

302 words, column #16  
Java Talk  
(for August 16, 2007 to August 22, 2007)

## **Every Age Is The Best Age**

### *Elder Tellers*

Everyone loves a storyteller, especially one who has a good story to tell and who can tell it well. If you live long enough, you will have a lot of stories, probably well-honed from years of telling them. One thing that seems to be true—although, what is true is hard to be sure of, when you are talking about stories and storytellers—is that, traditionally, storytellers and story-listeners especially revere their elder tellers.

Stories seem to be ageless. I mean, when does a story begin or end? Does the story begin when it is first heard? Can the same story ever really be retold and be the same story? For example, is the story told by a dad to his son, who then tells the story to his own son, really the same story? Is it the same story, if the way we understand the story when we tell it, or the purpose for telling it, or the way it is understood by the listener, keeps changing? Grimms' fairy tales take on new significance when we hear them told at different times during our lives, although perhaps not the watered-down Disney versions. The National Geographic presents twelve "unvarnished tales based on a 1914 translation," that you can read or listen to, at [www.nationalgeographic.com/grimm/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/grimm/), such as "Breman Town Minstrels," a story about some very old animals. This tale takes on dimensions I would not have imagined as a child. We change, the stories change—and what is old becomes new again.

A growing collection of recorded stories told by some of Canada's renowned elder storytellers can be listened to, thanks to the Storytellers of Canada, such as Victoria's master storyteller, Kate Stevens, telling her traditional Chinese tales, at [www.storysave.ca](http://www.storysave.ca). "Lifetimes of learning are here," says the introduction to this wonderful oral collection.

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