

## MORNING STORIES TRANSCRIPT

*Between the Lines: Liz from Georgia, Georgia from Utah, Cyndy from Virginia, and the Bride of Frankenstein tell us about new things they've been hearing in old stories. Also, news about our Transcription Project.*

### **Tony Kahn:**

Hi, everybody! This is Tony Kahn, the producer and director of *Morning Stories* from WGBH in Boston. You know, they say you never step into the same stream twice. Well, the same is true for stories. You can hear them, and then you can set them aside, hear them again, and then see how you and they have changed.

Well, I'm here in the studio with Gary Mott, and this week we decided to dip into some of the stories that we've told you before, and to hear what those stories mean these days to some of you. [music begins] Take one of our earliest stories, called *A Better Life*.

### **Fatima:**

When I was seven years old, my mom was killed. And I saw it. I never met my father. And so after that, my.... [her voice and the music fade]

### **Tony Kahn:**

Our storyteller was named Fatima, an illegal alien from Brazil living in Boston. And she spoke of her early life of poverty, and of her dream for the sake of her own children, to come to America.

### **Fatima:**

When we arrived here, we work really hard. Really, really really hard! My husband helps me clean house. He deliver papers, and he works delivering pizza.

### **Tony Kahn:**

One of our listeners, Liz Cooksey, responded to Fatima because of her own refugee father. This is a little bit of what she had to say:

[Liz is on a phone line]

### **Liz Cooksey:**

I didn't learn 'til I was sixteen that he was not a citizen, and terrified – terrified that he'd be deported to what was then the Soviet Union. Ah –

### **Tony Kahn:**

How did you find out?

**Liz Cooksey:**

I was filling out my passport application, and I said, "Mother – citizen? Yes! Father – citizen? Yes!" and he said, "No!" And I said, "What?!!" And he said, "I'm not a citizen." And he said (like this: I can't do the Yiddish English, but I wish I could), "I would give my right arm to vote, and that's the one I use!" I've never missed an election in my life because of that.

He'd sit in front of the television and watch *College Bowl*. He'd sit and read the, the "Increase Your Word Power." He was always trying to better his third-grade education. He read my mother her medical textbooks without understanding a word of them. She became a psychiatrist, and it was my father who convinced her to go for her dream and he put her through medical school. Her eyesight was very poor, and the story is that when she got her diploma, and came home with him, she opened it and handed it to him, saying, "Here – you've earned this as much as I have."

**Tony Kahn:**

[Appreciatively] Mmmm.

**Liz Cooksey:**

I miss him, still.

**Tony Kahn:**

Liz, I think, inherited her father's persistence. We met Liz when she got in touch with us about our request for help doing transcripts for our podcasts. She has not only sent us a number of transcripts, but she offered to help coordinate the work of other volunteers who've also contacted us.

[Music: "There is an old cookhouse not far away, where we get sweet damn all three times a day . . ."]

**Dan Watt:**

I was not prepared for what I found. Not only was there a very, very large collection of letters that my father had written that my mother, Ruth, had saved in a scrapbook; there was a stack of copies of letters that Ruth had written to George in Spain:

**Female Reader:**

"Around midnight, I wake – [fades]

**Tony Kahn:**

Georgia, another of our volunteers for the transcript project, had some touching

things to say about another one of our stories, called *I Got Her Back*, about a box of hidden letters that helped connect a young child to a part of his father he never knew and to a mother that he'd never met.

**Gary Mott:**

Georgia writes, "One of my most treasured possessions is a small wooden box my husband made for me several years ago and gave to me with a promise that it would magically produce a letter for me at least one time every month. We have by now two large collections of not only sweet love letters and notes, but poems, jokes, and even a few well-placed apologies to show for our seventeen-plus years together. If we are ever blessed with children, I want them to have our letters. I want them to know their mother and father better by reading and touching handwritten, ink-smudged, and occasionally misspelled love, to get acquainted with pens and paper and discover the secrets of the magic box for themselves

**Tony Kahn:**

As you might have gathered, our transcript project is really taking off.

**Gary Mott:**

Tony has been knee-deep in transcripts the last few days -

**Tony Kahn:**

[Laughs] It's like a snowstorm!

**Gary Mott:**

- like a snowstorm! Please, go to our Flickr site -

**Tony Kahn:**

Right.

**Gary Mott:**

Click away; you'll see the transcripts, the full transcripts of our podcasts. It's a new experience, Tony. Seeing our not-so-intelligible words, sometimes, in print!

**Tony Kahn:**

To use a Yiddish term which I think is very appropriate right now, our effort so far has been very *ongepotchet*\* [Tony and Gary laugh]. Ya know what I mean? We have put, I'd say, about ten of our transcripts up on our Flickr page. But obviously as more transcripts come in, we're going to have to think of a better way of making them available. Perhaps you can help us here. If you have any suggestions about how we might do that, please let us know.

One of our most prolific volunteers, a lovely woman named Lynn actually had

this to say in an email. She says:

“Hey, this is great! I can do this at home, in my jammies, with a cup of coffee, and look like Frankenstein's bride and nobody would know the difference, or care. Anyway, since I'm home all day, why not help people out? I'm glad to help those that are learning English, but my heart really goes out to those who've lost their hearing, or have never been able to hear. Which is why I try to be as descriptive as possible when there's music, ocean waves – whatever – in the story being told.

[School bell ringing; music begins]

**Tony Kahn:**

It's not only transcribers we're hearing from, by the way:

**Betsy Bunn:**

I feel stunned all over again, just talking about it. Even all these years and years and years later.

**Tony Kahn:**

You may remember this story from Betsy Bunn, about the lessons that she learned, her first day of school in the Deep South, and about two friends that she had at the time called Marshall Jr. and Louise.

**Betsy Bunn:**

Mama said, “Baby, white children and colored children don't ever go to school together. Marshall Jr. and Louise will never be in school with you.” And I remember, I was just stunned. And she said, “Oh, baby, it's all right. They go to another school and they don't mind. They have other friends and you'll have other friends too. You don't need them anymore.”

**Tony Kahn:**

When we first podcast that story, we got an amazing letter from a woman named Cyndy McCollough, something that I never forgot. You've got it there, right?

**Gary Mott:**

That's right. “My father disowned me when I was twenty-four. I was in love with a black gentleman, and my dad couldn't take it. It broke both our hearts, I think. I was his baby girl, and the one of five children most like him. We stayed estranged for the next nine months, and then he was killed in a freak car accident on the autobahn while traveling in Zurich. Everyone always puts on their “sad face” when they hear this story. They say, “Oh! If you'd only known that you had so little time left.”

"But it was a question of personal integrity. There was no way I could've made the choice to stop dating this man because my father was a bigot. I'm sad it happened at all, and sad that we didn't have more time, or more chances to sort through it all. I've been angry, I guess, and that anger kept me closed to any memory of him. But he didn't raise me to be a racist. He taught me to stand up for what was right, even at great cost, even if he wasn't able to see it at the time. Thanks for motivating me to put these thoughts in writing.

**Tony Kahn:**

I remember, Gar, we put that letter in our podcast at the time, and I remember thinking just, rather sadly, that – guess not all stories end in a nice, resolved kind of way.

**Gary Mott:**

But the story continues, Tony!

**Tony Kahn:**

But the story continues. We got a letter from Cyndy just the other day. She wrote, "Dear Tony, I want to tell you what happened after I wrote you. I shared the podcast with my mom, my two brothers and two sisters. And in one of our conversations, I became aware of something that had occurred the week before his death. Turns out, that on his way to Zurich he stopped in New York for a few days to visit with a close friend of the family, Bob C. It turned out that Dad had spoken to Bob about me, the week before his death. Dad told Bob he wished he had handled it differently, and asked for advice regarding how to patch things back together. They ended their visit with plans for Dad to stop in New York on his way back from Europe, so that they could speak again after Bob mulled over the problem. It was as though a twenty-year-old wet cement mantle was being lifted from my heart.

"Now I have no doubt we would have straightened it out, and that he was, in fact, a loving father who got lost for a bit. What a difference one small action can make! That action was hearing your podcast, which led me to recall my own past, which led me to write you an email, which led – well, you see, you see what your work brings about? Huge, my friend, huge. Thank you. Much warmth and love, Cyndy."

Well, Cyndy, I've got this little quote up on my wall. It's from an, an author named Muriel Rukeyser. It says, "The universe is not made out of atoms; it's made out of stories." [Gary laughs gently.] Now I know what she meant! [Tony laughs heartily]

**Gary Mott:**

<<http://wgbh.org/morningstories>> – we have an active, growing Flickr site:

<<http://flickr.com/wgbhmorningstories>>. We have YouTube – Tony, what else we got?

**Tony Kahn:**

When you're on our website, if you happen to see a little link that says, "Please contribute" – well, it's a very short sentence! [Both laugh.] So it won't take you long –

**Gary Mott:**

Please contribute!

**Tony Kahn:**

– it won't take you long to read it!

**Gary Mott:**

Please, drop us a line at *Morning Stories*. We love hearing from ya. <[morningstories@wgbh.org](mailto:morningstories@wgbh.org)>. And –

**Tony Kahn:**

Ooh! If you want to help out in the transcript project, well, we've got someone that you can write to, as well.

**Gary Mott:**

Our intrepid volunteer, Liz Cooksey.

**Tony Kahn:**

"Intrepid" is putting it mildly. I would say "genetically persistent!"

**Gary Mott:**

Her email address: (She wants to hear from you, believe me!) <[transcripts\\_liz@bellsouth.net](mailto:transcripts_liz@bellsouth.net)>

**Tony Kahn:**

Transcripts – underscore, not dash – underscore Liz at bellsouth dot net.

**Gary Mott:**

That's it!

**Tony Kahn:**

We'll see you next podcast!

[Classical guitar begins, underlays rest of show]

[Liz on a phone line]

**Liz Cooksey:**

My first marriage lasted for about four-and-a-half years, and I was still too afraid to remarry for three years, while he worked on my getting healed from the first marriage. My current husband of thirty years came to the house where I was raising our daughter, Marian, and then the other – alternative – weeks, I went to his apartment with her, and he hosted dinner.

Very early, before we even got married, she put a little note in his hand one time, when the two of us were (the adults) were sitting on the lawn in front of my apartment, that said, "I have idoptid you (I-D-O-P-T-I-D). Can I call you 'Daddy'?" And he responded, "As soon as your mother will agree to marry me." Then, she'd sit across from me at the table and say, "Mama, I want a daddy!" And I said, "You have a daddy!" "No, I want a daddy in the house!"

Everybody could see what a great jewel he is.

**Tony Kahn:**

I think she inherited your persistence. [Liz laughs.]

[Music plays for a while, then tapers off.]

[End of Recording]

Transcribed by:

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Notes from transcriber Liz:

\*Ongepotchket means "messed up, slapped together without form, excessively and unaesthetically decorated"