap it on the bun. That's what I did. He didn't bring it back."

Industrious at home and in the community, Irene made quilts for each grandchild and school uniforms for some granddaughters, and she played the organ for thirty years at her

church.

"On my hundredth birthday, I played 'Faith of our Fathers' at church," she said.

"Her music was always pleasant," said Lori Grossman.

Though she doesn't get out much these days, and she suffered some injuries in her 89th year from two car wrecks, she recovered and is still active.

"I took a lot of vitamins and I worked hard. Some people don't like work. But I do. Not long ago, I was fluffing my quilt and making my bed and my arm hit the wall and put a hole in it, but I wasn't hurt," she said.

"She's tougher than a prairie chicken," said Donna.

Irene rode in the Founder's Day Parade last year and plans to do so again this May.

"I was on the float with another woman, the other

oldest person in town, and she wouldn't throw any candy, so I threw it all," Irene said.

Not one to tell people how to live, Irene, though, believes she knows what has made her life complete.

"I like to laugh. They say laughing makes you happy. I can't say I didn't have a happy life, because I have," Irene said.

This golden-ager has been an inspiration to many.

"She was and still is the most important woman in my entire life. She taught me how to be brave, work hard, to be honest and loyal, and to never give up on life," said granddaughter Christine Barber. "She gave me so much strength through the hurdles that I had in my childhood. I always feel safe when I'm with her. Most of all she has taught me how to love and to love God. She is my hero and always will be."

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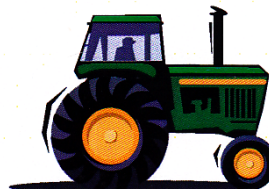
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ROMPFest to be held April 4 at rural site

The Rural Oklahoma Museum of Poetry presents ROMPFest 2015, April 4, Saturday, from 2-5 p.m. at the museum in rural Locust Grove.

ROMPFest, in its 2nd year, is an annual poetry festival that celebrates all things poetry, rural and Oklahoma. It takes place at the beginning of April, National Poetry Month, to kick off the recognition and enjoyment of poetry.

ROMPFest takes place on the museum grounds just a few miles west of Locust Grove. Special guest this year will be Bartlesville poet and actor Morris McCorvey.

McCorvey, a Bartlesville poet, actor and director of the Westside Community Center, will entertain Festival-goers with some of his poetry, talk about poetry, and be the Grand Marshal of the ROMPFest Prairie Poetry Parade across the meadow.

McCorvey's one-man portrayal of Paul Robeson received widespread critical claim. His poetry has won many awards and he will be reading from his Bus Station poems collection. He is the founder of the Dustbowl Players and Westside Players, a student theater group.

In 2002, McCorvey was



POETRY PARADE. . . A young poetry parade participant shows off her balloon at ROMPFest 2014.

commissioned by the Oklahoma County Metropolitan Library to write an original one-man play, "Indivisible Man," about the life and work of Oklahoma City native Ralph Ellison, most known for his novel *Invisible Man*.

Other festival activities will include museum tours, poem cache treasure hunts,

refreshments, awards ceremony for the Poetry Poster Contest and more.

POETRY: You can love it, hate it, or be indifferent to it, and you will find something to enjoy about this celebration of all things rural, Oklahoma, and poetic.

This is a free event, though donations are always accepted. The Rural Oklahoma Museum of Poetry, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization started in

2012, exists on grants and donations. Since it opened, the museum has been the subject of a spot on NPR's *State of the Re:Union* show, visited by New York organizers of Story Corps and earned a \$5,000 Popular Culture Society grant.

Directions to the museum and other information about it can be found at the museum website ROMPoetry.com or by calling Director Shaun Perkins (918) 864-9152.



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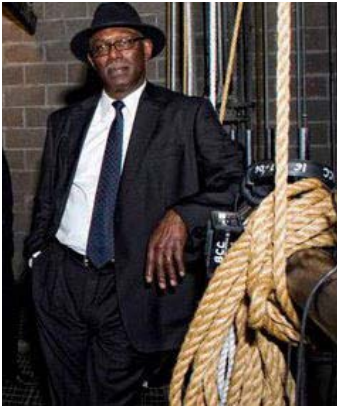
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MORRIS MCCORVEY, poet and actor, will be the ROMPFest 2015 special guest.

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Library Friends meet April 13

The Friends of the Locust Grove Public Library will meet at 5:30 p.m., April 13. Anyone interested in the library is invited to attend.

An Easter Egg Tree will be on display from March 19-April 14 to solicit donations for books.

Patrons can pick an egg from the tree, fill out the form inside, make a donation, and dedicate a children's book to the library.

The group is also accepting donations of gently used books for its 2nd annual Fall Book Sale. Books should be dropped off at the library at 715 Harold Andrews Blvd.



SENIOR CENTER COOKS. . . Terri Ingram (head cook), David and Polly Robinson will provide the meal for the monthly dance March 7 at the Senior Citizens Center

St. Patrick's Day dance, meal to be held March 7

The Senior Citizens Center will host its monthly dance on March 7 when a St. Patrick's Day theme will be carried out, and dinner will be Indian Tacos. The Hole in the Wall Band will once again provide the music.

Cost of the dinner/dance, sponsored by the LG Chamber of Commerce, is \$6.

The Feb. 7 Valentine's Day dance and spaghetti dinner had a good attendance, according to Jane Rogers, a senior group

spokesperson.

All seniors are invited to attend these monthly dances, either to get a little exercise on the dance floor, or just to enjoy the music and meal.

Poster contest set at ROMP

The Rural Oklahoma Museum of Poetry will host a second annual poster contest as part of its celebration of National Poetry Month in April.

The only guidelines are that the poster celebrate poetry or National Poetry Month in some way. Creativity is encouraged. Computer-generated, original entries are also allowed.

Different age categories will allow students of all ages to enter. Deadline for entry is March 28.

Teachers should call Shaun at 918-864-9152 to pick up any posters their students may have made.

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Barbed-wire twister gets new home

"April is the cruellest month," T. S. Elliot said. He wrote of "the dead land" and the "stirring of dull roots with spring rain." But taxes and twisters also come with the rain—and sometimes inspiration for some quirky Oklahoma folk art.

Locust Grove's metal twister is on display at the Rural Oklahoma Museum of Poetry (ROMP).

Amos Perkins and Kelly Palmer, father and daughter, produced a barbed wire tornado as a storefront attraction when Palmer opened Dust Bowl Debris, a resale shop in downtown Locust Grove (40 miles E of Tulsa). The tornado, standing over eight feet

The Write Stuff

by Roxann Perkins Yates

tall, was lit up and served as an icon for the store. When Palmer closed the store, the tornado became the property of the Rural Oklahoma Museum of Oklahoma (ROMP).

"I plan to use the tornado in a future museum exhibit. It will hold poetry and objects of poetry that get swept away in a disaster. Disaster will be interpreted in many ways," said Shaun Perkins, ROMP director, and sister to Palmer and daughter of Perkins.

Though an arduous task, Palmer enjoyed the work with her dad.



BARBED-WIRE TWISTER. . Kelly Palmer and her dad, Amos Perkins stand by the wire tornado the two of them constructed.

"When I decided to name my store for repurposed treasures, Dust Bowl Debris, I set about looking for signage appropriate to the business. I found a tabletop model of a barbed wire tornado in the Kansas Barbed Wire Museum in Lacrosse, Kansas. I then convinced my dad to replicate it on a much larger scale. He built the frame, and we wrapped barbed wire for hours to achieve the resulting design. It's one of my most treasured memories of time spent with my father," Palmer said.

Composed of Palmer's grandfather's old farm equip-

ment, the structure's monetary cost was short. The physical labor was long.

"I used a half mile of rusty barbed wire and 60 feet of rebar to build it," Perkins said.

The base support is fashioned with a carpenter's scaffolding, and lawn mower blades serve as inner braces. The opening is secured with an antique wagon wheel.

"The hardest part was twisting rusty barbed wire around the tornado. I had to wear gloves and twist pretty hard," Perkins said.

The shaping was done by working, stepping back, and reworking.

"I looked at it a lot. I spiraled upward, increasing the funnel along the way," Perkins said.

It was hauled to town and adorned with lights to draw visitors to the art piece and into the store.

"I'd do it again if someone wanted me to. One lady wanted one, and I told her it would be \$500... I didn't hear from her again," Perkins said.

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