LISTENER COMMENTS: A FORM OF COLLABORATION IN CONVERSATIONAL NARRATIVE

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the study of narrative has a history as old as that of Western civilization, the study of personal narratives and the focus on context as well as text is a very recent development. One of the things that has come out of such study is a focusing on the "point" of narratives, what people tell narratives about, why they tell them, and what they are trying to say with them. Researchers have come to realize that the point of any given narrative is very dependent on the context in which it is told and the reactions of the listeners. Despite this recognition of the importance of listeners, however, many researchers have touched on listener comments only in passing or have seen them as largely serving the purpose of assuring the narrator of continued interest and understanding on the part of the audience. I propose to demonstrate that listener comments can be much more than that.

A Brief History of the Study of Narrative

The study of personal conversational narratives is a relatively recent development, beginning in the late 1950's and only becoming widespread in the last decade or so. Until recently linguists, following the leads of Saussure and Chomsky, have studied largely langue and "competence" rather than parole or "performance". They have, in short, discussed language as opposed
to speech, and have studied it as divorced from its social context (Labov 1970). The study of narrative has been equally divorced from its occurrence in daily life. Folklorists, who have been the main people interested in narrative, generally have studied traditional folktales and have viewed them as fixed entities to be studied on the basis of collected texts alone.

Only in the late 1950's did folklorists and others begin to look at narratives in context. Schatzman and Strauss's 1955 study of social class differences in narrative style was one of the first studies of personal narrative and did not have a large impact. Around the end of the 1950's, folklorists such as Jansen (1957) and Dorson (1960) began calling for information on folk narrators as well as folktales and the analysis of performance as well as text. Similar trends can be seen in the call of Arewa and Dundes (1964) for studying proverbs in context, the work of Hymes (1962) on the "ethnography of speaking", and the general move of linguists towards "sociolinguistics" or the study of speech in context (see Labov 1970). In 1969, Georges summed up recent developments by criticizing "...the premise that stories are surviving or traditional entities and...the a priori assumption that the means of discovering the meaning and significance of these entities is through the collection and study of story texts" (316). He argued instead for the study of the entire "storytelling event".
The real ground breaking study in the analysis of personal narrative came with the work of Labov and Waletzky in 1967. Their research involved the analysis of recorded personal narratives and the attempt to define the "normal structure" of such narratives. One of the reasons they gave for such a study was the idea that studying personal narratives would enable them to identify fundamental narrative structures with which to understand folktales, myths, etc. Others picked up on this idea, leading to research in areas such as personal narrative as a key to understanding literary texts (Van Dijk 1975) and the study of personal narrative as folklore (Stahl 1977). Labov continued to refine his analysis of personal narratives, and there was a growing body of literature on conversation in general. Not until about 1978, however, did researchers begin to produce substantial amounts of work on personal narrative. I would now like to turn to this body of research.

Definitions of "The Point"

Just as Labov and Waletzky were among the first to study actual samples of everyday spoken narrative, so too were they among the first to suggest that "Narratives are usually told...to establish some point of personal interest" (1967: 34). Labov defines the "point" of a narrative as its "raison d'etre: why it was told, and what the narrator is getting at". He argues that in
order for a story\textsuperscript{1} to be successful, it must center around a "maximally reportable event", and suggests that such "reportable" events are generally unusual in some way (1981: 228-229). Similarly, Van Dijk (1975) argues that people usually tell stories about unusual, unexpected, or otherwise "remarkable" events. Robinson, however, points out that although people do tell stories about unusual events, these are not the only events people tell stories about, and he suggests that even commonplace, everyday events frequently make interesting narratives (1981: 60-62). Despite Labov's initial attempt at definition, the "point" of a narrative and its success do not seem to depend solely on the unusualness of the events narrated.

A more useful criterion is the relevance of the story to the conversation of which it is a part. Jefferson (1978) and Gardner and Spielmann (1980) both suggest that narrators frequently go to some lengths to demonstrate that their stories relate thematically or in some other way to the current topic of conversation. Ryave also sees narratives as occasioned by preceding conversation, arguing that "... the storyteller's talk is constructed such that the observable purpose of their telling a story is to illustrate, substantiate, prove some asserted state of affairs" (1978: 123). Similarly, Polanyi defines a narrative

\textsuperscript{1} The terms "narrative" and "story" will be used interchangeably throughout this paper and should be read as having identical meanings unless stated otherwise.
as "the linguistic encoding of past experience in order to explain something about, or by means of, the events or states described" (1979: 208). That which is explained, illustrated, or proved is the actual point of most narratives.

The point of a story, then, is not the events about which it is told so much as what the narrator is trying to say by telling about those events. Nor are the listeners left to guess about this. Ryave notes that narrators not only recount action but...

...are also frequently attentive to and concerned with expressing in so many words the import, relevance, significance of that recounting and/or indicating just how the import and significance of some assertion(s) can be appreciated and evidenced in and through the recounting of some event. (1978: 124-5)

Labov defines this sort of commentary as evaluation, "the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative" (1972: 366). Polanyi-Bowditch defines the concept by arguing that any narrative contains three types of clauses: etic clauses, which contain temporal and geographic material, non-vital character description, and development; emic clauses, which contain the material which the story is about, the point of the story which is put in context by etic details; and evaluative clauses, which serve to signal which clauses are emic (1976: 22). Thus a narrator uses evaluation to direct the listeners' attention to what the narrator considers important in the story and what he/she is trying to say by telling it.
It should be clear from the above that the point of a given story is not an absolute, but will vary depending on who tells the story and in what context. As Wolfson puts it:

There is always more than one way to organize a story; and as we know, the same story may be organized in different ways to suit different audiences or to make different points (1979: 181).

Young similarly notes that a given narrative can be used on different occasions to make very different points—-that the point rests with the teller rather than with the events told (1982: 301). Chafe's work on the role of salience in narrative is particularly relevant here. He argues that people include in a narrative details that are salient to them, but that the events which are salient will vary from speaker to speaker (1977: 241) and can even change for a single speaker at different times (1976: 45-47). He suggests, therefore, that

...verbalization is creative, in the sense that it requires a speaker to make choices between a multiplicity of available options. The assumption here is that the final verbal output is far from being uniquely determined by the initial nonverbal input from memory (1976: 41).

While the initial events being described clearly play some role in how the narrative is organized, the interpretation of those events is largely up to the narrator and will vary with the situation.
The Role of Listeners

One of the main situational constraints of a narrative is the audience. Not only must the narrator take known characteristics of the listeners into account in deciding how and if to tell the narrative, but he/she must also be responsive to audience reaction during the story and adjust the telling accordingly. A number of researchers, therefore, have stressed the importance of listeners in shaping the story. One finds, for instance, statements such as "...the storyteller and the story listener...shape the message jointly" (Georges 1969: 322), or "...the contributions of the audience must be given equal consideration to those of the speaker or narrator" (Robinson 1981: 59). Theorists have suggested that listening is as active a state as speaking (Watson and Potter 1962), and that stories are not in fact homogeneous blocks during which no one but the narrator may speak (Jefferson 1978). Ryave (1978) and Polanyi (1979) both point out that statements of listeners can be as important as those of tellers in determining the point of a given story, that determining the point is in fact a matter of social negotiation among all the participants.

Despite this plethora of literature on the importance of listeners, their comments are still frequently seen as serving mostly to show appreciation and interest in the narrative. Donaldson is typical in this respect:
...I do not mean to be devaluing the role of the hearer/respondent, as this role is just as important as that of the speaker and entails just as many responsibilities. Most speakers depend quite heavily on the reinforcement of mm-hmm's and other responsive devices for the assurance that they are communicating, that the other person is following what they are saying and that he is continuing to be interest (1979: Endnote #4).

Robinson stresses that listeners are expected to show their interest and appreciation of the narration (1981: 71), and Tannen (1984) sees listener comments as encouraging the narrator, expressing interest, and demonstrating rapport. Donaldson, in fact, even goes so far as to say that listeners are not expected to give informational responses, and that if they do, this is seen as a bid to take the floor from the narrator (1979: 265).

I hope to show that while comments by listeners do have the appreciative and encouraging role described above, this is not their only role. In her study of Hawaiian children, Watson (1975) discovered that two children would frequently tell a story in tandem, one child taking the role of lead narrator, the other interjecting comments which elaborated on, rephrased, summarized, and otherwise supported the main narrator's story. Robinson has recently called into question the applicability of this research to continental American white society (1981: 72-3), but I have found evidence of something similar, which I shall call "co-narration", among American whites. If one of the listeners is a "knowing listener", that is, was present at the events being
described, he/she can interrupt the narrator with comments that not only show appreciation, but actually contribute to the narrative text of the story. Furthermore, even "non-knowing listeners" who are hearing the narrative for the first time can sometimes contribute in this way.

I shall argue, then, that listeners do in fact "shape the message jointly" with the teller. Their role is not limited to giving the narrator feedback on how well he/she is doing. Rather, both knowing and non-knowing listeners can interject comments which accentuate certain aspects of the narrative and help the narrator make the point. Or, as I shall also show, such interruptions can deliberately or inadvertently undermine the point the narrator is trying to make and offer an alternative point for the same series of events. I shall call the first of these, where co-narrators are in agreement about the point, cooperative co-narration, and the second, where they disagree about the point, competitive co-narration. Cooperative co-narration is far more common in my data than competitive, and I shall attempt, in Chapter 5, to explain my theory of why this is so. First, however, let us turn to the collection of the data.
In studying personal narrative one tries to record narratives in as natural a context as possible, to capture them as they are normally produced within the situations in which they normally occur. While asking someone to tell you a narrative may very well produce one, I question whether such a narrative is the same in all respects as a narrative that spontaneously occurs in the course of a conversation. Spontaneous narratives seem most commonly to occur when friends and acquaintances are sitting around talking in what Watson and Potter have called a "sociable setting", that is, a setting in which "people have come together in order to enjoy each other's company" (1962: 246). I have therefore collected my data within a naturally occurring social setting rather than through the more artificial technique of elicitation in an interview.

The Context of Narrative

I would like to point out, however, that the sort of dichotomy I have set up between "natural" and "artificial" speech is itself rather artificial. Robinson argues that all speech occurs in and is influenced by a context and that there is no reason to feel that an interview situation is less "natural" than a conversation among friends (1981: 68-9). As Wolfson puts it, "If speech is appropriate to the situation and the goal, then it is natural,
whether it takes place within an interview or outside it" (1982: 70). Rather than viewing some speech as natural and some as artificial, Labov suggests that individuals have a variety of speech styles which "can be ranged along a single dimension, measured by the amount of attention paid to speech", with the "vernacular" defined as the style in which the least attention is paid to speech (1970: 46).

While an interview is not an "artificial" context, it does "...define a speech context in which only one speaking style normally occurs, that which we may call careful speech," which may be quite different from that used by the speaker in less formal contexts (Labov 1972b: 79). If one wishes to study a range of styles, one must therefore come up with a way of eliciting vernacular speech. Labov attempted to do this by encouraging people to tell about a time when they were in danger of death. He felt that the subjects became so involved in the narration that they paid less attention to their speech and used a more spontaneous style (1970; 1972a; 1972b). Such a technique may well have provided the data Labov needed for his study of pronunciation and grammar, but Wolfson provides substantial evidence that the narratives he elicited in interviews differ in various ways from those spontaneously occurring in conversation (1982: 58-65).

Wolfson explains this by arguing that "...the interview is
itself a speech event with rules for the use of language which tend to prohibit the occurrence of performed conversational narratives" (1982: 107). Thus while an interview itself is not an unnatural situation, the production of a narrative within an interview is. (Robinson 1981: 84 provides further support for this view). Even if the narrative itself is similar to that produced in a social setting, the circumstances of its production and reception will be different. A narrative elicited by the researcher cannot be used to study such things as how people introduce a narrative into conversation, how they continue conversing once the narrative is over, or the role of interruptions and comments by listeners. As Robinson puts it,

   Personal narratives are typically recited in conversation, and for that reason the contribution of participants other than the narrator must be considered. It is a weakness of elicitation methodology that the role of listener is rarely evident in a normal way" (1982: 70-71).

The research on listener comments presented in this paper could only come out of spontaneously occurring narratives recorded in a social setting.

Research Strategy

I did my research at Lanie and John's summer house where they were celebrating their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary by inviting a variety of people to visit them. The guests ranged from children just starting grade school to retired senior
citizens, and they stayed for anywhere from a day to the entire month. Some were relatives of Lanie and John, while the others had all been friends of theirs for several years. With three exceptions all of the guests were white, upper-middle class Americans who either had or were planning to receive a college education. Appendix One contains further information on the age, occupation, and relationship to Lanie and John of specific individuals mentioned in the transcripts.

Over the period of the month I recorded fifty hours of conversation using a Panasonic walkman recorder. When each guest arrived, I told him/her that I was working on a project studying conversation patterns and asked permission to tape-record his/her conversation. I left the tape recorder on a small table in the living-dining room and turned it on anytime someone was in the room. All but one of the narratives here cited were recorded in this setting.\footnote{2} Because of time constraints I could not transcribe all of the tapes. I therefore transcribed a sampling which includes 16 hours of recorded conversation from 8 different

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\footnote{2} The exceptions were Mala, an Indian woman who had come to the States for college and eventually become a U.S. citizen, Maria Elena, a Peruvian currently working in the U.S., and Marie Carmen, a French girl visiting the U.S. for the summer. Mala is the only one of these cited in this paper.
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\footnote{3} The exception is story 10 which was recorded earlier in the summer at Helen and Dan's apartment. Once again it was recorded with the walkman during a naturally occurring conversation, and all participants were aware they were being recorded.
\end{flushleft}
days with 20 different speakers. Transcripts of the stories cited in this paper and an explanation of transcript notation may be found in Appendix Two.

As will be noted from Appendix One and my above description, most of the speakers I studied were relatively homogeneous. In some ways this is a flaw since Tannen (1984) demonstrates quite convincingly that different groups each have distinctive styles of speaking which include not only differences in dialect or accent but also different ways of interacting within a conversation (see also Schatzman and Strauss 1955). This study, therefore, must be taken as a description of the narrative style of one particular group which may provide a point of reference and comparison for the study of other groups.

On the other hand, the similarity of the guests may have been an advantage in producing a situation which was highly conducive to performed narratives. Wolfson has noted that narrators most often produce fully performed narratives when they perceive their listeners as similar to themselves and sympathetic to the views expressed in the story (1978: 225-229 and 1982: 67-68). Similarly, both Watson and Polanyi have argued that narrator and listeners must have a certain shared background of knowledge and/or cultural values in order for a story to be interesting (Watson 1975: 58; Polanyi 1979: 209-10). Thus the homogeneity of
the guests may actually have been an advantage in producing narratives.

The Problem of Observation

If people are aware they are being observed, this may change their behavior. We can never assume that people who are being recorded have completely "forgotten" about the tape-recorder or the presence of the researcher or that the knowledge of observation does not influence their behavior. If the researcher does not take part in the interaction, this will make people all the more conscious of being observed by an outsider, whereas if the researcher does interact in the situation, he/she risks effecting the very behavior under study. Various studies have highlighted this danger by showing that a researcher may unconsciously influence the behavior of others so as to lead them to act in ways which support the researcher's hypothesis (see Rosenthal 1966 for an overview of such research). Not only are all of these factors omnipresent in any research involving observation, but it is very difficult to empirically assess the type of effect and the magnitude of effect they have on the behavior in question.

The presence of the tape-recorder is of course the biggest problem in any study of conversation. Wolfson notes that,

...try as we may to distract the subject so he forgets that he is being recorded, we do not have the right to assume that our subjects are unconscious of
observation. That the subject is well aware of the presence of the tape recorder, even in the most casual of interviews, is evidenced by the references made to it (1982: 57).

There are indeed such references to the tape recorder in a number of the conversations I recorded. On the other hand, the recorder was kept relatively inconspicuous, and the fact that it was constantly there meant that guests who stayed any length of time had plenty of opportunity to become used to, and therefore less conscious of it. Furthermore, the setting itself was entirely natural; the guests were there to visit Lanie and John, not to take part in an experiment. Many of them had not seen each other for several years and were eager to catch up. Labov has noted that such group interactions tend to minimize the effect of a tape-recorder (1970; 1972a; 1972b).

It is also important to realize, as Goodwin has noted (1981:44), that no one in a conversational setting is ever unobserved. The question is whether being tape recorded or observed by a scientific researcher causes one to behave differently than being observed by other members of the conversation. Being recorded is probably the most inhibiting in situations where people are talking about extremely intimate or sensitive subjects (e.g. personal relationships, illegal activities, sexual, political, or religious topics). The situation in Maine, however, was such that while all the guests knew Lanie and John, they did not all know each other. Friendly
conversation and the telling of personal narratives is perfectly normal behavior in such a setting, but the discussion of extremely personal or potentially controversial subjects is not. The sorts of topics that would make people embarrassed or nervous about being recorded were inhibited as much by the normal constraints of such a social setting as by the presence of the tape-recorder.

Nor do I think my presence as a researcher was disruptive. Goodwin suggests that

If the investigator is the addressee of the party he is observing...what he will in general obtain are samples of how these different individuals talk to an academic stranger--rather than samples of how they talk to each other (1981: 43).

The point is that I was not an "academic stranger". Although everyone knew I was doing research, many of them already knew me, and they thought of me primarily as a guest just like themselves. Furthermore, I did my best to downplay my research, referring to it as a "project for school" and generally trying to portray myself as an amateur. I took no notes and interacted with the other guests just as I normally would. Since I had previously seen these people in situations where they were not being observed, I could compare the two and be fairly confident that there was no substantial difference in their behavior.

By minimizing my effect as an observer, however, I maximized it as a participant, and my participation in the conversations
doubtless helped to shape their structure and direction. I knew at the time that I was going to be studying personal narrative, but I had not yet decided to focus on listener comments. Researcher awareness of the specific hypothesis was therefore not a problem, but I cannot rule out the possibility that the research I had been doing on narrative may have effected my behavior in some way. While I have avoided using my own speech as data in this study, I cannot eliminate whatever effect my behavior may have had on the others present. Given a choice between effecting the conversation by making people aware of me as an observer and effecting it by being a participant, I chose the latter as the lesser of the two evils.

Choosing the setting I did thus allowed me to record narratives in a situation in which they occurred spontaneously and to minimize participants' awareness that they were being observed. The fact that people knew me as a friend meant that they did not think of themselves as being scientifically observed and also allowed me to compare their behavior with other situations to be sure it was not appreciably different. My strategy does raise the possibility that my behavior as a participant may have influenced the situation, but this seemed a less serious problem than those that would have arisen with any other approach. While it is never possible to completely avoid the effects of observation, I believe this strategy kept them at a minimum.
CHAPTER THREE: CO-NARRATION BY KNOWING LISTENERS

When two people have witnessed the same event and one of them chooses to tell a narrative about it, the other person can interject comments which either support or detract from the main narrator's tale. Previous researchers, when they deal with listener comments at all, have generally discussed such comments as functioning primarily on the conversational level, providing interaction between the main narrator and the co-narrator. Comments by knowing listeners can also play a role on the textual level, however, serving as evaluation within the narrative. At times listener comments work primarily on one of these levels, at others they may operate simultaneously on both.

Listener Comments as Social Interaction

Knowing listeners frequently encourage the narrator by chiming in with words and phrases or finishing his/her sentences. Story 1 contains an instance of the first of these when Judy describes their dog by saying "She was a disaster" and Jim says "Paranoid" at the same moment (lines 2-3)\(^4\). Story 2 provides an example of a listener finishing a sentence: John starts the sentence with "so your father wrote a letter to both of you telling you how to", and Lanie finishes "plant tulip bulbs" (lines 2-5). Tannen (1984) argues that such comments are a show of rapport with the

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4. See Appendix Two for complete transcripts of the stories.
narrator, conveying that the listeners are "with" the narrator and interested in the narration. They also serve as prompts to the narrator when the listener perceives him/her as hesitating or searching for a word. By supplying the words for which the narrator is searching, a knowing listener can help get the story moving. Such behavior sends a non-verbal message of support for the narrator.

Goodwin notes that knowing listeners may also monitor the narration and interject corrections or additional explanations when they seem called for (1981: 156-58). Brady argues that this may be necessary since a narrative with insufficient or confusing orienting information may leave the listeners feeling lost (1980: 169-70). In such instances a knowing listener can supply the information left out by the narrator. Thus in story 3 when Jan describes someone as moving from Janecio, Curt thinks it necessary to add "Up near Quad Cities" in case any of the listeners do not know where Janecio is (lines 8-9). Stories 2 and 4 provide additional examples of this. Such explanatory interruptions help avoid confusion on the listeners part, thus aiding the narrator by making the story more easily understood and effective.

At times, however, a knowing listener will interject an explanation or correction even when the information does not seem particularly crucial to understanding the narrative. In story 5,
for example, Lanie corrects John's comment that she was working on the turkey by stating that she was actually working on the stuffing (lines 9-10). She also explains that the apartment in question belonged to Mala as well as herself (line 3). When one views the narrative as a whole, however, it becomes obvious that neither of these facts is particularly important to the narrative. Why, then, does Lanie interject them?

One explanation for such seemingly irrelevant corrections lies in Chafe's discussion of salience. He suggests that different events may have differing degrees of salience for different people depending on their involvement in the action being described (1977: 241). We all tend to remember our own actions more clearly than other's, and to want them to be reported accurately. Thus it is important to Lanie, even if not to anyone else, that she was working on the stuffing rather than the turkey. Similarly, the fact that the apartment also belonged to Mala would probably not have been mentioned were it not for the fact that Mala was part of the audience. Lanie's comments were thus less important to the narrative than to the social situation in which it was told.

Lanie's comments stress both her and Mala's status as participants in the events being described. Goodwin (1981) suggests that narrators themselves will sometimes acknowledge such status by asking knowing listeners for information or
verification. Such requests for aid "...operate ritually, displaying deference to the other party present who could be telling the story" (1981: 158). Narrators can also show this kind of deference by saying something like "That's right" or repeating the information volunteered by knowing listeners. In story 6, for instance, Lanie says "We stopped at Aunt Somebody", and Bill supplies the name Aunt Kid (lines 10-11). Although Lanie has not specifically requested Bill's help in this situation, she does acknowledge it by saying, "Yeah, Aunt Kid", before she continues with the narration. Stories 2, 7, 8, 9, and 10 contain other examples of this type of acknowledgement. Thus listener comments act in part to establish the speaker's status as a knowing listener with the right to participate in the narration.

Listener Comments as Evaluation

Listener comments can function on other levels besides that of conversational interaction, however. I would like to turn now to a purely textual analysis which leaves aside questions of speaker intent. I am interested, in other words, not in the reasons why knowing listeners interrupt, but rather in how such interruptions function within the narrative itself. Many comments by knowing listeners are in fact just like those of the main narrator--if one were to take out the names in the transcription it would be hard to differentiate them from the rest of the narration. This is particularly true of comments which serve as evaluation. As
Young puts it, "Evaluations offered in the course of the storytelling are not, in spite of Labov, necessarily uttered by the storyteller" (1982: 302). Comments by knowing listeners can also function in this way.

We saw in Chapter One that evaluation is the means by which the narrator focuses attention on crucial aspects of the narrative. The most obvious way for the narrator to do this is through an overt statement of subjective meaning or value, such as "It was fascinating". Thus Polanyi notes that

The main point of the story is often most highly evaluated...in actual everyday storytelling, by external commenting by the narrator saying quite explicitly what he believes the point to be (1979: 210).

Labov suggests that there can be varying degrees of embedding of evaluation ranging from the type described by Polanyi to something as subtle as syntactic complexity (1972a). "External" or "overt" evaluation is thus a statement in which the narrator comes right out and explains how he/she interprets or felt about the event, while "internal" or "embedded" evaluation is a more subtle way of directing the audience's attitudes towards the events described.

The more embedded forms of evaluation include a wide range of devices for focusing audience attention on particular facets of a story. Wolfson (1978 and 1982) and Polanyi-Bowditch (1976) have argued that repetition and redundancy can be one way of doing
this. Narrators may also use attention-getting or dramatic features such as direct speech, expressive sounds, sound effects, and motions and gestures (Wolfson 1978: 216). Labov and Waletzky suggest that inserting background information during the course of the story can act evaluatively by retarding the action in order to create suspense (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Labov 1981). Other evaluative devices include interpretive asides (Wolfson 1982: 27) and elaborating on crucial events (Gardner and Spielmann 1980). In short, practically anything above and beyond the bare bones of the plot, especially anything that identifies the meaning of the events described or makes a subjective comment on them, can be seen as evaluation.

An Example of Co-narration and Listener Evaluation

Let us turn, then, to a narrative in which the comments of a knowing listener act in precisely this way (Story 11):

JOHN Well I told you Mala that I saw Doug M. a couple weeks ago and he related again the napkin story on Lanie
MALA Yeah
JOHN We had some Australian friends who came to the U. S. for 5 three or four months and so while we were in Urbana we took them up to Chicago for a weekend you know to see the big city
LANIE
JOHN Mala and Dean helped entertain them I think actually we probably stayed with you and maybe they did too I don't
10 remember so anyway we went off to some fancy place one evening and um Delma the wife decided that she wanted to collect souvenirs from the U. S. so she was gonna steal ah salt an salt pepper or sugar bowl

LANIE No no salt and peppers 15 were pa she'd already done that sort of thing She wanted to get a sugar bowl

JOHN She was gonna steal sugar bowls from all the restaurants across the U. S. or something like that as her souvenirs

LANIE Which I thought was a little too much

JOHN 20 And so we were all chastising her that she couldn't do this in this fancy restaurant that Dean and Mala

LANIE And one time she wanted to collect this table cloth that she was sort of gonna sort of pull off the table at the end you know I don't know It was kind of difficult 25 going to dinner with Delma

JOHN And so while she was doing all this scheming we were trying to shut her shut her down you know not let her do it

LANIE Check her purse before she left make sure there wasn't 30 a sugar bowl

JOHN And so they had bright red napkins in this restaurant and Lanie was having something that dripped or was gooey or something and so she carefully tucked this napkin in 35 Yeah no I tucked it in to my skirt So I had this
sort of red napkin tucked in

And so we finally got Delma not stealing anything
appropriately from this fancy restaurant but we walked
out got in the car and su or I guess as we were walking
out somebody looked and Lanie had this bright red napkin
tucked into her lap Walked right out with it

Nobody said a thing I didn't know I had it Maybe it
was that nonchalant like I didn't have it on attitude
Nobody dared comment What napkin

Lanie's first two comments in this story clearly play the kind
of interactive roles described in the first section of this
chapter. With "to see the big city" (line 7), she supplies a
phrase and her second interruption (line 14) is a correction of
the type described above. At the same time, however, these
statements function evaluatively. Lanie's first comment not only
supplies a phrase, but also restates John's explanation "we took
them up to Chicago for a weekend" in a more catchy, colorful
way. The words "to see the big city" provide an atmosphere,
carrying connotations of going on a spree and showing off the
country to the foreigners. Similarly, Lanie's second
interruption not only corrects John, but also gives the
additional information that Delma had already stolen salt and
pepper shakers. Her comment emphasizes the fact that Delma
habitually stole from restaurants in much the same was as John's
statement that "She was gonna steal sugar bowls from all the
restaurants across the U. S." This portrayal of Delma as practically a kleptomaniac plays an essential role in the point of the story, namely the contrast between Delma's deliberate attempts to steal and Lanie's inadvertent theft.

Lanie's next few interruptions act to strengthen this portrayal of Delma. Her comment, "Which I thought was a little too much" (line 19), overtly evaluates John's description of Delma's behavior. Not only does Lanie give her personal opinion about the event, she also leads the other listeners towards a similar attitude: they too are encouraged to think that Delma's behavior is "a little too much". In case the point has not been sufficiently emphasized, Lanie then describes yet another incident where Delma embarrassed them with her attempts to steal (lines 22-24). Her next comment "Check her purse before she left make sure there wasn't a sugar bowl" (lines 29-30) continues to emphasize Delma's incorrigibleness, as well as making more concrete and visual John's statement that they tried to "not let her do it". Lanie sums up the point of both her own and John's evaluative devices with another example of external evaluation: "It was kind of difficult going to dinner with Delma" (lines 24-5).

Once this point is firmly established, John continues with the narrative and describes Lanie tucking in the napkin. Lanie's next comment about the napkin (lines 35-6) echoes him very
closely, using redundancy to keep firmly in the listeners' minds the knowledge that Lanie had tucked in a very conspicuous napkin. John uses this strategy himself by twice referring to the napkin as "bright red". Lanie's final comments make more explicit the facts, already implied by John, that Lanie was not aware of the napkin and that it was not noticed by the restaurant staff, despite its conspicuousness. Lanie's comments throughout the narrative act to highlight, emphasize, and evaluate the important parts of the narrative.

Listener Evaluation: Degrees of Embedding

Comments by knowing listeners often take the form of external evaluation. In story 4, for example, Lanie's description of the terrible cornflakes Peggy left is enhanced by Becky's comments: "Which tasted disgusting", and "I mean I like cornflakes but I didn't like those cornflakes" (lines 13 and 17-8). There is more going on here than Becky merely wanting to put in her two cents' worth. Her personal opinion about the cornflakes emphasizes the fact that they really were terrible, making it clear why "getting stuck" with them after Peggy left was such a predicament. As with Lanie's comments about Delma in story 11, the opinion of a knowing listener can influence the opinion of non-knowing listeners and bolster the point the main narrator is trying to make. Stories 6, 7, and 9 provide other examples of this.

The use of redundancy to highlight important information
provides a more embedded form of evaluation. Thus in story 12, John's statement "It's the first time it's snowed in Sydney ever" is echoed by Lanie's "They had the most snow it's ever had in Sydney" (lines 10-14). Redundancy can be almost verbatim repetition, as in story 12, or, even more simply, an affirmation of what the narrator has just said. Thus in story 8, Jim responds to Judy's statement, "I wouldn't take any help" with an emphatic "No you wouldn't" (lines 17-19). At other times redundancy takes the form of an elaboration on what the narrator has said. In story 7 for instance, Jan describes an accident with the phrase "Peeled back the whole top of the truck". Meg then provides a sort of instant replay by saying, "He was looking in the mirror and all of a sudden the whole truck..." which Jan then finishes with "just disappeared" (lines 32-36). In each of these examples the repetition by the knowing listener highlights information relating directly to the point of the story. (See stories 9, 13, and 14 for further examples.)

At times knowing listeners emphasize a narrator's point, not by repeating the same information, but by introducing entirely new information which gives further strength to the main narrator's point. Later in the story about the truck, for instance, Meg announces that the accident appeared in the newspaper (Story 7, lines 67-70). This new information affirms the point that this was really a terrible accident. Similarly, Jim, in story 8, emphasizes Judy's helplessness by giving the information that she
could not even get to the door (line 33). Other examples can be found in stories 4, 5, 12, and 15. In this type of interruption, the co-narrator adds new plot details which corroborate the point the main narrator is trying to make. This and the type of redundancy mentioned above seem to be the most common types of interruption and evaluation by knowing listeners.

Listener Comments as Detracting from the Narrator's Point

Thus far we have spoken as if every interruption helps the narrator make his/her point, but this is not entirely true. The same types of evaluation which knowing listeners use to support the narrator's point may also end up being irrelevant to that point or even disputing it. A co-narrator may believe that he/she knows the point the main narrator is trying to make and offer evaluation to support it, only to discover that the narrator was using the story to make a different point. In this case, the comment by the knowing listener will seem irrelevant to the narrative and may distract and confuse the other listeners. Or a knowing listener may simply disagree with the main narrator about what the point of the narrative should be, and the two of them will compete for control of the narrative. In both these instances, the narrators disagree about the point of the story, and co-narration therefore ends up being disruptive rather than supportive.

Story 6 provides an interesting example of this. In this
story, Lanie tells about a visit to Aunt Kid before she and John were engaged, and Bill interrupts to say that he was working as hard as he could to get John to marry her (lines 8-10). Bill's comment is basically irrelevant to Lanie's story. If we look at its placement within the narrative, we can see that this happens because he does not realize what the point of Lanie's narrative is going to be. Lanie's story directly follows Bill's comment, "I tried awful hard for Lanie", and just prior to his interruption on line 8 she has been talking about visiting him. Nor has she yet mentioned Aunt Kid. It is not unreasonable on Bill's part to suppose that her story will be about visiting him, but in fact it turns out to be about visiting Aunt Kid. In short, Bill may have thought he was providing additional information to support the point, just as Meg and Jim did in the examples above, but because he did not realize what the point of Lanie's story was going to be, his remark ended up being distracting rather than supportive.

At other times, the knowing listener may understand the point the narrator is trying to make, but feel that the narrative should be used to make a different point instead. When this happens, the co-narrators will compete for control of the story, each using evaluation to stress what he/she thinks should be the point. Take, for example, the following narrative about a canoe ride (story 16):
LANIE Yeah I still have a towel One of those towels from one of those events still has sandy Still hanging on the line

CYNDI Still hanging on the line and John said well the rain'll because of the bailing

LANIE That's right

JOHN Oh that's right We went ah down at Sommes Sound there's a little ah kind of inlet into a marsh which when it's high tide the marsh fills up and when it's low tide all rushes out an it's mud flats so we went in at what turned out to be an hour before high tide we thought it was around high tide and there was like this waterfall goin' into the marsh where the tide came in

LANIE Well that looks exciting so so we went but there was these big kind of waves at the end and we went splosh and this wave went whomp into the canoe right on top of Cyndi who happened to be paddling

CYNDI Who got wet from the waist down

LANIE And I was leaning against a towel which in my excitement landed in the canoe so it was sopping wet and John says well you got a cup or something to bail with and I said oh I didn't bring any cups this trip so he used my sneaker which had all these holes in it which wasn't very successful and I was wringing out this small hand towel periodically we got it all dried out

CYNDI towel

BECKY I think I see the mosquito Dad killed

JOHN But then we had the problem of getting out
JUDY 30 Oh
LANIE Because it was still coming
CYNDI The tide was rushing
JOHN She missed the tide by an hour so there we were and we couldn't get out
LANIE It was hard to keep track of the dates around here
JUDY Oh what'd you do?
CYNDI We waited
JOHN We waited for an hour and the tide changed and we came 40 out got a good view of this place
LANIE But then I had a soggy towel at that point and I saw it was wet and I hung it up on the line it looked like rain anyway so I thought the rain will wash out the salt

The point of this narrative for Lanie seems to be an explanation of how the towel got wet. The story is triggered by her comment about the towel, she fills the climax of the story with details about the towel, and once she has explained how it got wet, she seems content to let the story lie until John picks it up with "But then we had the problem of getting out" (line 29). For John, on the other hand, the point seems to be how the tide kept them from getting out. His first interruption (line 14) mentions the tide, and at line 29 he takes over the story to explain about the tide keeping them in. From line 29 to line 40 he, rather than Lanie, carries the brunt of the narration. By line 40 John thinks the narrative has ended, as is shown by his summing up coda: "Got a good view of this place". Lanie, however,
intervenes at this point with more information about the towel, making a final bid to give it, rather than the tide, the starring role in the narrative.

Thus the comments of knowing listeners can in fact exert a great deal of influence on the point of the narration. If we compare story 11 with story 16, we can see how the same two people can either cooperate or compete in co-narration depending on whether or not they agree on the point of the story. If they agree, as in story 11, then the comments of the knowing listener encourage the main narrator and/or serve to highlight the important points of the narrative. If they disagree, then we have the situation of story 16 where each person includes details and evaluation which support the point as he/she sees it, making for a narrative which lacks a single clear point. In Chapter Five I will discuss some of the factors that determine which of these two situations occurs.
Even if we accept the idea that knowing listeners can play important roles in shaping a story, it may seem that non-knowing listeners would be unable to do so. If non-knowing listeners are, by definition, unfamiliar with the events of the narrative, then we might reasonably expect that they would be limited to just the type of appreciative remarks discussed at the end of Chapter One. My data, however, show that this is not the case. Non-knowing listeners can and do contribute evaluative remarks which define and support the narrator's point. By extrapolating from what the narrator has said and their own general knowledge, they can even add plot details. They too can either support or detract from the narrator's point. Comments by non-knowing listeners in fact play much the same roles as those of knowing listeners.

Evaluation by Non-knowing Listeners

In many instances listener evaluation does in fact seem largely appreciative. Comments such as "That's amazing" or "I would have been terrified" show enthusiasm without contributing much to the actual narrative text. But listeners can also evaluate a narrative in ways that structure its meaning and add to our understanding of it. At the end of story 18, for instance, Michelle says "Until now I had no idea the U. of I. was this
warped" (line 18). Michelle's comment differs from Judy's "Geez" (line 15) in that it shows not only her appreciation of the story, but also her interpretation of it. She states a possible point for the narrative, namely that "the university is warped", and encourages the other listeners to view it in this light. Stories 14 and 15 show other examples of the way in which evaluation by non-knowing listeners can be just as influential as that of knowing listeners in shaping the point of a narrative.

We saw in Chapter Three, for example, that the personal reactions and opinions of knowing listeners could act to support the main narrator's point (e.g. stories 4 and 11). The same is true for non-knowing listeners. In story 19, John makes a derogatory remark about Chinese wine (line 28) that comes from his own experience in China rather than from Bill's story. His comment serves as independent corroboration for Bill's claim that their wine was terrible. Similarly, in story 20, Marge's belief that a large age difference in a married couple "doesn't make any difference" (line 13) corresponds exactly to the point Bill is trying to make. In neither of these instances were John or Marge familiar with the story Bill was going to tell. They had their own views on Chinese wine and age differences, however, and were able to use these views to buttress Bill's point. (See also story 10.) Even though non-knowing listeners do not know the story, their general knowledge and opinions about the things described can allow them to contribute this type of evaluation.
Another form of evaluation used by knowing listeners was the restating in different words of what the narrator had said. This is also a common practice of non-knowing listeners. Take for instance, the following short narrative by Michelle (Story 21):

MICHA. I remember the first day of kindergarten. My mom said I could walk to school myself. I started walking. Mom was about a hundred yards away giving me directions. Turn here.

LANIE. All by yourself right. Within shouting distance.

Lanie's comment repeats the important aspects of Michelle's story, drawing attention to them and helping to make the point. Theorists who see listener comments as largely appreciative, however, could argue that the main purpose of Lanie's remark is not to help Michelle make the point, but rather to convey to Michelle that she understands the point. They would see Lanie's comment as feedback, letting Michelle know that she told the story well and got her point across.

I would argue that restatements of this type do more than just provide feedback—that they can actively contribute to the narrative. In story 22, Judy's first comment "Get the vet to train the cat" restates practically verbatim John's "Your job is to train the cat" (lines 7-8). Her major purpose in making this statement seems to be to convey to John that she follows his
story. Her second comment (line 14), however, is rather different. Here she sums up John's rather rambling description of the vet's behavior with the concise and accurate "Reinforcing it". She not only lets John know she is paying attention, but also provides a more effective way of expressing what he is trying to say. We see something similar in story 8 when John responds to Judy and Jim's description of Judy's stubbornness in refusing help with "She had to prove her womanhood" (line 22). Such comments indicate that the listener is understanding the story, but they also improve on the narrator's description of crucial events.

Contributions to the Plot--Listener Extrapolation

Non-knowing listeners are not confined to restatement of what the narrator has said. Like knowing listeners, they can at times expand on the narrator's remarks, provide clarification, and even give new information. They can do this, even without knowing the actual events of the narrative, by extrapolating from what the narrator has said and their own knowledge of the world to make guesses about what must have or might have happened. One way to do this is to imagine how they might react or perceive events if they had been there. In story 23, for instance, Lanie responds to Marge's description of her ring bearer's embarrassing remark with "I can just hear that echoing through the church" (line 6). This statement not only indicates Lanie's interest in the
narrative, but also strengthens its point for the other listeners; their perception that the ring bearer committed a blunder is enhanced because Lanie's statement causes them also to imagine the boy's voice echoing through the church.

At other times a non-knowing listener may jump in to explain something the narrator has left unclear, just as a knowing listener might. This may be possible because the listener, although he/she does not know the actual story, does have knowledge of events relating to it. In story 24, for instance, John can clarify Bill's "you can tell Tom W. that you drank Cincinnati beer and Pepsi" by stating "Yeah okay because it was his son who's the Commodore or the Admiral" (lines 11-14). In this case John can draw on some fairly specific knowledge he has about Tom, but story 3 shows that he can make the same sort of clarifying remark based on more common knowledge. When Jan says "of course they still somehow didn't have their money sorted out", he can realize, from a general understanding of real estate, that what she means is "They'd sold the house but hadn't gotten paid" (lines 18-22). Similarly Curt, in story 15, can deduce from Lanie's story that Heidi thought of a "power mower" as a riding mower. We can see the need for his clarifying remark from the fact that Jan does not understand this until a moment later.

Listeners need not limit themselves to clarification. They can
also add new narrative clauses by extrapolating from what has already been said and suggesting hypothetical events that may have happened (see Twer 1972 for a discussion of ways in which people are able to draw this type of inference from limited facts). In story 7, for instance, John can see where the story may be heading and jump in with "Got to the railroad? Couldn't get under?" (line 30). And later he responds to the description of Jack's accident by saying "First day in town he tied up traffic for six hours" (line 64). His statements can be deduced from the events described by Jan and Mèg and serve to highlight important events. His second comment, however, may be hyperbolical—was the traffic really tied up for an entire six hours? And if not, are we to take John's statement as deliberate exaggeration or has he simply guessed wrong about the events—made a false deduction?

John's comment, in short, raises the question of what happens when a listener's extrapolation is incorrect. To clarify the matter, let us look at a case where the listener's supposition is clearly wrong. At the end of a story about a pie crust, Marge comments "I thought you were gonna say that it kept stretching and stretching That's what I thought" (story 5, lines 28-29). She realizes when she makes the comment that this is not what happened, but she nonetheless considers it something worth saying. Furthermore, Lanie picks up on what she has said and treats it as if it were true: "That's how he got his pie crust
done". Yet both Lanie and Marge know that this is not in fact what happened.

To take an even more extreme example, in story 14 Lanie describes her sister performing an emergency landing in a farmer's field and discovering that she is the third pilot to do so. At this point Becky comments "Use 'em for an airport", closely followed by Jim's "The price for my corn is such and such" (lines 20-21). Clearly neither Becky nor Jim expect that people would really use a farmer's field as an airport or that a farmer would greet the pilots by trying to sell them his corn. They interject these comments, not as suggestions of something that might really have happened, but rather as rhetorical devices which enhance Lanie's story by pointing out the absurdity of the fact that three different pilots would be forced to land in this particular field.

These examples show that the truth or falsity of the listener's comment is not really relevant. As Polanyi argues,

...fictionality or non-fictionality are not the important issues for participants in oral storytelling when faced with this sort of chiming in by a story recipient. Competents understand that Susan's mimicry fulfills a function in the storytelling interaction--it signals that the story is being well received (1982: 163).

It should be clear by now that while I agree with Polanyi about the irrelevance of the fictionality issue, I disagree that the purpose of such comments is limited to signaling that the story
is well received. The suggestion of such hypothetical events supports the point and makes the story more effective for the other listeners present.

Questions--Another Form of Extrapolation

Listeners do not only make declarative statements, they also frequently ask questions of the narrator. One might assume that they ask such questions because they are interested in the specific information their questions request--such indeed being the most obvious reason to ask a question. Brady takes this view when he notes that listeners may request clarification if a narrative lacks sufficient orienting information (1980: 169-70). Similarly, Tannen points out that listeners will ask questions if they are unsure about what the point of the narrative was supposed to be (1984: 115). Many listener questions do serve this sort of informational and clarifying purpose, but others can enhance the story by working rather like the types of extrapolation mentioned above.

When a listener asks this type of question, he/she does not state a hypothetical event as though it really happened, but rather asks the narrator if it happened. In story 7, for instance, Lanie asks (line 68) if the viaduct survived the accident that Meg and Jan have described. If the answer is that the viaduct was damaged or destroyed, then that information further emphasizes one of the points of the story, namely that
this was a really horrendous accident. In other words, Lanie is not merely asking for information or encouraging the narrators to keep talking. She is also providing them with a hint about what will make the narration effective: if the viaduct was damaged it will make their story even more impressive. Meg indeed plays up to this by saying that the viaduct was going to have to undergo construction, even though her mother later points out that the construction was planned before the accident.

Michelle uses the same strategy at the end of the restaurant story when she asks Lanie if they gave the napkin to Delma (story 11, line 47). If they did, then this provides a final ironic twist to the story. Lanie and John's response is interesting. Although they both state that they do not actually remember what happened to the napkin, they are both willing to go along with Michelle's reconstruction of the event. John in fact even goes so far as to say "We must have given it to her". He recognizes the power of the ending that Michelle has suggested and is eager to incorporate it into the narrative even though there is no evidence that the event actually occurred. Michelle's question provides an opening for more effective narration which the narrators pick up on even though it may not exactly fit the facts.

Michelle and Lanie's questions succeed in enhancing the story because the narrators are able, by slightly reconstructing their
memories of events, to more or less answer in the affirmative. At times, however, the events the narrator remembers are too discrepant with the listener's question for him/her to answer it this way. In the restaurant story, Lanie is forced to tell Marge that the people at the restaurant did not catch her (line 46). Similarly, in story 14 about the airplanes she must tell Becky that all three airplanes did not land in the field on the same day (line 35). In both these instances Becky and Marge are using the same strategy Lanie and Michelle did above, suggesting events that if true would make the story more effective, but in these cases the narrators cannot convince themselves that the events actually turned out that way.

Do Marge and Becky's questions therefore fail to enhance the narrative? I would suggest not completely. In our earlier discussion of listeners' extrapolations, we found that it did not really matter whether what the listener suggested was true or not. The issue was not whether such a thing in fact really happened, but whether the suggestion that it could have contributed to the narrative. The same is true of questions. The questions are most effective if the answer is affirmative for the narrator can then elaborate on it. Even if it is negative, however, the idea has been suggested. In telling conversational narratives the "might have" is almost as powerful as the "did". Thus questions, like the type of extrapolation described earlier, can enhance the narration regardless of their actual truth.
Disputing the Point by Non-Knowing Listeners

We saw in the case of knowing listeners that the co-narrator's comments only supported the story if both narrators were in agreement about the point. The same is true of non-knowing listener comments. If narrator and listener have different understandings of the point of the story, then the very techniques used by the listener to enhance the story may backfire and detract from it. In story 25, for example, Lanie advances the same sort of hypothetical event we described above when she suggests that John might have asked the company "What happened to your camping stuff" (line 4). It turns out that this is not what John asked, but as we discussed above, the actual truth or falsity of the comment should not have mattered. What did matter, and what caused John to deny Lanie's suggestion, was that his story was not about Bean's no longer selling camping equipment, but rather about the fact that they were too disorganized to send him a catalogue in time. Lanie's comment, meant to support John's story, turns out to be irrelevant to it.

Since it is often hard for a non-knowing listener to guess in advance what the point of a story may be, this may be one reason why listener comments tend to cluster near the end of narratives when the point is already established. Even here, however, misunderstandings can arise. In story 26, for instance, Jim
_attempts to be a supportive listener by summing up what he sees as the point of Lanie's narrative, namely that "That's the way insurance always works On their side" (line 7). It turns out, however, that Lanie was not trying to make that point at all, and she disputes Jim's analysis by pointing out that the insurance company did pay what the calculator was worth at the time it was stolen. Lanie and Jim have different conceptions of the point of this narrative, just as Lanie and John originally did of the canoe story. (See also story 28.)

In the instances cited above, narrator and listener had differing understandings of what the point was, but it is also possible for the listener to understand the point the narrator is trying to make, and yet to disagree with it. In story 12, for example, Bill realizes that John is trying to make the point that they had an unusual snowstorm in Australia, but he disputes the fact that the snowstorm really was unusual by pointing out how far north Melbourne is (line 20). It would, therefore, not be surprising to have snow there, and John is forced to reiterate that "it was the worst snowstorm in a hundred and forty-eight years" (line 21). Similarly, in story 27, Diane questions Becky's story about how horrible it is to drive in snow by stating that driving in zero visibility is scarier. She understands the point Becky is trying to make, but chooses to dispute its truth.

We have seen, then, that while comments by non-knowing
listeners do have the "encouraging" and "appreciative" functions suggested by many theorists, they are not limited to that. Although non-knowing listeners do not, by definition, know the story, they can still make evaluative remarks supporting the point. They can also draw on their powers of inference to extrapolate from what the narrator has said to suggest events which might have taken place and would enhance the narrative. Whether or not such statements agree with what actually happened does not really matter so long as they support the point. If such statements dispute what the narrator is saying or are irrelevant to it, then we find the same sort of disagreement about the point that we saw with knowing listeners. In short, comments by non-knowing listeners are not just appreciative responses. They function much like interruptions by knowing listeners in making the story more effective and helping to define the point.
CHAPTER FIVE: DETERMINANTS OF COOPERATION VERSUS COMPETITION

We have seen, then, that co-narrators may either agree or disagree about the point of the story they are trying to tell. When they agree, the interruptions of the co-narrator help the story along and emphasize the main points. When co-narrators disagree about the point, the comments of the second person seem irrelevant to the story of the main narrator. At times the two narrators will actively compete for control of the narrative and its point, or a listener may dispute the truth of the main narrator's point. My data, however, show many examples of co-narrators cooperating and few examples of them competing. What factors determine the difference?

Co-narration Among Knowing Listeners

We might expect non-knowing listeners not to understand the narrator's point, but it seems at first rather odd that knowing listeners can disagree about it. If one looks at cases of co-narration, it is clear that in order for it to occur, both narrators must have been present at the event described. This does not, however, mean that they will agree on the story to be told about these events. It is useful, in this context, to examine Young's distinction between Taleworld and Storyrealm (1982). The Taleworld, as I understand it, is the events a narrative is about, while the Storyrealm is the plot created out
of those events. Thus Taleworld is what happened; Storyrealm is how it is told. Any two people who witness the same event will have roughly the same Taleworld—that is, they will agree (within certain limits) as to what happened. They may not, however, have the same Storyrealm. In that case, the stories they tell about the event will be different, not just stylistically, but also in terms of what is presented as important and which details are left out.

Cases of cooperative co-narration can therefore only occur when both narrators share similar Storyrealms. This is possible because although any two people can end up witnessing the same event and telling about it together, this is most likely to occur frequently when people know each other very well and spend a great deal of time together. Co-narrators therefore will not only have witnessed the same event, but will likely have related the story about that event more than once in each other's hearing. This retelling of the narrative serves to provide the co-narrators not just with similar Taleworlds, but also with similar Storyrealms. By repeatedly hearing one narrator tell the story, or by repeatedly trying to tell it together, the co-narrators will come to a mutual understanding of the point of the story and how it is to be told. This is not to say that the narrative will be identical every time it is repeated, but rather that both tellers will agree upon which events from the Taleworld constitute the Storyrealm.
We can see this process at work in stories 11, 16, and 17. The events of the restaurant story (story 11) occurred roughly fifteen years before the particular recounting of them that I have recorded, and I have heard Lanie and John tell this story together before. The events of the canoe story (story 16), on the other hand, occurred the same summer I recorded it. If this was not the first telling of this story, it was certainly one of the first. In accordance with our theory, the narrators are in greater agreement about the story that they have told more often. We see the same thing if we compare story 16 with story 17, a second version of the canoe story which was recorded five days later. Note that in this version, Lanie begins and ends the narration by talking about the tide and mentions the towel only once. Her narrative, in fact, has the same point that John was trying to make central the week before. In this instance John does not interrupt at all, but only provides a closing frame which once again emphasizes the tide. Story 17 is thus an example of how one narrator can assimilate another narrator's understanding of the Storyrealm, thus minimizing competition in the telling of the narrative.

But agreement about the Storyrealm is not enough by itself to insure successful co-narration. Part of the reason Lanie and John co-narrate so skillfully is simply that they have been married and telling stories together for twenty-five years. They
are used to each other's thought patterns and ways of verbalizing, and this allowed them to move from story 16 to story 17 in only five days and to produce the smoothly interwoven narrative of story 11. Take, by contrast, story 10:

DAN You have to you have to pardon her she gets she gets she blushes when people wave at her
CYNDI Really
HELEN You're a sick man Dan
DAN So what if I was waving between her legs I mean she's here lying on my bed talking to a friend on the phone and she's like this right? and my hand hand comes between her legs and just waves and she just stops talking
HELEN This was Mike so I had Mike on the other end various and sundry strange remarks attempting to elicit blushes while he is doing strange things and making other strange remarks like
DAN What was the other comment you guys were talking about well there's two of them here and I said yeah (    )
HELEN Oh no he asked about Well he was asking about me and Scott
DAN And there's something
HELEN He said how did things go with you two out there or over there and I said which two? where?
DAN Oh that's right and I said those two there and again the blush came forth
DIANE Funny I think you never struck me as being a person particularly susceptible to blushes
Although Helen and Dan seem to have the same Storyrealm, that is, to agree what the story is about, their narrative still lacks coherency. When this conversation was recorded, Helen and Dan had been housemates for less than half a year, and they did not have a great deal of practice telling stories together. They lack the kind of understanding of each other's narrative styles shared by Lanie and John, so that even when they agree on the point of a story, they are less skilled at co-narrating it. The successfulness of co-narration by knowing listeners thus depends on two variables: the extent to which the co-narrators agree about the Storyrealm and the extent to which they are familiar with each other's narrative styles.

Co-narration Among Non-Knowing Listeners

My data show an equally low incidence of competitive co-narration among non-knowing listeners, but since they, by definition, have not had the chance to hear repeated retellings, the same explanation does not suffice. Part of the reason for the predominance of cooperative narration may be, as Robinson (1981) points out, that although listeners are theoretically free to challenge the narrator's point, comments directly repudiating it are likely to be seen as rude and argumentative. Since we most frequently engage in storytelling with people with whom we are on friendly terms, and with whom we wish to remain so, it behooves us to avoid a stance of direct opposition. This
explains why listeners generally avoid the sort of direct challenge to the narrator's point that we find in stories 12 and 27, but it does not account for how they avoid the kind of misunderstandings seen in stories 25, 26, and 27.

Even if we assume that listeners try to avoid deliberately misconstruing the narrator's point, this still does not explain how they avoid doing so inadvertently. Polanyi (1979) in fact suggests that this sort of disagreement about what the point shall be is quite common. She considers it a form of negotiation between narrator and listeners and gives a fairly involved example of differing interpretations of a woman's story about fainting in a subway. In this example various listeners offer their understandings of the point of the story, each of which is rejected by the narrator. My own data, however, show very few examples of this type of "negotiation".

A clue to the discrepancy may lie in Tannen's reaction to the conversation described by Polanyi: "I expect a lot of overt agreement in a conversation. The speaker of the fainting story did not have this expectation" (1978: 206). Tannen's statement alerted me to the possibility that the extent to which a listener's comment is "supportive" or not may lie as much with the narrator as with the listener making the comment. In story 26, for instance, Lanie could have accepted Jim's interpretation of her story without dispute even though it was not the point she
originally intended. This may be precisely what happened in story 18. John might not have intended his story to demonstrate that "the U. of I. is warped", but he does not argue with Michelle's comment. If listeners want to avoid confrontation and preserve an amiable atmosphere, this is equally true of tellers. Therefore a teller will sometimes accept and even incorporate comments which are in fact tangential to the narrative as he/she originally conceived it. Polanyi's hypothesis that narrators and listeners actually "negotiate" the final point may thus be quite true, but it often occurs in a more subtle way than is shown in her fainting story example.

I suggested in Chapter Four that a non-knowing listener's comment could be a productive addition to a narrative even if it was not true, so long as it supported the narrative's point. We have seen that even this latter condition is somewhat flexible. Just as listeners try to avoid disputing with the narrator, so too will narrators shift their understanding of their own story so as to incorporate comments by listeners. Similarly, two people who experienced the same events will, by the process of telling about them, come to have a congruent understanding of them. Storytelling, far from being an audience-performer situation, becomes a form of collaboration between listeners and teller, enhancing the same social bonds that brought them to the storytelling situation in the first place.
CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS OF CO-NARRATION

I have tried to show that telling a narrative is a process of interaction, a collaboration between teller and listener. My paper has focused on the effect this has on the narrative, but I would also like to touch briefly on the social effects of this process. Storytelling does not take place in a vacuum, isolated from other types of social interaction. The actions of both narrators and listeners have implications beyond the narrative situation itself. Telling a narrative has ramifications for our social interaction, our beliefs about ourselves, and ultimately our structuring of the reality in which we live.

The storytelling process can be a way of strengthening social bonds. The first type of co-narration I discussed, the interjecting of comments by knowing listeners, occurs most often among close friends or family members because they will have shared experiences and will get the opportunity to tell about them together. The act of co-narration affirms this bond. We saw, for instance, that knowing listeners encouraged and supported their friends in the telling of such stories, and that the narrator showed respect for the status of the knowing listener as a participant in the events being narrated. Non-knowing listeners can also play this sort of encouraging and supporting role. Even beyond overtly appreciative comments, both types of listeners can supply evaluation by repetition, adding
new information, or adding their opinions to the narrator's. In so far as such evaluation supports the narrator's point, it too can be seen as supporting the narrator and affirming social bonds.

We can gain a broader perspective of what is going on in such interactions if we recognize the fact that narration is a sharing of self. When you tell me a story, you are offering me your understanding of a personal experience, presenting a view of yourself, the incident, and perhaps even our wider social context. If I show interest in your story, I am ultimately showing interest in you as a person; if I accept your story, I am accepting the view of yourself and the incident that you have offered. Correspondingly, if I question or dispute the point you are making, then I have rejected your viewpoint, and perhaps even rejected you. People's awareness of this danger, even if only on an unconscious level, motivates the sort of avoidance of competitive co-narration that lies at the root of my discussion in Chapter Five.

I have tried to show, however, that listeners are not passive spectators of a narrative performance, limited to a sort of verbal applause. Although listeners generally avoid openly disputing the narrator's point, listener evaluation can sometimes alter the point more subtly, shaping the meaning and interpretation of the entire narrative. I showed in Chapter Five
that knowing listeners and narrators will come, through repeated retellings, to agree on the point of a narrative, and that narrators will frequently incorporate the interpretations of non-knowing listeners into their own understanding of the events being narrated. When a listener's evaluation offers this kind of new perspective on the story, this can change the main narrator's understanding of its events.

This is significant because a narrator often presents a view of more than just self or the immediate events being narrated. In discussing the point of narratives in Chapter One, we saw that narrators often tell stories to support some more general statement about the way the world works (p. 4-5). Rather than "This is what happened", a narrative may carry the message "This is what always happens". Narratives, in other words, are frequently used as exemplars of typical situations. Robinson, in fact, argues that stories are used as noncommittal vehicles for expressing attitudes and ideas (1981: 82). Even when narratives do not directly express attitudes and values, they almost always embody them. Because narratives tend to occur in settings where the participants are fairly homogeneous, we may share the listeners suppositions and not be aware of them. Stahl (1977) and Wolfson (1982), however, show how both cultural and personal values and attitudes implicitly underlie the point of many narratives.
Narrative, in short, is a way of structuring reality, and when people co-narrate they are jointly creating meaning for their experiences. When someone tells a story, he/she presents a version of personal experience for the audience to accept, reject, or modify. Out of that process there comes a mutually created understanding of the participants' relationships, the events being narrated, and life itself. If narratives express underlying views about the world, then the process of co-narration is a process of creating a mutual understanding of our human experience.
## APPENDIX ONE: CONVERSATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Occupation / Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lanie</td>
<td>Late 40's</td>
<td>research associate in astronomy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Late 40's</td>
<td>professor of astronomy. Lanie's husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becky</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>high school student. Lanie and John's daughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>(MICH.) 16</td>
<td>high school student. Friend of Becky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy</td>
<td>Early 40's</td>
<td>housewife. John's cousin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mala</td>
<td>Late 40's</td>
<td>consultant for artificial intelligence and computers. Graduate school roommate of Lanie's.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curt</td>
<td>Late 50's</td>
<td>agronomist for USDA. Attends the same church as Lanie and John.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan</td>
<td>Late 50's</td>
<td>retired nurse. Curt's wife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meg</td>
<td>Early 30's</td>
<td>teacher for the Ba Hai's. Curt and Jan's daughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>Mid 70's</td>
<td>retired lawyer. John's father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marge</td>
<td>Mid 70's</td>
<td>housewife. Friend of Bill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>Early 20's</td>
<td>college student. Friend of Lanie and John.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>Mid 20's</td>
<td>college student, police dispatcher. Friend of Diane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Late 20's</td>
<td>college student, computer operator. Helen's housemate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have tried in my transcription to find an appropriate balance between readability and faithfulness to the quality of the speech. Because my analysis has not dealt with the fine detail of the recorded speech, I have not attempted to indicate exact pronunciation or emphasis, nor have I indicated pauses in speech or been concerned to show where exactly a second person's speech overlaps with the first speaker's. I have avoided punctuation in order to avoid imposing an artificial structure on the speech. I have, however, used capitals at the beginning of sentence-like structures to increase readability, and question marks have been irregularly used to indicate rising intonation associated with questions. Line numbers have been inserted every five lines to aid in referring to specific passages.

Speakers' names are given in the left margin and are not repeated until a new speaker breaks in:

JOHN Well Lanie dug and dug and dug and never got through and her sister didn't have any
LANIE Send these care packages

Single-spaced overlapping lines indicate two people speaking at the same time:

JUDY We tried one cat before we got our dog We'd had one dog that didn't work out She was a disaster Every time even Paranoid
JIM the crackling of bacon would make her panic She'd run

In this instance Jim said "Paranoid" at the same moment Judy said "disaster".

Parentheses mean that the speaker's words were unintelligible, and the words in parentheses are an approximate hearing:

JUDY Bridget wanted this animal and I don't Josh wasn't born (or else he was real little she didn't have another)
child and we figured she needed something. Oh we tried

If I could not distinguish even an approximate hearing, then the space within the parentheses is left blank. Double parentheses indicate a non-verbal action or occurrence:

((Someone enters the room))
STORY ONE

JUDY  We tried one cat before we got our dog. We'd had one dog
      that didn't work out. She was a disaster. Every time even
      paranoid.

JIM  the crackling of bacon would make her panic. She'd run

JUDY  5 and do crazy things. She'd be so panicked. We got her when
      she had probably been abused by someone with a young child
      or something. Any kind of a pop. Anyway, she was terrible
      so we said we're not having any more dogs. So we tried to
      get a cat. Bridget really wanted an animal. I could have
      10 cared less. I really didn't think we needed an animal but
      Bridget wanted this animal and I don't. Josh wasn't born
      (or else he was real little she didn't have another) child and
      we figured she needed something. Oh, we tried this one cat
      and it didn't work. I got terribly allergic.

LANIE  Oh

JUDY  so we figured it was the fur. So we got another cat with

LANIE  different fur and that one was just as bad and I haven't
      been able to figure out why because growing up I had a
      cat and my cat had kittens and when I had my apartment
      20 I had a cat. I don't know what happened but boy. It
      it didn't just affect me with the cat any more. Some
      days I was allergic to dogs and dust and everything.
      Huh

LANIE  it just really triggered all the allergies so I don't

JUDY  25 know why but I haven't figured out. Well, we never
had a cat again. Well now we've got the dog instead.

LANIE And the allergy didn't come back.

JUDY No I'm not, it doesn't seem to bother me or the boys. It bothers Andrew if he gets real close to the dog and plays with it a lot and gets ( )

JIM Otherwise he has.

JUDY He's allergic to guinea pigs.

JUDY Yeah.
JOHN When we first moved to Illinois Lanie's sister was
living in Virginia at the time so your father wrote
a letter to both of you telling you how to
plant tulip
LANIE 5 bulbs
JOHN start planting their bulbs or something and what he
said was well you dig down through the topsoil to the
bottom and then mix the two together or something
LANIE As you put it back in
JOHN 10 Yeah as you put it back in
LANIE You know you have the pile of topsoil and then you
have the pile of other crud and you mix it together
with bone marrow
JOHN Well Lanie dug and dug and dug and never got through
15 and her sister didn't have any
LANIE Send these care packages
STORY THREE

CURT We trapped him
JAN We trapped him
CURT Personally
JAN Yeah we did
CYNDI 5 Well done
JAN Yes it was and they are a good couple. He's the financial manager for the city of Champaign and they were moving down the first of September from Janecio and they had Up near Quad Cities
CURT
JAN 10 two little kids and they had something happened with their house and I can't remember they thought it wasn't gonna sell and so Susan had made arrangements to stay with the kids and then all of a sudden somebody came in with two kids herself or three kids and said I want the house but you got to move out right now. So Susan took the kids and went to a Chicago suburb or wherever her parents lived with the two kids and Richard came down and of course they still somehow didn't have their money sorted out
LANIE 20 Oh yes
JAN And so they were real So they were
JOHN They'd sold the house but hadn't gotten paid
JAN real close to their minister there and so he said CURT Well they had sold immediately
JAN 25 just call the church in Champaign and see if anybody
will take care of you so Frieda you know puts it in and says anybody have room. Well we were going to Alaska and weren't coming back till the middle of September but I called Frieda and said you know 30 we've got college there's room upstairs nobody's home everybody's gone and ah we'd be glad to put him up But I said ah we can't put him up till the middle of September because my parents were in the house but I felt we wouldn't be quite fair to them letting 35 a stranger so anyhow then I called him and talked to him a few times He could he could stay with LANIE ( ) needed a house-sitter JAN the lawyer the city lawyer ( ) until we were ready so so fine He comes he comes in the first 40 Sunday night Tall thin guy you know with a beard and he said ah I don't suppose I could do some laundry could I Miscommunication with his friend the lawyer and he meant to pick up the laundry from the apartment afterward and take it home to Susan's parents and do 45 the laundry over the weekend but the apartment was locked and he'd already given back the key so he went to Chicago but he didn't have any laundry so he comes back and of course he didn't have very many clothes clothes LANIE JAN 50 down there because he was he thought he was moving out LANIE with him no JAN just a couple of suitcases so I said well after that
you know we couldn't be very formal with Richard. He was just really. It was kind of like having David home. He was just delightful and Susan is too so they're and they haven't yet joined the church even though he's warmed up?

CURT (No thank you)
JOHN 60 But you've got him on two committees
CYNDI He's already on the committees?
LANIE (I was just trying to get rid of it for you then)
JAN He's already on the committee Yes because we recognized them
STORY FOUR

LANIE Yeah that was funny We had Peggy and Dad staying in a motel and

JOHN Because we had Michelle and another friend of Becky's staying with us too in this little rented house

JUDY 5 Oh that's right

LANIE And the motel had kitchenette things and we figured Peggy has weird eating times and habits she'd probably be happier than in a normal room anyway which she did but when she got done she had all this left over yogurt which was diet or 10 special and diet or special margarine and diet or special oh! she bought this gigantic cornflakes generic sort of giant economy size

BECKY Which tasted disgusting

LANIE Which we got stuck with after she left What are we 15 going to do with this

JOHN I finally finished it the day before we left

BECKY I mean I like cornflakes but I didn't like those cornflakes Well I don't know

JOHN Yeah and generic dairyless margarine which we used for 20 greasing pans that was about all it was good for
STORY FIVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JOHN</th>
<th>Unlike the first pie I made in her apartment I'd made pies before. Yeah in their apartment which was Mala's apartment too.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lanie</td>
<td>before we were married. It was a Thanksgiving you know. Shelf was about this big.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Community effort Thanksgiving a whole bunch of us were getting together. I didn't have an oven in the little place I was living at so Lanie was off somewhere else working on the turkey I think. I was in her apartment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanie</td>
<td>I was working on the stuffing I think.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Making the pie and the trouble was that the table they did things on was ten inches and we had a ten inch pie plate which meant I needed you know at least a foot and so the pie crust was sort of dangling over the edge. You know how else could I do it? I had to make the pie crust big enough. Well then Lanie phoned to find out how I was doing and so I had to go into the living room and pick up the phone and say yes I'm doing fine and then I went back and started working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanie</td>
<td>If the pie crust is dangling over the edge obviously some flour's gonna be falling on the floor right? And so these white footprints went from the kitchen into the phone and back to the kitchen again. And I got accused of all kinds of dire things but it wasn't my fault if the table's ten inches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
inches and I've got a twelve inch pie crust what can I do

MARGE I thought you were gonna say that it kept stretching and stretching That's what I thought

LANIE 30 That's how he got his pie crust done He just let it dangle When it was just right he stuck the pie plate underneath
STORY SIX

BILL Well I tried awful hard for Lanie here Boy oh boy
CYNDI You knew who you wanted
LANIE You picked me huh It seems to me it was your Who was it in Philadelphia no Pittsburgh that we had after we'd gone 5 to visit you the Christmas before we got married Before we got engaged
BILL Boy you came there I was just working on that as hard as I could
LANIE 10 We stopped at Aunt somebody
BILL Aunt Kid
LANIE Yeah Aunt Kid on the way back and apparently she went after there was Johnny and myself and I think two others driving back to Michigan and she was gonna put us all up 15 and so she was asking Johnny about something discreetly like which one might become a future member of the family because that person was gonna be in with some kid of hers or something in her room which happened to be me and when John said Lanie she said I figured as much
MALA 20 Lanie was oh just crazy about John
STORY SEVEN

MEG You gotta tell them what happened to the roofing vans

JAN Oh yes we haven't gotten around to the moving van yet
Well they they came up Tuesday or Monday night a week
ago I guess a week ago Monday And Jack was in the office
5 on Tuesday he got so angry ( ) That was
Diana's birthday

LANIE They were They were in an apartment for the moment
CURT They were in a motel

JAN 10 They were in a motel They were in a motel A Pinta
motel which her wheelchair works on and so the moving
tuck was coming on Friday and so the moving truck
came on Friday and they worked and Diana had everything
I as a matter of fact I've said it in that letter I
15 mailed to Kay everything where she wanted it and of
course she can't move furniture so they had to put
everything where Diana told them to and they really
worked hard and tried yeah she's real well organized
CURT She's well organized

JAN 20 She's a planner and Francis K. and ah Martha S. went
LANIE She must have
to help her
LANIE had some experience having ah moved the family out

JAN Yeah she ah they helped put shelf paper put dishes in the
25 cupboards but they did everything low for her So anyhow
so then Jack had some books in the truck and he was leading
the truck the North American van to the church and the only
route that Jack knew was up Prospect to Green and down Green street so they were barreling along Green street

JOHN 30 Got to the railroad? Couldn't get under?

MEG Worse than that
JAN Peeled back the whole top of the truck I nearly
LANIE Oh no

MEG He was looking in the mirror and all of a sudden the
35 whole truck
JAN truck just disappeared Oh he said it was awful and he
LANIE Did he get the books from down?
JAN Well he had two other people The books weren't
curt The books it wouldn't damage the books but the good
CURT 40 piano for somebody else
JAN damaged but a piano He had two more deliveries to make
and quite a bit of the stuff Jack said he couldn't
believe the force with which that loaded big I mean it
was a big you know one of those big long vans that hit
45 that viaduct and just well the trailer was totalled
they had to send in another van to and I guess it
comes out of the salary of the driver
CURT Well they operate on some kind of They may own
LANIE The way insurance goes
CURT 50 or lease their own ( ) so
LANIE these days Oh
JAN It was a young couple they had a what his wife was
with him and a two year old child so it was you
know Jack said he felt so bad and of course that's
55 a lousy way to get to the church from south on
CYNDI Anyway
JAN Devonshire You know south of Kirby you come across Kirby and you come up Fourth But Jack didn't know didn't know
LANIE
JAN 60 that And so it was really unfortunate CYNDI No of course He was new LANIE It was a mess JAN because certainly it delayed Jack too having to JOHN First day in town he tied up traffic for six hours or JAN 65 First well Yeah JAN right MEG There was a picture in the paper LANIE Is that viaduct still there or MEG Yeah well about two paragraphs down at the bottom 70 of the page it says the viaduct is going to be undergoing JAN No but that was planned That was construction planned for the viaduct but I think it did probably do some damage to it When I was talking to Richard Richard swore LANIE It was going to be planned JAN 75 that afternoon I said well Richard that was our van our moving Jack's moving van that hit that viaduct in Champaign I said when you get the bill for it He said it wasn't and I said yes I just talked to Jack and yes it was He said oh dear well JOHN 80 So don't take the train south from town JAN Yeah right Don't go to New Orleans JOHN Right Go to Chicago
STORY EIGHT

LANIE There was a diaper service that we had. We ended up continuing it; the idea was to have it the first month or something.

JUDY Right but then you get so attached. Well that finally happened to me. I don't know why I didn't do it sooner. Once I caught on aahh Well when I broke my leg Andrew was four months old and Josh was about twenty-two months old both in diapers. We had a house with three floors and the washing machine was in the cellar.

LANIE Oh fine Yeah naturally.

JUDY And I would go up and down the stairs holding this laundry basket with my leg out sitting on each stair dragging the laundry basket down all the way to the cellar with diapers and now after that after my leg healed I got the diaper service. What in the world was I doing? Why was I so stubborn? I wouldn't take any help. Nobody could help me. Nobody could do it.

JIM No you wouldn't there's the Yeah you tried but

LANIE 20 but me

JUDY She had to prove her womanhood

JIM Yeehah I can do it I can do it. Leave me alone.

JUDY Oh I was such a martyr.

LANIE 25 Can't do it anymore

( )

JUDY Oh I was terrible. I he told me when he was putting the
cast on now you're gonna need some help and here's various places you can find some I'm not going to need any help I'll be able to handle this all myself Well I got home I couldn't even move it hurt so much I couldn't get off the couch and I had the baby out there crying I couldn't even get to the door

JIM

JUDY couldn't even get the door Oh it was just terrible

35 Somehow we got through it
STORY NINE

LANIE Yeah the cookies that John was planning to dangle in front of me on a long stick ahead of me to keep me going up the canyon were in our packsack and we were told that if we put our packsacks with our food on top of these poles that they had provided then the animals couldn't get at them. John discovered on the first night at the bottom of the Grand Canyon that they can get at them. He woke up with this rustling sound. He was sleeping outside cause we had a three man tent and we had four people. Three girls in the tent and the guy was out (among) the stars.

JOHN Yeah it was beautiful.

DIANE I'll bet.

LANIE And he woke up with this rustling sound and he flashed his flashlight around and it was this skunk up on top of the packsack chasing a squirrel away and later we discovered

JOHN On this animal proof pole.

LANIE On this animal proof pole and we fortunately the only thing the skunk or squirrel or whoever ate it liked was the unopened package of Archway cookies to get me out of the canyon. Didn't like the rest of it.

JOHN They were the bonus food that we didn't really need. Thank goodness.
JOHN We must have given it to her
JOHN  But then again Eric who went to Australia. This was my office mate and co-worker in Los Alamos and he went to Australia for six months. He's coming back next month and

LANIE 5 We told him it would be mild

JOHN  Yeah we said well you know the winter there really isn't cold by our standards. You know it gets in the forties occasionally. Well they had apparently the biggest snowstorm they've had in the last hundred and forty-eight years or something like that. You know it's the first time it's snowed in Sydney ever or something

MARGE  Oh for goodness sake

LANIE  They had the most snow it's ever had in Sydney that dusting

DIANE 15A dusting

JOHN  But he's in Melbourne where they actually made snowmen or something

BILL  Melbourne?

JOHN  Yes

BILL 20 That's so far north. Heavens

JOHN  Well I'm saying it was the worst snowstorm in a hundred and forty-eight years or something like that. Never gonna believe us
STORY THIRTEEN

JOHN    Well last summer um Cyndi's boyfriend and another boy
CYNDI  Both came to visit
JOHN    Both came back with her from school and then her
           boyfriend left before Cyndi did and this other male
           friend stayed with us for three or four more days and
           everyone kept saying you know is that her boyfriend and
           we kept saying no her boyfriend left yesterday
           he left already
CYNDI
LANIE    This is her male friend
STORY FOURTEEN

JOHN Well sometime when your Aunt Lin is up here that's when you get Lanie's sister had a terrible fear of flying too and the way she overcame it is she's now a pilot

LANIE 5 Teaching other people

JUDY Oh yeah Gee that's good My sister has that fear too Maybe she oughta become a pilot She will not get into a plane

BECKY I wouldn't mind that I'd be perfectly willing to be dragged along

LANIE One time they ah the engine conked out on 'em when they were flying around somewhere in Virginia and they were fairly low and you always sort of with a one engine plane you keep tabs on fields as you go for possible emergency landings and they did emergency land came down in somebody's field and you know came up to the end and a couple came out of the house you're the third plane to land

BECKY 20Use 'em for an airport

JIM The price for my corn is such and such

LANIE They had trouble getting out because there was this wire that was too low or something for when they I forget whether they had the wire raised up or something

25
JOHN Yeah you know but the fact that you know your mom thinks grew up with these things and you think they're ancient antiques When we ah Lanie's niece brought over the lawn mower and she'd told us the other day that ah
LANIE 5 I'd asked her if she had a power mower or a hand mower and she said this was the hand mower It looked like a power mower to me
CURT She meant a riding
JAN She meant a what
JOHN 10 You had to push it but you know the blades are power
JAN That's what's known as a generation gap
JOHN Precisely
Or something weird

Yeah I remember she had something the power company came or

Yeah and it was written up it was written up in the little newspaper

Did they mention this couple that had three planes

Well sort of

Was that in one day or

The write-up was written by your Aunt Lin

No the past few years

Then it got into the airpilot's climb magazine She

joined the 99 Club women pilot's association and now

she's secretary of the local chapter

I assume she doesn't have

a fear of flying anymore

No I guess not Even when you semi crash land
LANIE  Yeah I still have a towel One of those towels from one
of those events still has sandy

CYNDI  Still hanging on the line

LANIE  Still hanging on the line and John said well the rain'll
because of the bailing

CYNDI  That's right

LANIE  Oh that's right We went ah down at Sommes Sound there's a
little ah kind of inlet into a marsh which when it's high
10 tide the marsh fills up and when it's low tide all rushes
out an it's mud flats so we went in at what turned out to
be an hour before high tide we thought it was around high
tide and there was like this waterfall goin' into the marsh
where the tide came in

JOHN  Well that looks exciting so so we went but there was these
big kind of waves at the end and we went splosh and this
wave went whomp into the canoe right on top of Cyndi who
happened to be paddling

CYNDI  Who got wet from the waist down

LANIE  And I was leaning against a towel which in my excitement
landed in the canoe so it was sopping wet and John says
well you got a cup or something to bail with and I said
oh I didn't bring any cups this trip so he used my sneaker
which had all these holes in it which wasn't very successful
25 and I was wringing out this small hand towel periodically
CYNDI  towel
we got it all dried out
BECKY  I think I see the mosquito Dad killed
JOHN  But then we had the problem of getting out
JUDY 30 Oh
LANIE  Because it was still coming
CYNDI  The tide was rushing
JOHN  She missed the tide by an hour so there we were and we couldn't get out
LANIE 35 It was hard to keep track of the dates around here
JUDY  Oh what'd you do?
CYNDI  We waited
JOHN  We waited for an hour and the tide changed and we came 40 out Got a good view of this place
LANIE  But then I had a soggy towel at that point and I saw it was wet and I hung it up on the line it looked like rain anyway so I thought the rain will wash out the salt
CYNDI  It's been washing out all day
JOHN 45 All day yesterday and all day today
BECKY  By the time you take it out it's gonna be so stiff
LANIE  Be an interesting towel
LANIE We had a very exciting canoe ride. Down at the far end of the sound near Sommesville. At high tide it rushes into a marsh and as the tide goes out it gets completely mud flats. Well (I had forgotten) exactly I was one day off on the tide table. It's hard to know what day of the week it is. So we thought it was high tide about two thirty so we went about two thirty and we were paddling along got to the bridge area what looked like a waterfall goin' down into this thing but it looked like it was all water and not rock so said let's let's this is rapid let's try this. So we went sailing underneath the bridge and got to that side and it was kind of wavy like this (You know we're) plunging in this and the water goes Splosh Cyndi's drenched I'm sitting behind and I'm sitting in this much water and then John says you know usually we have canteens or thousands of cups so he said well you got a bailing cup today. And of course I hadn't brought one. So we took my sneaker which had lots of holes in it and he was using my sneaker to pour water out but it was coming out through the holes and it was going and I was sitting on what had been a dry towel so I kept wringing the towel over the side to get it all out. Well then we discovered. That was when we discovered I was an hour off on the tide because we
thought we'll come out as the tide switches but we kept going up and looking and the rapids were getting less and less but we were there for a good hour and then they completely calmed down and we were able to get back out and that was when high tide was 30 At the instant of high tide it started to switch the other direction

JOHN Yeah the tides are about ten feet here They're very noticeable
STORY EIGHTEEN

JOHN Well of course we also ran into the problem or I did I was going on a trip for the University and I was getting a travel advance in cash and so I went up to the cashier's window with the appropriate form signed by 5 twelve people saying I was legitimate and everything

JUDY Yeah Yeah

JOHN else and for years they wanted identification so I would give them my university ID card for students it's got a picture but for faculty it doesn't and the girl says that's no good I need a photo ID In other words the ID card that the university gave me they would not accept

CYNDI university Brilliant

JUDY 15 Geez

JOHN I thought of raising a ruckus but I was afraid that they'd go through and we'd all have to have pictures

MICH. Until now I had no idea the U. of I. was this warped

CYNDI She's changed her mind about going there

MICH. 20 I'm totally disillusioned

DIANE As bureaucracies go the U. of I. is no better or worse than any other place in town and in some ways it might make more sense
BILL So you flew China Airlines

JOHN Was there any other way to get around China except you know we had these short trains

BILL ( ) They gave you a present every 5 time you flew Every time you got in the airplane they'd give you a little ( ) or something One thing they'd do

MARGE We didn't get anything

BILL You were an adventurer You were there before they

JOHN 10 Before they realized they were supposed to

LANIE Yeah right now they're a tourist trap

BILL And ah we got a nice little package oh beautiful package and it was a bottle of wine they told us So that was fine we figured well we were having plenty to eat and drink over there so Jane saved and brought it home It was such a fancy little thing When we got home she took the thing out and it was ( ) you know You could hardly look at it It was a funny looking Buddha (Well it wasn't a Buddha) They wouldn't 20 have a Buddha for a wine bottle but it was something like that

CYNDI ( )

((Someone enters the room))

BILL Hello there

CYNDI Hi
BILL 25 And ah then we tried the wine and of gosh that was worse
MARGE  Oh that was terrible
BILL    And Jane brought it all the way home
JOHN    Yeah their wine was not exactly (overjoyed)
STORY TWENTY

BILL  We had friends too A fellow who ran the hotel the Imperial Palace Hotel was a good friend of ours He was a great guy We ah the first time we went over second time we went over we said Come on you've got to come out with 5 us go to dinner Get a girl and come out Oh no he couldn't do that He did

MARGE  Oh ho

BILL  Then it turned out that this girl oh she was the most beautiful young sweet girl She was obviously very 10 much in love with him and he was just as enamored of her The only trouble is he was twenty years older than she was

MARGE  Doesn't make any difference

BILL  In Greece it doesn't make any difference So he married 15 her and then she and her children came over that time with us in Garden City in that house in Garden City where you were

MALA  Yes? Ah

BILL  We had a wonderful 20 You have travelled so much You went to New Zealand when Lanie and John were in Australia
STORY TWENTY-ONE

MICH. I remember first day of kindergarten My mom said I could walk to school by myself I started walking Mom was about a hundred yards away giving me directions Turn here

LANIE 5 All by yourself right Within shouting distance

MICH. Uh huh I'm serious
STORY TWENTY-TWO

JOHN Well our cat gets up on the table even though we try to she's not supposed to etcetera and one time we were both going away The kids were still in Cyndi was still in high school I think yeah anyway she was there so she must have 5 been in high school and we had this grad student and his wife stay with them and this gal was a veterinarian and we said okay you know now your job is to train the cat

JUDY Get the vet to train the cat

JOHN You know

LANIE They didn't have a cat either

JOHN Let Mel take care of the kids Well she loved the cat so much that she made it worse You know she had the cat up on her lap feeding it from the table scraps

JUDY Reinforcing it

LANIE Our only hope is that this poor cat's getting so old that when she leaps up to get on top to sample whatever you've left out by mistake half the time she doesn't make it up to the top anymore So there's hope in her old age
TWENTY-THREE

MARGE Well at our wedding ah the ring bearer ah when we had a rehearsal he said I gotta tinkle So his mother made sure that he went to the bathroom before before the wedding

CYNDI 5 Before the wedding

LANIE I can just see that echoing through the church

MARGE And so at the time of the wedding he was holding the pillow and everything and he said how much longer do I have ta hold this and it got me to laughing so 10 that I could hardly answer the things that I had to Say I do

CYNDI answer But that's what makes

LANIE Memories

CYNDI Weddings good
STORY TWENTY-FOUR

BILL  I was the quarter master of the Cincinati navy
LANIE  Is there any left?
MALA   Yeah
BILL   Bought all the stuff Took it down because I was driving
       my car and I had to do it and ah we were half way out and
       Yeah
JOHN  
BILL   we ran out of beer and Pepsi Everybody bought some
       Oooooh
ACYNDI  
BILL   So the others were all flying back to Cincinati they couldn't
       take it so I have beer and Pepsi out in the car for you
       and so you can tell Tom W. that you drank Cincinati beer
       and Pepsi
JOHN  Yeah okay because it was his son who's the Commodore or
       the Admiral
BILL  15 That's correct
STORY TWENTY-FIVE

JOHN But they they lost some business from us because of these various all this variety of catalogues because I wrote them in October or November

LANIE Said what happened to your camping stuff We can't get 5 air mattresses from you

JOHN No and said you know send me your catalogues that list cross-country skis cause we knew we were gonna buy some And they didn't send it

BILL Hey

JOHN 10 And so we bought some at the local sports store and

LANIE Did they have such a thing

JOHN actually we spent about ten bucks more a pair I think than we would have by getting 'em from Bean but

BILL What ya gonna do You know

JOHN 15 Bean's finally did you know six months later in March or something

CYNDI But what good was that

JOHN And they were ten bucks less than we had paid but ah you know they were too late

BILL 20 In March who wanted 'em

JOHN We got 'em in December at the local sports store
STORY TWENTY-SIX

LANIE Like that calculator that cost a hundred fifty and by the time it got stolen it's value was eighty-five no ah yeah about eighty-five and our deductible was fifty so I got thirty-five and by the time I got to buy a new one they cost thirty-five Of course I got a better model so back to a hundred dollars

JIM That's the way insurance always works On their side

LANIE The amount did cover what the original
I remember the first time I had experience driving on a snowy road? It was so weird because I was driving a friend home and most of the streets were pretty clear but his street just after I left him off I would have been very nervous.

Oh yeah.

There was this big patch of snow until I hit the next road and you're drivin' along it and the car would just slip a little this way and slip a little that way and I had to be very careful in steering and then I had to stop at a stop sign and I was afraid I wouldn't be able to get out apparently it wasn't as bad as I thought.

I can remember the first time I drove in zero visibility. I think that's scarier. Zero visibility is scarier than driving on ice. It's scarier than driving on snow.
Well I didn't do that but I remember when I was getting out of Yale they came around and said now we're collecting for the twenty-fifth anniversary gift fund. In other words you pledge so much a year for the next twenty-five years and I said well you know I may be richer then and I may be willing to give more than I'm willing to pledge now and I was told that we'd rather have a fixed amount and know what it is. And so when that was so I was giving them ten bucks a year and Lanie kept upping what she was giving Mt. Holyoke and Holyoke's gotten a lot more from us over the twenty-five years than Yale has.

That's why I get all the adds from Yale Press in your name.

Cause I didn't give enough.

I don't know. Maybe because you gave too much.

No I didn't. I mean.

Ten bucks a year?
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