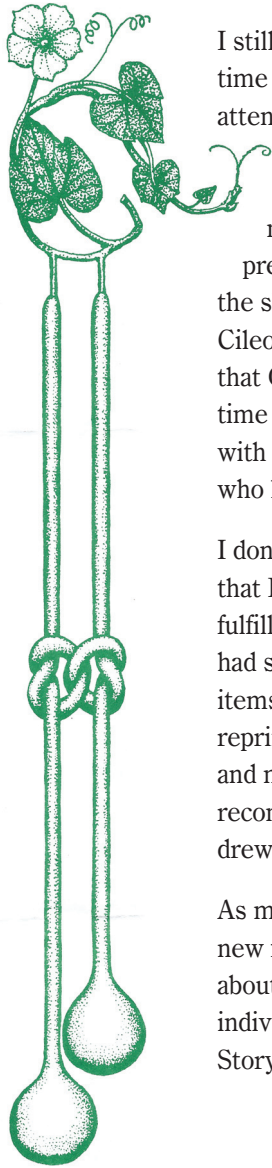


I Remember Jim Story

By Leigh Adams



I still have a mental glimpse of Jim from the first time we met twenty or more years ago. I was attending the Ohio Gourd Festival and my first AGS Annual Membership Meeting. As Editor of the California Gourd Society newsletter and board member of the state organization, our spectacular president, Carol Rookstool, convinced me to go to the show with two other board members, Rebecca Cileo and Ardith Wilner. The AGS Meeting was at that Ohio Show where met more than one of my long time idols of the gourd world. I also happily connected with many friends from the California gourd world who had also travelled to Mt. Gilead, Ohio.

I don't recall the agenda of the board meeting, just that I was anxious that perhaps I would not be able to fulfill the society's expectations of me (not that anyone had stated any expectations of me). We voted on a few items, confirmed that state newsletter items could be reprinted in other states with appropriate attribution and notification, a treasurer's report was made, recommendations were delivered and the meeting drew to a close.

As members stood and greeted one another, meeting new friends and connecting with old friends, talking about gourds and families, families and gourds, one individual after another came up to me and said, "Jim Story's looking for you." "Don't leave without talking

to Jim Story." "Jim Story wants to talk to you." I became terribly concerned that I must have taken Jim Story's parking space (a huge concern in California). Carol Rookstool assured me it wouldn't be a criminal offense in Mt. Gilead and took me firmly in hand after the fifth or sixth person had urged me to turn myself in to Jim Story. "I know you want to meet him", said Carol, "let's go find him."

I had read Jim's articles, admired Jim's work, heard Betty Finch and Carol Rookstool and Jim Widess praise of Jim Story's generosity and accessibility. I'd wanted to meet him for years. And now, I feared I'd done something to offend him before I even got to meet him! As I was grasped by Carol Rookstool and escorted toward a throng of people, I felt like a recalcitrant child in a playground scuffle. 'I can't think of any reason for him to be upset with me, I don't know him!' We stood on the perimeter of a group of people surrounding a face I recognized from Betty Finch's photos; it was Jim Story himself.

With a knot in my stomach I heard a voice from the crowd say, "There's Leigh Adams, I've been wanting to talk to her, can you excuse me for a minute?" Carol introduced me as Jim took my hand to shake it and said, "I want to have a few words with you." His kindly demeanor relaxed my nervousness instantly as he pulled me aside to talk with me. "I've been reading what you write and I enjoy it very much", I pray I didn't gasp in his face. "You're doing a good job out there in California and it's creating a lot of interest. I want you to keep it up." I could have been knocked over with a feather – one of my heroes, reading my work? I was flabbergasted.

That was the beginning of a great and supportive friendship. Jim and his charming wife, Miss Jane, were always very kind and interested in whatever manipulation I was trying with a gourd. Jim encouraged and challenged me and my only regret is that I didn't get to know him sooner. It was Jim's constant support and perennial challenges that helped me and many gourd lovers to achieve new and distinct creations. Jim's challenges were infamous, and one of my favorite quotes is from Glenn Burkhalter who said, "Jim Story encouraged me to kill a lot of gourds... in my effort to manipulate multiple knots into a single dipper. "I love that Jim's memory and quest can be carried on through AGS's Jim Story Award.

Long-handle dipper gourd that was manipulated "Jim Story Style" by tying the leg of a stocking over the ball of the gourd when it was small and using the stocking to gently pull the gourd in the desired direction around a wooden dowel, the stocking was re-tied daily to pull the gourd around the dowel in a corkscrew fashion, after four revolutions were completed the dowel was removed and the gourd was pulled back over itself.

Betty Finch

