



The official newsletter of

## San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild

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*SFBAPG is a charter guild of the Puppeteers of America, Inc., a non-profit, tax exempt organization*

**February 2021**



**A New Year's greeting from our most distant guild member, Herbert Lange in Germany:**

To brighten up your spirits even after the Holiday Season, here comes a possible NEWSLETTER contribution: a puppetry picture of a rare encounter spontaneously taken at the speech-language office that I'm working at in Bremen.

According to Persian culture, a goldfish stands for **LIFE**. According to Chinese tradition, a goldfish brings **PROSPERITY**. It also brings us **GOOD LUCK** and **HAPPINESS!** So, there is plenty of reason to cheer and ring in the NEW YEAR!!!

In German, we do have a saying, "Cups Up", meaning high time to clink glasses and celebrate!!! Let's have some sparkling champagne.

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# What's Coming? Great Things!

## **March 20<sup>th</sup> Guild Meeting “The Ins & Outs of Live-Streaming Your Puppet Show”**

When: March 20, Sat. 3-5 pm

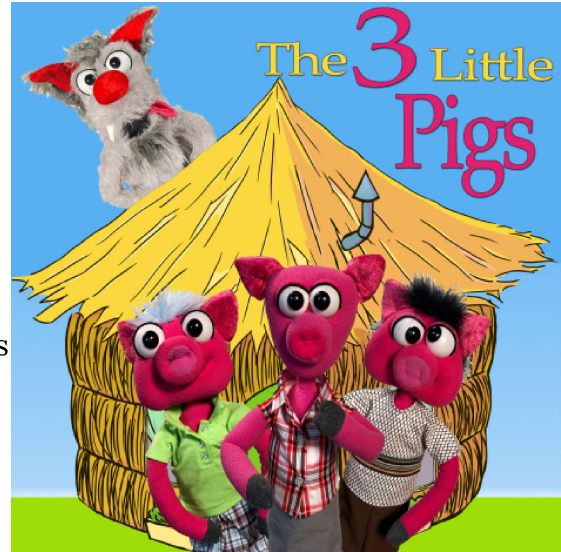
Where: On Zoom – RegFox registration information will be in the March newsletter

Join us for a Zoom Guild meeting, followed by a live streamed show of the “Three Little Pigs” and a backstage tour by Art Grueneberger of Puppet Art Theater.

### **The Three Little Pigs**

Three pigs strike out on their own looking to have fun and adventures. But first, they must build houses for themselves. Straw, sticks, bricks, and a huffing and puffing Big Bad Wolf add up to hilarity and mayhem in this adaptation of the classic story, “The Three Little Pigs.”

After the show, Art will give a backstage tour to look at equipment and his virtual set-up. Art will share three ways he's adapted his shows to work as live-stream performances in the COVID Era. He will also discuss how he will use the live-stream technology post-pandemic.



### **Art Grueneberger**

Director, Puppeteer, Puppet Builder

Art became fascinated by puppetry in the early 90's while pursuing a degree in teaching. A puppetry course his last year of college took him off the teaching path and onto a successful career as a puppeteer. Under the mentorship of master puppeteer Richard Bay he began performing shows at theme parks and schools. An early opportunity to study with Jim Henson's Muppet Performers and hundreds of performances for Bay's company helped hone his skills as a



performer. An invitation to be one of the first participants in the Emerging Artist Program at the National Puppetry Conference, Eugene O'Neill Theater Center helped develop Grueneberger's writing and production skills. These skills combined with a bit of luck led to the formation of Grueneberger's Puppet Art Theater Co. in 1995. Today Puppet Art Theater Co. has eighteen productions that tour across California and beyond completing more than 600 live performances for family audiences every year. Grueneberger has become a master at developing marvelous puppet shows that delight audiences of all ages.



Grueneberger took these skills and started Puppet Arts Creative which develops and tours fantastic educational programs for government agencies, corporations and other organizations that deliver important educational messages to targeted audiences. In April 2020, Puppet Art Theater pivoted from live performances to live-streaming shows. Since the pivot they've completed over 200 paid live-stream performances.

#### Loose schedule

3:00-3:30 Guild meeting  
 3:30-4:00 Show  
 4:00-5:00 Live Stream presentation & Q & A

### 2 Programs Coming Up!

#### **Doug & Annie Zesiger, Producers of Stinky Tales**

Social/Emotional Education for children, with puppets dramatizing kid's everyday problems. Doug & Annie are both teachers and create original scripts and music with stories geared for child interaction. They work on the web, zoom & live.



#### **Tanya Crowley & Yumi Ozaki of Quack & Wabbit**

Quack & Wabbit performs in schools and they have tapped into grants to fund puppet videos on topics such as helping children deal with stress related to online learning. Q & W have worked with teachers to create puppet activities for the classroom and have a wealth of educational ideas.



#### **PROGRAMMING HELP WANTED!**

- Would you like to suggest a program for a Guild meeting?
- Do you have a show or skill that would be of interest to our membership?
- Would you like to be on the Programming Committee?

If so, please contact Lee Armstrong, [images@vom.com](mailto:images@vom.com), cell 707 738-5906, Judy Roberto [be\\_artsy@hotmail.com](mailto:be_artsy@hotmail.com), or anyone on the Programming Committee or Guild Board.

# Holiday Party Thank You's to All!

The January Holiday Party was a great success. Thank you to all the participants who attended. About 70 puppet enthusiasts joined in, with members as far away as Germany (Herbert Lange) and Hawaii (Gale Warshawsky) with friends from many



places in-between. Much appreciation to Gabriel Galdamez (webmaster) who setup our RegFox which got people into the Zoom. And thank you to Camilla Henneman (President) who led the meet & greet, announcements, puppet trivia and donated door prizes. The program started with Video Shorts, shared by talented Guild members. Special thanks to...

- Kasandra Vargas for Christmas Special
- Doug & Annie Zesiger for I Like Clean Hands
- Mary Nagler for Penguin Fishermen
- Nao Kobayashi for Little Journey
- Magical Moonshine Theatre for So Far So Good

Many thanks to Sarah Fornace, co-director, who joined us to introduce Manual Cinema's Christmas Carol. After the show, there was a prerecorded Q&A by the puppeteers and musicians, explaining their Covid safe setup.

This was an ambition program and a huge shout out goes to our membership officer John Arnold who downloaded all the videos, set up a rehearsal and kept everything running smoothly for this three hour event!

We look forward to seeing you at the March meeting and have exciting programs in the works for 2021!

The Programming Committee  
Co-chairs Lee Armstrong & Judy Roberto

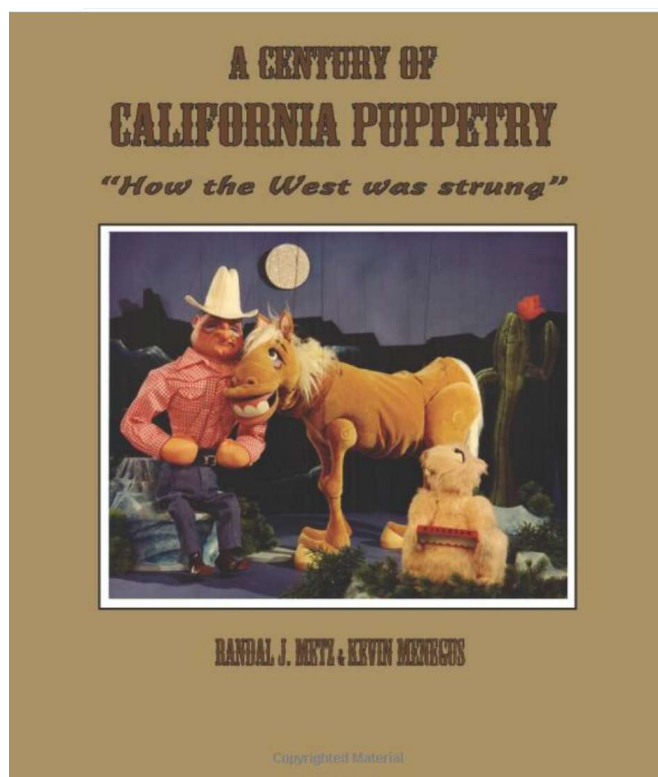
# Digging Through History

By Randal Metz

Kevin Menegus and I have published our new book: *A Century of California Puppetry, or How The West Was Strung!* The book was published in cooperation with Luman Coad of Charlemagne Press, and was edited by Danalynne Wheeler Menegus. It's available through the Charlemagne Press website, (<http://www.charlemagnepress.com/>) where you can find many more interesting puppet books, and on Amazon. (Ed. note; save money on the Charlemagne website and free shipping.)

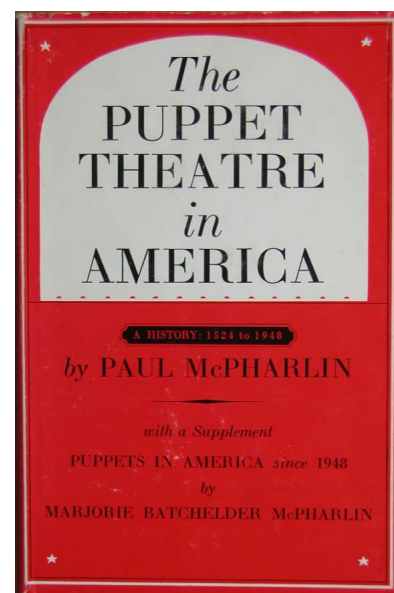
The idea for this historical tome came about after I had finished updating the San Francisco Bay Area Puppet Guild history on our website for our 50th anniversary in 2010. Kevin and I were discussing the possibility of researching the roots of our "puppet tree" in California. Now that we had the use of the internet, we figured we could find out more about who the early puppeteers were and how they influenced the future. Jump ahead to 2018, and that's when we figured we had the time to start such an ambitious project.

At the end of the guild's history, I challenged other states and guilds to research their heritage and put it to paper. In 2001, Mark and Tony Mazzearella released their one hour documentary on PBS, *"Stories of the American Puppet."* This was followed in 2003 by Paul Eide, Alan Cook and Steve Abrams publishing a special edition of *The Puppetry Journal* titled *A Timeline of Puppetry in America*. But I suppose the original germ of the idea occurred in 1993 at the Puppeteers of America National Festival in San Francisco. Lettie Schubert, Mike Oznowicz and Alan Cook covered one wall of the exhibit with a sheet of paper





where they had written several names. Festival participants were invited to add their own names, with lines connecting who inspired or mentored them. It was fascinating to see how we were all connected. The only other American puppet histories we have are Paul McPharlin's and Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin's *The Puppet Theatre in America: A History 1524 - 1948* and *Puppets in America Since 1948*.



But how to approach such a large volume of work? Since I've written several other histories on puppetry and Children's Fairyland, Kevin felt that I should handle the initial writings. I agreed, but only if Kevin researched the photography needed for the book, and handled personal correspondence with the puppeteers. Once that was agreed, we sat down and discussed what was happening in the puppet theater through the various decades, and who best represented that knowledge. We also wanted to reflect in each chapter, how history, film and literature inspired the various art forms and puppeteers we wrote about. Using *A Timeline of Puppetry in America*, we were inspired to follow their guidelines. Once I had written several chapters, Kevin's wife Danalynne, who is a professional editor, agreed to proof the text.

The next step was easy. Who should help bring the book to the world of publishing? Why Luman Coad. Luman is the main publisher of modern puppet books through his Canadian company Charlemagne Press. Not only is he a great publisher, he has an immense knowledge of the puppet world and what has inspired it. Many times, when we couldn't find an appropriate photo, or needed help fact checking historical information, Luman was an important part of the entire process, and we owe him an immense amount of respect and gratitude.

But who to include in the book? In addition to the requirement of the artist having lived in California at one time, we carefully subjected each name to a battery of questions. Have they mentored the careers of other puppeteers? Have they run a successful puppet theater, program or business? Have they made a huge difference in some puppetry aspect? Have they taught or worked in some form of educational puppetry? Have they made a difference in the business, or history, or guilds of puppetry? Is this someone we haven't heard about before? Were they heavily recommended by their peers and colleagues? And finally, were they a stop motion animator, ventriloquist, or other puppet-like business? When we started researching the book, we discovered more than 200 respected puppet professionals who merited mentioning. That number has been reduced to what we now consider a more manageable 121. And at the end of each chapter, we've added a section we call "Outstanding Ovations," where we've highlighted another 47 puppeteers whose accomplishments we feel need to be recognized, in a shorter format. We've also included a special chapter on eleven established California puppet theaters.

Next came the job of looking through California Puppet Guild archives, plus the complete archives of *The Puppetry Journal* and the many books and pamphlets we found concerning American puppetry. We also sent out a questionnaire to the many living puppeteers we wanted to include.

Other pertinent information was gathered online from sites such as Wikipedia, Muppet Wiki, IMDb - Movies, TV and

Celebrities page and of course Unima's *The World Encyclopedia of Puppetry Arts*, as well as personal puppetry files collected by many puppeteers. Grant Baciocco of Los Angeles has also been producing a wonderful group of Podcasts interviewing American puppeteers titled "*Under the Puppet*."



Very soon we found out that studying history and historical trends led us to the discovery that our profession is built upon the teachings and knowledge of many puppet individuals who came before us. The book shows how many modern puppet careers have been influenced and/or mentored by artists from many years before. The book also details the growth of puppetry across the United States in every decade. Each previous artist passing on knowledge to eager students. Puppeteers are very giving. As I've mentioned many times, challenge 12 puppeteers to do the same production or story, and you will get 12 different, varied and interesting takes on the subject. Each one unique.

Our book has been beautifully laid out with historic and modern black and white photos of each selected biography. And each highlighted puppeteer tells their life story, challenges and influences that inspired them to become an American/Californian puppeteer. We hope you enjoy this glimpse of a California art form that has inspired dreams from 1850 thru 2020!

## Fabricated American Lands Big Role in the Windy City

By Lee Armstrong



Toony is not your everyday talking fish puppet. Images in Motion fabricated "Toony" who is starring on *Toon In With Me*, on MeTV (Weigel Broadcasting) in Chicago. The puppet

(puppeteered by comedian/writer Kevin Fleming) pulls from his vast knowledge of cartoon classics to ad libs intros plus comedy sketches with co-host, Bill Leff.



Images in Motion received a call from a TV producer at Weigel, who had searched the web to find a company to construct their star. After initial conversations, Kamela Portuges designed this fun and wise-cracking character. Kamela supervised and Nao Kobayashi built three Toony's for the show. Lee Armstrong gave Kevin some Zoom classes in the basics of TV puppeteering.

The fish is a foam understructure, covered in custom dyed

antron fleece, with mechanisms to moves his topknot "hair" and side fins for emphasis. It's always a challenge building identical puppets, but with meticulous patterning, the triplet Toonys are now quite busy in Chicago.

## Our Amazing Puppet World

**By Ilene Kennedy (vice president)**

Nick Barone was a very interesting man, He was very interested in puppetry. He was so interested in puppetry that he built his first puppet when he was just 5 years old. He soon began writing short stories and making home movies featuring his hand-made puppets. During summer vacations, Nick attended various art classes in New Jersey and Philadelphia. While still a teenager, Nick was contracted to paint sets for local theater companies.

Eventually, Nick moved to Hollywood, California where he became a set painter for the television industry. He also got a second job teaching puppet making classes at Michael's Arts and Crafts. The President of Michael's was so impressed with Nick's puppets, he took



one for display at the corporate headquarters in Dallas, TX. Nick soon became a lead window dresser and store display coordinator for Michael's Pacific SouthWest Region.



Nick made a few puppets for a public TV station in Oceanside, CA. There he learned of a Puppetry guild in San Diego.

Nick worked with various puppeteers at the Marie Hitchcock Puppet theater in Balboa Park, in San Diego. He was there for almost 10 years. He learned how to work and developed his skills to work on stage in front of a live audience. It was in San Diego that he built his first puppet and performed his first Puppet show, Jack and the Beanstalk. People really liked his puppets, so he started building puppets for sale.

At first, he only sold to local puppeteers, but soon he started selling them to puppeteers and theater groups across the country. He took on building an entire cast of puppets for the Marin Theater Company's production of "The Puppetmaster of Lodz." He also

designed and constructed the costumes and the puppets for Nickelodeon Productions and made miniature sets and performed the puppets for the Emmy Award winning video of "The Mouse cracker" by Snapdragon Video Production.

After deciding to move Northern California, Nick stopped building puppets for others in order to concentrate on writing and building his own puppet shows. Through the years, Nick also taught puppet building and workshops to amateur and professional puppeteers at national and regional puppet festivals.



Although he used a variety of puppet styles in his performances, he became really well known for his moving mouth puppets. Nick Barone was also a staff member of the Puppetfest Midwest and was also the Moving Mouth Puppetry Consultant for Puppeteers of America.

Nick spent most of his days traveling around the San Francisco Bay area entertaining audiences of all ages with his original stories and beautifully handcrafted puppets. When

he was not out performing he could have been found in his workshop writing stories, building puppets and creating new puppet shows to entertain the children in all of us.

He had many accomplishments in his lifetime as well as touching many a heart with his smile and fun characters he created.

Nick was one of those premier puppeteers whose popular shows entertained thousands of children and families throughout the years.

He became a professional artist and puppeteer. And created so many special shows and made many types of puppets. Sadly he was taken way too soon.

Nick Barone, July 28, 1967 - Dec 17, 2014. He will forever remain in our hearts.

## Stan Winston School of Puppet Building

By Moddy Himmel

It's been a whirlwind 3 weeks of completing my first puppet building assignment from the Stan Winston School Puppet building online class. I am so grateful to have access to these videos by BJ Guyer thanks to the Guild Scholarship! I've never been much of a baker, but I think this little muffin definitely turned out "GBD," as my father-in-law would say, "Golden Brown and Delicious". I haven't quite found his voice or his personality yet but I'm having fun playing with him until I do, and the name Murray seems to have stuck.

The process started simply enough by tracing some circles onto 3-inch upholstery foam that I picked up at JoAnns Fabric store. I used a mason jar ring. I suppose I



could have used a compass or a roll of tape to trace these but I have a definite preference for using whatever is on hand for my builds. Not doing much canning these days any way.

I took the recommended approach of using an electric turkey knife to cut the foam. It's been a great purchase so far, though I was informed that the foam will dull the blades. So far so good. I'll keep you posted. I cut out a



(very) rough shape for the muffin top and one for the bottom (I cut a few extra too just in case I messed up). Then it was snip after snip with my scissors to create a more refined muffin shape.

Shaping the foam with the scissors was probably my favorite part, though I did make quite a mess in my studio and the muffin was left with tiny ridges all over. The ridged texture was good for the lower half of the muffin as it helped create the look of it being in a liner but for the muffin top the ridges were out of place. I sanded it down with a small disk of sandpaper attached to a dremel. This smoothed out all the ridges and grooves and left a much more convincing texture. Then I hollowed out the lower half of the muffin.



Carving the foam was so much fun but the



meat-and-potatoes of this build was definitely the mouth mechanism. After watching (and re-watching) the video on how to put together the mech I was able to create a working mouth for my little muffin. Essentially it is a hinge created by a half circle of craft-wood attached to a dowel rod with another full circle of craft-wood that has a hole in the center. I used brown felt that I already had to line the mouth although the video recommends suede for durability. The half-circle is attached to the 1/2-inch x 12-inch dowel rod by creating a notch near the top of

the rod and inserting the straight side of the half circle. I secured this piece with super glue. This now stationary half-circle forms the roof of the puppet's mouth.

Next, I drilled a hole with a diameter slightly larger than the diameter of the dowel rod in the center of the full circle. Then, I elongated the hole shape to more of an oval to allow for movement. This would become the lower jaw. Once I was happy with the range of motion, I cut out a circle of felt to line the inside of the puppet's mouth, and two small rectangular strips to secure the two pieces together creating a hinge.

After that, I attached a small eyelet screw to the back of the lower jaw circle and attached the spring. Now I had an idea of where best to put the second eyelet screw into the rod itself so that the spring is neither stretched nor compressed, but sits in a neutral position when not in use. I poked a very small hole in the front of what would eventually become the



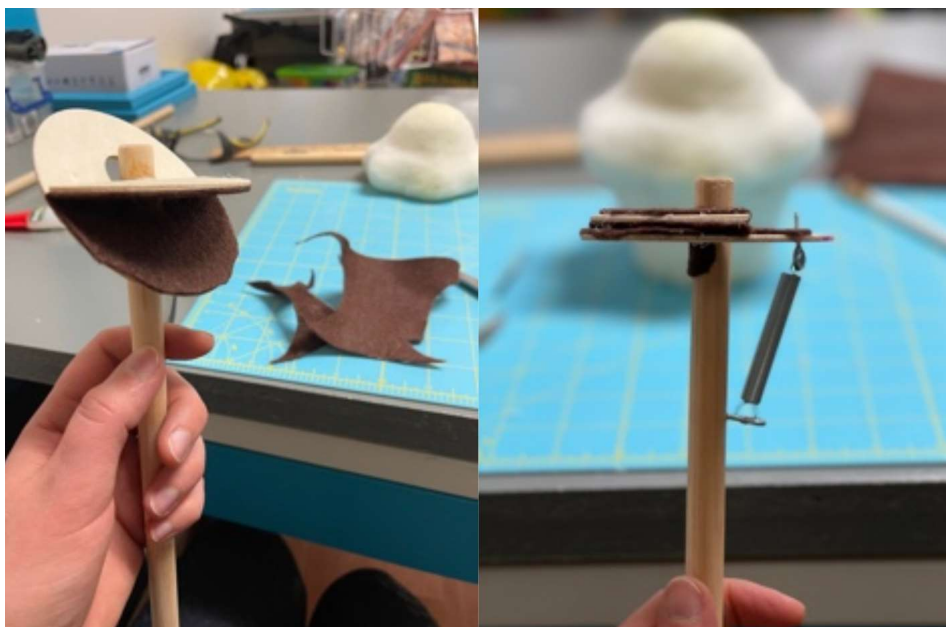
bottom lip of the puppet to attach some extra-strong upholstery thread. The video recommended fishing line, but I once again opted for using what I already had on-hand.

Now it was time to attach the foam muffin pieces. I hollowed out the back of the inside of the muffin's "head" to make room for the moving wooden disk then secured the muffin-top to the stationary roof-of-the-mouth gluing only the front of the muffin-top to the half circle. I glued the upper edge of the hollow muffin

bottom to the lower full circle and added a smaller disk of craft-wood to serve as the base of the puppet. I used a plastic coffee stir stick, ran the thread through it and taped the stir-stick to the dowel rod using gaffers' tape. Finally I attached a key ring to the thread and the mech was complete!

Now it was time to decorate! One positive thing that has come out of the lockdown is the ability to attend workshops online I might not have been able to attend in person. One such workshop was taught by Hobey Ford who makes amazing rod puppets. One suggestion he had was that of using chalk pastels to color the carved foam. It has the distinct advantage over paint of not absorbing into the foam which might also stiffen it and limit its movement. The chalk pastels cling well to the surface of the foam and can be easily touched up if necessary. I got to apply his technique here to make my little muffin look like

he was fresh out of the oven. Then I had fun dressing him up and making puns





Stud Muffin  
English Muffin

And that was  
it- Muffin to  
it!

## Hello my DEARS!

Mrs. Bandersnoot here! Have you missed me? I am sorry I have been so absent of late!



When the pandemic began Mary went into self-isolation and I went into Storage! The indignity!

Well really, it wasn't all that bad. I was in good company because I was in there with all Mary's other puppets, my friends! We make a very, big bubble, and we had a good time.

But recently, Mary was asked to bring us out to participate in a video shoot. Yes, A gig! We were to play all these different roles. I was cast as the attorney! Many of us from Mary's Avenue Q set play the customers of an answering service and many of Mary's animals play the answering service! So fun!

This is how I look as an attorney! They got me this lovely red wig, and I think it makes me look 40 years younger! (I may keep it!) I have some funny lines and since I usually play a cranky preschool principle it has stretched me as an actress.

The shoot is tomorrow, as I am writing this, so I will have to report on how it went next month. Mary is

doing all the puppeteering for 11 puppets and they have a lot to say, so she is worried about her arms falling off. But it's a gig! And we all need gigs. The studio has taken many precautions and Mary feels pretty safe to do the job.

Part of the reason we all went into storage is because Mary is taking Bernd Ogrodnik's Academy of the Wooden Figure and learning to carve. She has turned her bedroom into a workshop. Where I used to stand has a Drill press now. She is very eager for the class to start next week. Oh, and the big happy news!! Mary received a UNIMA scholarship of \$1,000.00 to pay for part of the class! Thanks to Lee Armstrong for telling Mary about the scholarship! Thanks Lee!

Well, Mary is busy getting ready for tomorrow's shoot, so I was tagged to give you our news from the North. Mary says Hi and how nice it was to see you at the holiday party. Stay safe friends. I know I will be safe, because in a few days, I will be back in storage!

Love, Mrs. Bandersnoot. Feb 2021

PS. If you have any questions about puppets, puppeteering PLEASE send them in to Mary's email [mary.nagler@gmail.com](mailto:mary.nagler@gmail.com) and maybe we'll resurrect my advice column and she'll let me out of storage to answer!

**Send newsletter articles, photos, etc., to [newsletter@sfbapg.org](mailto:newsletter@sfbapg.org)**  
**Your fellow members will be grateful!**

And because there's a little space left on the page, some photos of the Nelson's students' shows who made toy theatre productions at home. Michael & Valerie continue to explore the challenges of teaching theater over Zoom!

