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## Master storyteller Donald Davis to tell his tall tales at Columbus Tech on Feb. 16

BY SANDRA OKAMOTO

Every other year, master storyteller Donald Davis spends six weeks in west central Georgia and east central Alabama presenting workshops and performances. This year some of the institutions include the Azalea Storytelling Festival, Auburn City School System, Columbus Technical College, LaGrange College, West Georgia Technical College, Troup County School System and area churches.

Davis will be at Columbus Technical College at 9:30 a.m. Feb. 16.

The workshop, "Storytelling in the Classroom for Pre-K" is for early childhood students and education professionals.

At noon, there will be a public performance "Lunch with Donald Davis." Bring a sack lunch; bottled water will be provided.

Finally, at 4 p.m., Davis will present a workshop for faculty, staff and educational professionals from the community on "Storytelling in the Classroom at the College Level." Those attending will receive credit for annual professional development.

Davis was born in the southern Appalachian mountain world rich in stories.

"I didn't learn stories, I just absorbed them," he said. He recounts tales and more tales learned from a family of traditional storytellers who have lived on the same Western North Carolina land since 1781.

Davis grew up hearing gentle fairy tales, simple and silly Jack tales, scary mountain lore, ancient Welsh and Scottish folktales, and-most importantly-nourishing true-to-life stories of his own neighbors and kin. It was his Uncle Frank, a man who "talked in stories," who helped Donald capture the real and daily adventures of life ... and it was Uncle Frank who gave him the creative courage to tell about them.

"I discovered that in a story I could safely dream any dream, hope any hope, go anywhere I pleased, fight any foe, win or lose, live or die," he said. "My stories created a safe experimental learning place."

He graduated from Davidson Collage, then went to graduate school at the Duke University Divinity School. Davis is a retired Methodist minister; former chairperson of the board of directors for the National Storytelling Association; a featured teller at the Smithsonian Institution, the World's Fair, festivals and concerts throughout the United States and the world; an author and producer of books and tapes of his works; a master teacher of workshops and storytelling courses; a guest host for the National Public Radio Program "Good Evening." He is the father of four sons.

Storytelling "is not what I do for a living ... it is how I do all that I do while I am living," Davis said.

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