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Estelle Condra tells the tale of a boy who found a palace in a foreign land during Eakin Elementary School's Storytelling Festival. Four storytellers participated in the event that drew about 500 children and parents to the school yesterday.

STORYTIME

Yarn spinners enthrall kids with tales of cats, ghosts

By **FIONA SOLTES**

Staff Writer

Livermush the cat — named after her favorite food — grew so fat that people had to ask what kind of animal she was.

At least that's the way Donald Davis tells the story.

Davis, a North Carolina native who has written two books of his Southern Appalachian stories, was one of four storytellers who participated in Eakin Elementary School's Storytelling Festival yesterday.

"I grew up in traditional storytelling," Davis said between tales. "I never learned any stories from books. They came from my family. There was no TV, no radio, no going to town."

Davis said he always assumed everyone had a similar background and was surprised to learn otherwise. He now shares the stories passed down through genera-

tions as well as many original ones with an estimated 400 audiences a year. He said he spends about 100 days each year in schools.

He also leads workshops for teachers on improving oral skills.

With bright eyes and spectacular gestures, Davis brought hundreds of children and parents into the very heart of the stories he told yesterday.

But his audiences seemed no more captivated by him than the children around several other areas of the school ground.

Groups gathered to hear Nashvillean Susan Ramsey spin yarns with the help of her guitar, Steve Giltner telling tales of a "real" ghost and others and Estelle Condra acting out the adventures of a boy who finds a foreign palace.

There were also stories and drawings by Eakin students on display, and used books, food and



other items for sale.

"Storytelling can be such a positive experience," said Louise Clifton, a member of the Eakin Parent Teacher Organization, which sponsored the event. "We wanted

the whole family to experience it. We wanted the families to remember that they have their own stories, too, and they're something that should be passed on."

About 500 people turned out for

the event, and parents who came with their children seemed to enjoy the stories as much as the kids.

Many said they had spent most of the day in attendance at the festival. ■