

# Storyteller Gives Africa Life For Her Listeners

By JULIE PURSELL  
Art Editor

It starts with the beating of a tribal drum, rhythmic and insistent.

Children's voices join, accenting the lilting cadences of the storyteller's evocative tones. Characters from ages past, the folklore of all ages, spring to life. Jungle animals leap from the corners in the best Robert Louis Stevenson manner.

Estelle Condra, storyteller, is at work. But she is not just any bend-of-the-river-type yarn spinner. A native of South Africa, she brings along a tantalizing wealth of drums, skins, spears, "callabash and such" to spice the mood.

Her tales are of two types principally: those of the diverse South African tribes comprising the "nations within a nation" of South Africa; and the European-Dutch based oral traditions handed down by succeeding generations of the settlers of South Africa who became the Afrikaans.

Mrs. Condra completed a storytelling session for the public (children in the majority) today at the Richland Park library. Aug. 12 she goes to the Thompson Lane library, and on Aug. 16 to Centennial Park. And on Aug. 20 there will be a workshop for Metro School librarians.

"It all started with my mother telling me stories, some of them tribal, some from the stories I remember my nanny telling us. And others I originate," Mrs. Condra said.

"South Africans are more verbally inclined than some others, because we never had television until three years ago," she added. "So when we go to people's houses, we sit and make conversation and share experiences. It's a natural thing to tell stories."

She works with children from 3 to 13 and sings a few words of native

languages in tribal songs she learned as a child.

"I try to do participation stories so the young audiences three years and up will get the mood and atmosphere of the story."

But she is not limited to children. She tells stories for adults — at parties, groups, churches and organizations. As a member of the Nashville Storytelling League and the National Storytelling League, she attended the recent national convention in Jonesboro, Tenn.

On Wednesdays at 4 and Sundays at 7 p.m. she tells stories for adults on the special transmitter "talking library" for the handicapped broadcast over WPLN radio.

Mrs. Condra and her husband, David Condra, moved to Nashville seven months ago from Carrollton, Ga., where she had a speech and drama school. She has written, directed and produced children's theater in this country and in South Africa and studied children's drama in London for a year.

Adult stories concentrate on writings of Hemingway, Poe, Pearl S. Buck and John Steinbeck.

Mrs. Condra was selected an "Outstanding Young Woman of America" for her bicentennial pageant depicting the life of William McIntosh, the first citizen of Carroll County.

Concerning her workshop for teachers, she said, "Story telling is going to encourage a lot of children to read. And that is the main purpose. Apart from educational purposes, it is entertaining and broadens the individual outlook. With tales of history and cultures they don't know of, people's perspectives will broaden."

She is working currently on a book in collaboration with two other authors, dealing with anthologies of folkloric stories and techniques and methods of communicating them.



**ESTELLE CONDRA**  
You Can Hear The Drumbeats