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# NEWS

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01-16

January 19, 2001

## Story/Photo Opportunity

### **"Theo," Star of the PBS Television Series, "Between the Lions," To Visit Charleston**

To demonstrate his appreciation for WEIU-TV's commitment to children's programming, "Theo," puppet and star of the PBS series, "Between the Lions," **plans to meet with approximately 230 Coles County pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students Tuesday, Jan. 23.**

He, along with **Norman Stiles**, head writer for "Between the Lions," will visit **Mark Twain Elementary School** (1021 13<sup>th</sup> St., Charleston) for a **9 a.m. assembly**. Kindergarten and pre-K students from Lerna and Ashmore schools have also been invited to attend the festivities which will include a **20- to 30-minute reading by "Theo"** and another **20- to 30-minute session for questions and answers.**

A similar open reading for students of all ages is scheduled to take place at **3:30 p.m.** that same day at the **Charleston Public Library**, 712 Sixth St.

### **Why Charleston?**

Charleston was chosen as one of 12 cities (including Baltimore; Cincinnati; Charleston, W. Va.; and St. Louis) for the "Between the Lions" reading tour, according to Karla Evans, director of development/marketing for WEIU-TV. The decision was based on WEIU-TV's commitment to "ready to learn" children's programming and use of such programming within the community.

Most kindergarten and pre-K classes at Mark Twain, Lerna and Ashmore view "Between the Lions" as part of their daily reading curriculum, followed by classroom activities which re-emphasize those lessons from the series. "Between the Lions" is shown on WEIU-TV, Channel 51, at both 10:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday through Friday.

(WEIU-TV serves an 11-county area of East Central Illinois, and is available on cable systems in Mattoon, Charleston, Champaign, Effingham, Paris and Tuscola, among others.)

### **Special Media Opportunity**

In addition to the readings, media representatives are also invited to a media luncheon in the WEIU-TV studio (on the EIU campus) from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Reporters will have the opportunity to speak with Norman Stiles (bio attached) as they enjoy box lunches provided by the station.

***If you know you will attend the luncheon, or for information on any of the day's events, contact Karla Evans, director, development/marketing, WEIU-TV, at (217) 581-6631.***

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**E**astern Illinois University emphasizes distinguished teaching in the liberal arts, sciences and selected professions. A traditional, residential state university of recognized quality, Eastern enrolls more than 10,000 students in undergraduate and graduate programs. The university, located in Charleston, also serves the region through a variety of non-credit and off-site degree programs, as well as cultural and recreational opportunities. Eastern's pursuit of excellence attracts well-qualified students of an increasingly diverse population and a teaching faculty active in research and public service who utilize the latest technology.

## Norman Stiles, Head Writer

Norman Stiles graduated from Hunter College in New York City, in 1964, with an amusing BA degree in Zoology and Chemistry which gave him the basic foundation for a career in comedy.

In late 1964, he began working for the New York City Department of Welfare as a caseworker and then became a supervisor in 1966. While at the Welfare Department he began writing freelance stand-up comedy for comedians who are no longer in the business.

In 1968 he got his first full-time comedy writing job on the staff of Merv Griffin's *Late Night* talk show, on CBS. In 1970, he started writing for *Sesame Street* and became head writer in 1973. Stiles left *Sesame Street* in 1975 and went to Hollywood to work with Mel Brooks as a co-creator and co-executive script consultant of the ABC sit-com, *When Things Were Rotten*, a parody of the Robin Hood legend.

In late 1975, *When Things Were Rotten* was cancelled and Stiles' dream of fame and fortune was crushed. He remained in Hollywood for the next five years, during which time he co-wrote episodes for various situation comedies, and was: co-head writer on *The Captain and Tennille* (ABC); co-head writer on the *Frankie Avalon Summer Show* (CBS); co-executive script consultant on Norman Lear's syndicated television satirical, talk show parodies, *Fernwood 2-night*, and *America 2-night*, (for which he received an Emmy nomination); co-producer of *The Bad News Bears* (ABC); co-creator/co-producer of *Fort Leo*, a sitcom pilot (NBC); co-producer of *Brothers*, a sitcom pilot (MTM/CBS), and co-writer of pilot scripts and feature film scripts that were not produced but for which he was paid a pretty penny nonetheless.

In 1980, Stiles returned to New York, where he resumed his work on *Sesame Street* and regained his sanity. As head writer he has supervised the *Sesame Street* writing staff of fifteen to twenty writers, guiding the writing of more than 2,000 scripts. During his career on *Sesame Street* he has conceived, co-conceived, or supervised the development of characters such as: Count Von Count, Forgetful Jones, Sonny Friendly, H. Ross Parrot, Placido Flamingo, Elmo, Telly Monster, The Amazing Mumford, Zoë and Rosita, among others. He has written more than 100 scripts for *Sesame Street*, winning eleven Emmy Awards and fifteen Emmy nominations for his work on that PBS series.

Stiles has consulted on *Sesame Street* international co-productions in Israel, Portugal, and Mexico, helping to develop their writing teams and to create characters and formats unique to their cultures. He has authored and co-authored eight *Sesame Street* books.

He wrote *Put Down the Duckie*, a one-hour *Sesame Street* special for PBS, and two *Sesame Street Live* productions, *Sleeping Birdie* and *Silly Dancing*. He also was lyricist and-or co-lyricist on many *Sesame Street* songs.

In addition to his work on *Sesame Street*, Stiles has been co-writer of television specials for ABC and PBS and co-author or contributor to a number of trade books.

Stiles is co-founder, with Christopher Cerf, Michael Frith and John Sculley, or Sirius thinking, Ltd., a children's educational entertainment company.