

Saturday April 14th

By: Jeff Anderson

“How Folklore Impacts Our Everyday Lives”

Are you aware we have a site in Kerr County where artifacts predating the earliest Egyptian Dynasty artifacts were discovered?

This ground on Thompson Road above the Guadalupe River at the entrance to Saddlewood Estates is named the Gatlin Site. It marks a 7500 year old campground above the River floodplain where nomadic people groups gathered for over 6000 years around fires to tell stories of harrowing journeys, cunning animals and the mighty heroes who vanquished them.

Folklore has provided a way for colorful stories to spring to life across the world for thousands of years. It helps people make sense of their own world and by studying the folk arts, we come to better understand who we are.

Amazon advertises a definitive resource for studying this fascinating topic. “Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Folklore Beliefs, Customs, Tales, Music and Art sells for \$277.78. A reviewer awards the book five stars saying, “I paid a high price for this book... and I'm glad I did. There's nothing like it out there. If you want a good introduction and overview of folklore, look no further this book will save you a ton of time and research.”

The editor of The Folklore Encyclopedia is Dr. Charlie McCormick President of Schreiner University and our nation's only University President with a P.h.D in Folklore. Dr. McCormick will be the featured speaker at an upcoming Dynamic Learning Institute Luncheon Tuesday April 24th where he will help us to individually understand how Folklore is impacting our lives in today's world.

We live in an increasingly high-tech world and one might conclude that the oral tradition of passing along traditional beliefs, customs and stories of our community by

the traditional word-of-mouth is outdated. Yet, Charlie a truly entertaining speaker promises that participants in this luncheon will come away never looking at their



everyday lives in the same way again.

As a Folklorist, Charlie believes that much of the world is invisible to us: both those forces that constrain us as well as those powers that liberate us. By making visible what is otherwise invisible, Folklorists give individuals the opportunity to never be duped by the world in which they live and perhaps be empowered to live the life most important to them.

Charlie grew up in Snyder, Texas and went to college in Abilene where he studied English and Literature. Late in his college career, he complained to his professor that he wished he had grown up in a community that cherished Literature. “I am embarrassed to think back on the experience now because I suspect that I was trying to get the professor to feel sorry for me. Instead and importantly--he looked at me like I had two heads.”

Charlie explains, “He then proceeded to remind me that I grew up in an extraordinarily literate community--only it told stories instead of writing stories. That was my epiphany. Though I did not have the

language or theoretical framework for it at that moment, I began to understand the sophistication and complexities of the small community in Texas which I grew up.”

McCormick hopes participants will leave this DLI class with a better understanding of the ways in which their lives are shaped by folklore and folklife. The class will look at specific examples of folklore--both from the past and in our contemporary lives--participants will understand the ways in which invisible and unwritten rules shape the way we live in the world. He adds, “To the extent that any of us develop a recognition of this and other shaping forces, we can begin to live our lives with purpose and not just as cultural creatures.”

We asked Charlie to explain why this class will cause participants to look at everyday life differently? He answered, “How many really look at their everyday life in the first place? This is why, I believe, folklore and folklife is such an important area of study. Modern American society has built huge industries in higher education and cultural institutions to study and celebrate the high arts or painting, music and dramatic performance. This is a good and appropriate thing to do. When we study this artistry and celebrate, we learn about who we might be as individuals and as a collective.”

Moreover he adds, “When we study the folk arts, we come to understand who we are. It has been my experience that, while all of us have our moments in which we are unseemly, on the whole we all bring an invisible artistry--not unlike the artistry expressed in those high art forms--to everyday life. When we are reminded of this or learn about this for the first time, it makes us have a different conception of ourselves and different interactions with our neighbors.”

Our everyday traditions make it much, much easier to live our everyday lives. Plus they give us the opportunity to advance human knowledge and artistry to an extent we otherwise could not achieve if we were always trying to figure out how to interact with our neighbors each time we meet.

A favorite quote of Charlie’s perhaps encompasses why this is important. “Why are so many of us enthralled by myths and folk stories in this modern age? Why do we continue to tell the same old tales, over and over again? I think it's because these stories are not just fantasy. They're about real life. We've all encountered wicked wolves, found fairy godmothers, and faced trial by fire. We've all set off into unknown woods at one point in life or another. We've all had to learn to tell friend from foe and to be kind to crones by the side of the road” - Terri Windling.

Tuesday April 24th 11:30am-1:15pm Dr. Charlie McCormick will explore the universality and social significance of folklore to help us learn how these powerful tales continue to shape society today. The DLI Board of Directors is hosting the April 24th Luncheon featuring Dr. Charlie McCormick’s Presentation “*More Than a Race of Spectators, How Folklore Impacts our Lives Today.*” DLI’s Fall Semester Classes will also be previewed. Cost to attend this class and luncheon is \$35 per person. To register, call [792-4044](tel:792-4044), Mondays through Fridays, or register anytime online at www.clubed.net.

The class location is Schreiner’s Callioux Campus Activity Center Ballroom (building #2 on the map) Parking will be next to the building in parking lot A. <http://schreiner.edu/campus-info/campus-tour/index.aspx>

The DLI Board is excited that over 1000 participants have joined us to discover the joy of learning from dynamic instructors with a lifetime of subject experiences to share. There are no tests, no grades and no papers — just the opportunity to explore interesting topics and develop new interests.

About Charlie McCormick:

Dr. Charlie McCormick is President of Schreiner University. Charlie joined Schreiner in 2009 as Provost. He received his bachelor’s degree in English from Abilene Christian University, his M.A. in anthropology from Texas A&M University, and his Ph.D. in Folklore and Folklife from the University of Pennsylvania. He holds the distinction of being America’s only University President with a Ph.D. in Folklore/Folklife.