

Rick Mullen: The Local Character of Mullen Folklore

Emma Mullen



Borland, Katherine

COMPSTD 2350H

Autumn 2019

Rick Mullen: The Local Character of Mullen Folklore

If you asked many different people to describe Rick Mullen, you would probably get a multitude of answers. Some would describe him as a hardworking man, always taking phone calls and text messages from clients and fellow coworkers at any hour of the day. Others might describe him as very social and friendly, a person who never meets a stranger and finds people to talk to wherever he goes. His immediate family, however, might describe him a little differently. Having lived through his quirks more intimately, they might describe him more as prideful, competitive, impatient, stubborn, in other words, someone with a Type-A personality. These varying qualities allow for his family to easily transmit and circulate a variety of stories with him as the person of focus, primarily for entertainment. The passage of these folktales, usually told by his wife, daughter, or son, demonstrate the impact and significance that local character anecdotes have on both a group of people and the individual of topic themselves.

If there is one thing known about the Mullen family, it's that they love to tell stories. These are used in a variety of ways, including entertainment, communication regarding the knowledge of another family member, giving advice, or even helping to lift others out of negative moods. A person learns how to tell Mullen stories through listening to the surrounding family members, usually the primary storytellers, in order to understand the basic structure for storytelling. This results in each individual family member having their own unique version on how to tell a Mullen story, usually adapted and shaped from the audience to whom they are telling the story. Since each audience will have differing reactions to certain storytelling cues throughout the storyteller's performance, these reactions will help to secure how this individual will approach telling stories. The most popular versions of stories told within the group are comedic local character anecdotes, where the subjects of these stories are usually ridiculed for

either the mistakes they made or the situation in which they were placed, and these stories are usually transmitted during weekly dinners and important get-togethers, including birthdays and holidays. Telling comedic anecdotes of family members allows for the family to bond through knowledge and laughter, while simultaneously allowing the family to understand a person's best and worst characteristics that make he or she a unique member of the group.

The primary subject of my collected folklore is Rick Mullen, my grandpa and the main man of our family. The stories I have gathered revolve around one particular story told from multiple different perspectives along with a few other shorter stories that help display an understanding of his personality and characteristics. The main story that will be the focus of analysis is infamously known by his family members as "The Boat Story." This story takes place around late July of 2019, not long after my grandpa purchased his first boat. This boat has a strong personal connection with my family members, particularly my grandfather and dad, because it was once owned and used by my late great grandfather- my dad's grandpa and my grandpa's father. This boat holds more meaning to my grandpa than it does to my father, though, since he had been wanting to purchase the item for many years from my great uncle Tony, who has been the owner of the boat for numerous years. However, once my great uncle Tony was diagnosed with dementia and family members began to sell off his assets, my grandfather couldn't help but jump on the opportunity to buy the boat he's been desiring after for years. Once he bought the boat, he immediately wanted to take it out to the water to try and sail it. However, he realized he was going to need help to get the boat into the water. This is where the other two members of the story comes into play, my brother Logan and father Patrick (or Pat as addressed in the text). Once Rick understood he was going to need some assistance, he invited his son and grandson to tag along in order to help move the boat while also leaving time for family

bonding. Both agreed, and the group discussed on taking the boat out to a lake in Wilmington called Caesar's Creek, located about an hour away from Cincinnati. This area was chosen since it was the closest public lake where they could sail their boat. The perspective of the storytellers differ across three generations, from grandpa to dad to son. The variety of generations allows for insight into how each person was impacted by the experience while also showing what aspects and scenes of the story were most important to each family member.

Although this story was in the second interview I conducted, I would like to address it first since it helps to put Rick's personality into perspective. When I asked my grandfather if he would like to be interviewed on this story for this project, he hesitantly agreed, not with discouragement from being interviewed, but with curiosity to why I chose this story for him to explain. Rick and my grandmother, Karen, drove from West Chester to visit me at my dorm in Columbus during late October of 2019. We spent the afternoon together, got dinner, and, at the end of the day, I asked Rick to explain his side of the story and for Karen to tell me her favorite stories about her husband, although I won't be discussing anything about her side until later. Rick began his side: "I'd like to tell the story of a trip I made about three four weeks ago with my son, Pat, and grandson, Logan, in a fishing boat that, um, my father had had for 30 years. I worked on the boat, fixed it up. We took it on the lake, and I took it out for the very first time, and I was in the back, starting the motor. Um, my son, Pat, was there and Logan was there. So, we got out on the lake, and I hand pulled the starter of the engine, and it started. So, then I proceeded to go out in the lake, and it stalled. So I couldn't figure out what was wrong, and I tried. I tried. So we're halfway in the lake, and, of course, my son and grandson are kind of smirking, laughing like, you know, 'What's going on? Why did we do this?' And so I tried to start it again, hand cranked it, hand cranked it, and it started up again, and I said, well, let's get back to the dock. So, it stalled again. So, it happened about two, three times. So, finally, I said you know what? This has an electric starter. So, I pushed the start button, and it fired up right away, and it worked like crazy, and, of course, my son thought that was the funniest thing in the world that 'How stupid can my dad be?' that, you know, I had a battery that I had bought for it. I had it hooked up to the motor, and I don't know why I didn't hit the start button. I just never thought of it. (Karen laughs) So, of course, Pat thought that that was extremely funny and

mocked me all the way back to the dock. So, I don't know how Pat felt about it, but I felt pretty good because I figured it out." (Rick Mullen, 2019)

Rick's story is a short and somewhat detail-less. He glazes over what he specifically fixed on the boat and what occurred before the boat was in the water. Rick explains himself as the victim in the story because his son and grandson are negatively commenting on how he could not figure out how the boat worked and for forgetting about the electric starter he installed before the trip, all while placing emphasis that he tried numerous times to figure out how to start the boat. His story is brief and filled with very few in-depth details regarding what was going on during the event, showing he was getting straight to the point. In order to get him to elaborate, he had to be asked questions by his wife and I:

Karen: And what did Logan do?

Rick: Logan wasn't allowed to say anything because I was the Papa. So that that's what happened about three four weeks ago.

Emma: Well, what did dad say about the no wake zone?

Rick: Well, he said 'You're not supposed to make a wake in the no wake zone,' and I said, 'I'm not,' and he said, 'Well what what are those waves behind the boat?' And I said, 'Well, those are just waves, they're not a wake.' So, he felt like I didn't know the difference between a wake zone, and a non wake zone.

Karen: And that would be Papa. No wake zone applies to everybody but him. (everyone laughs)

Rick: Well

Emma: Did you not think that, like, going out too far would cause any problems? Like

Rick: No, cause, you know, it started and everything was fine, and it was running good, and then it stalled, and unfortunately, another thing happened is I didn't unscrew the valve that would give the vacuum to let the gas go into the engine. So, I had to unscrew the valve and I did that, too. So, I learned taking this out for the first time, you know, and of course, my son thought that I should have known all that. And he's perfect. I'm not.

Karen: I agree. He is perfect.

Emma: But, didn't dad have to paddle the boat back in?

Rick: Yes. (Karen gasps)

Emma: Twice?

Rick: Yes, he did. He did.

Karen: See?

Rick: But the happy ending to the story Logan, your brother, wanted to go fishing. So, we dropped him off at the dock so he could fish. So, I wanted to take the boat back out, and your dad said okay. So once I figured everything out, I gave your dad the the captain. He he got behind the engine. We cruised up and down the lake. We had a great time. The boat did a wonderful job. So, guess what, I'm going back out Friday with your brother Logan and not your dad because I don't need him to go.

Emma: Because apparently that causes way too many problems.

Rick: Uh, he makes too much fun of me.

Emma: (teasing) Yeah, dad did not sound happy about the whole trip.

Rick: No, he wasn't, and I don't know if he'd ever go again, which is fine.

Emma: He said he actually enjoyed it.

Rick: He did. It was it was a good day. We we did not have the best of the pleasant first voyage, but we got the engine started, and I'm going back out to give it another try on Friday.

Emma: How did you feel about not catching any fish?

Rick: That wasn't really the problem we me because I wanted to get the boat on the water, but your son your brother, Logan he's convinced there are no fish in that lake.

Karen: But but Friday your going to prove him wrong.

Rick: Yep, we are we are going to try again. Now maybe we won't catch any fish, you know, but we're sure going to give it a try, but it will be more than just a boat ride.

After asking these questions, some of the untold important details in the story are revealed. In Rick's point of view, he did not do anything wrong. He tried his best to figure out why the boat was malfunctioning, stating that he was the one that figured everything out and made the decisions that led to the boat working. However, it can be noted that there was frustration between both him and his son, Patrick, since Rick continued to comment on how Pat was making fun of him and that everything he does is 'perfect.' The underlying frustration that he notes with his son demonstrates that there were arguments between the two, possibly resulting from how both were becoming impatient and annoyed that the boat was failing to work. It can be

seen that he tries to quickly explain or overlook all of the mistakes that he caused, including how he forgot about the unscrewing the valve that would start the engine or how Pat was forced to paddle the boat back multiple times when the boat continuously stalled. Every time there was a part of the story that made him appear negative, he would either quickly address it or change the subject into a different detail he thought was important to the story. This could be seen when he made his son appear as if he was doubting his knowledge about a wake and when he quickly began talking about the 'happy ending to the story' when I asked about Pat being forced to row the boat back when the it malfunctioned. Rick was attempting to get his audience to focus on the better parts of the story in order to make himself appear in a better light, trying to save his pride from being tarnished from the sections of the story that projected him in even the slightest negative way.

Although the questions asked after Rick's story helped to put the narrative into a better perspective, there are still many parts of his account that do not make complete sense. Pat's side of the tale told in interview one helps to place these missing pieces into a greater perspective. He begins with describing the whole purpose of going on this trip in the first place, which was to see how the boat sailed after years of not being used, twelve years to be exact. Pat describes the beginning of the trip starting with getting the boat to the dock and into the water:

Pat: We're taking it out, and it's got this engine on it that hasn't been ran in 12 years, still probably the same gas in the tank from twelve years ago. So dad my dad is, you know, hauling this at his two thousand and sixteen jeep that he has. Beautiful, beautiful jeep. He's towing it, and we're taking it to the lake and we get to the boat dock. Right. So the boat dock, you know how it is, if you've got a boat, you've got to pull forward and then you've gotta kind of back in the water to release the boat. Alright, for one, he pulls up and he's trying to back in the water. All right. But when he's backing up, it's going to the left. So then he slams on it, goes forward, and then he's backing up and it goes to the right. And then he slams forward, he's getting ticked off at this point, and then he's backing to the left. And then he goes forward and he backs to the left again. Finally, I'm like, "Dad! Come get out of the car! I'm taking over." And I

back in, he's like, "Alright good," he's like, "because I here, I gotta get the, uh, release on the boat to get it in the water once you back out." So, I back in the water and he goes to push the release, and the rope is held up. And he can't get off the the trailer.

Emma: He can't get off the trailer?

Pat: No. Can't get off the trailer. Try to push off, I don't know if you've been there before, like you try to push off shore and it should just be released. By the way. after all this has happened, it is a hot day at Caesar's Creek, OK? It's just a hot day. And people are backing in they're boats left and right and here is our train wreck of a mess, trying to get in the water for this little fishing boat. People are back in a 32 foot speedboats like (imitates speed boat) you know, like, no problem. And we are having such trouble with this little 12 footer fishing boat.

Rachel: Your little John boat.

Pat: Yes! So we finally get it in. I said, all right. After all is said and done, I park the car and what not. We get the boat in the water, hop in, and we're going off on our maiden voyage. I said, "All right, Dad," even told this to him, I said, "Dad, when we get this engine started," which hasn't been started in 12 years, I'm like, "If we get it started, we go no pass the no wake zone. If you go pass the no wake zone, you're into open water. All right. If it bogs down, we can at least have the we have oars in the we can row it back." Papa gets it started right away. (girls start giggling), and rather just playing it safe in the no wake zone, he goes full throttle in the middle of Caesar's Creek.

Rachel: He's never even

Pat: With all these (wreck) boats!

Rachel: And how many years has that has that motor been hasn't started started?

Pat: In 12 years.

Rachel: 12 years! That motor has never been started!

Pat: With with 12 year old gas in it, guys.

Rachel: With 12 year old

Pat: It still sparked!

Rachel: oil in it.

Pat: Yeah. He's like, "Oh! (imitates engine speed increasing)." We go out, and I'm like "Dad, dad! Slow down! Slow down." We get out there and all of a sudden we hear bum bum bum bum. (Rachel starts laughing) It shuts off, the engine does, in the middle of this crazy sea of Caesar's Creek...

Pat: These two jet skiers came up (to us) and they're like, "Hey, oh God, you guys are oaring back. You look like you're in trouble. Do you need help?" Guess what Papa says? "Nope! We're good!" As I'm oaring back, like, "Dad, I

told you, if we get it started, don't just go straight out. Let's coast around the no wake zone. OK, so guess what happens? He gets it started. We go back to the no wake zone. We kill the engine and we try again. He was so happy that we even got this started that second time he wanted to keep going around the middle. I said, "Now lets play it safe and go back." He listened to me and we went back. Got it started again. And guess what he does? Straight out in the middle of the fricken water again! And guess what happens? It dies! (Puts hands over face) I said, "Dad." Oh my God. So we're starting to row back and this time we got a tow back to the no wake zone. We trolleyed around once we got it started again. For what it was was that it had twelve year old gas in it, guys. Okay?

Rachel: And wasn't it a button that he was forgetting to push, too?

Pat: Oh yeah, it was an electronic start too. But (laughs) you know what? Anyway, it still worked out. We has a great day on the water.

Pat's side shows that there were issues occurring with the boat before the actual sailing even began, and there were a potential for more since the boat hadn't been started in over 12 years, which a fact was not even mentioned in Rick's narration. This also identifies that frustration between the men was brewing far earlier than what was stated in his father's story since Pat expected his him to look over any main problems before they arrived to ensure they would be prepared if something like this would happen. As a result, Pat felt the need to specifically gives Rick directions on what to do in order to safely sail the boat just in case something with the engine goes wrong. In his eyes, this is logical reasoning since the boat hadn't been started or replaced with new gas in over a decade, and he did not want them to get themselves into a situation where they were too far from the dock. However, Rick proceeded to ignore him and go out into the middle of the lake when the engine happened to start, not once, but multiple times, stubbornly ignoring his son's logic. His description allows more insight to the story than Rick was willing to tell. In Rick's perspective, the most important thing he wanted to tell was occurring during the actual boat ride, focusing on the actual trip, its purpose, and how he was eventually successful rather than talking about any potential problems that occurred before or during the trip. His son, however, wanted to focus on all the things that went wrong during the

trip, finding them the most memorable moments of the entire event. Pat highlights his frustration with his father's stubbornness and inability to take directions from others, even when he specifically asks them for assistance in the first place. It is obvious that it isn't the first time that Pat has gone through something like this with his father, since he didn't appear to be too surprised at his actions and ignorance of his requests.

While Pat's narrative helps to piece together many of the missing parts of the story that Rick told, Logan, Pat's son and Rick's grandson, assists in bringing in another perspective that wraps up the tale while also inserting another opinion on the personality of Rick Mullen during the third interview I conducted. This third point of view gives rise to the most memorable moments of the experience while also identifying his relationships to the other men in the story.

Logan begins his story right around the same place that his father began his narrative:

Logan: When we get to, uh, Caesar's Creek, uh, Papa get's the boat out, and he is already struggling. He's telling everyone what to do. He's like, "You need to grab that rope. You You gotta do this." If you don't do it, he get's pissed. He like he he'd be like, "Logan, I told you to grab the rope!" And you're like, (sarcastically) "Sorry."

Pat: (imitating Rick) "I told you to pull it to the right."

Logan: He's like, "No no not you don't clip it there, you clip it there!" You're like, "Sorry."

Pat: "Sorry, your right, my left. We're looking at each other different."

Logan: All right, and then we finally get it out, and instead of, like, staying in the area, we're, um what is it? What is it called, the no wake area?

Pat: Yeah, the no wake area.

Logan: And, instead of staying there and trying to start it up, he goes straight in the middle! No, and just straight in the middle! And he starts to start it up, and you hear (imitates sound of engine starting), and you hear, "Ahhh," and (Logan laughs) he's like, "Ahh I think it's flooded. We've got to wait." I'm like, oh my god. So we wait

Pat: Did he wait? He waited two seconds, and he was he kept pulling at it and flooded it more.

Logan: And then it and then he just keeps doing it and we're like, "Papa, just wait and we'll get it." And it it) we keep doing it and eventually doesn't work, and it started to get hot. We're

Pat: Yeah.

Logan: So

Pat: Hot August.

Logan: Dad is rowing the boat back to shore (laughing) while the engine is still flooded and he is still trying (laughing harder) to get it. We're just standing there in the in the scorching hot, just rowing it back, rowing it back, and when we finally get there, um, they drop me off 'cause I wanted to fish, and I was just casting around, and I hear on the lake I hear, "There's a button. Well what if we press it?" Press it, immediately starts.

Pat: Yeah, electronic start.

Logan: And (pause) I'm looking at Papa

Pat: Yeah, yep. Um, (stutters) him starting the engine was him pulling thousands of times in the heat.

Logan: Yeah, you we were all sweating. We weren't even out there for, what 15 minutes?

Pat: Horseflies were all over.

Logan: Yes.

Pat: I mean it was oh, those things are terrible.

Rachel: They are terrible.

Logan: And we finally, okay, we have a good time. We're driving around. Uh, the engine was working. But the thing is, we got skunked. We didn't catch one fish, and I think that's what made him a little a little bit more mad or I don't know, grammar. But, we're on our way. We're getting back, and, uh, Papa who is it? Dad, he went to go get the Jeep, and I'm stuck with him. So, I have to grab everything, he's like, "Logan "

Pat: 'Cause the Jeep had the trailer on it for the boat.

Logan: Yeah.

Pat: And I was the only one who knew how ta

Logan: He was the only one who knew how ta use the trailer to back in. So, he's backing in, and I hear Papa say, "No, you're doing it wrong. Come on, push it back, we've got to do it again." And I'm like, "Papa, we could just bring the boat in." So, we finally get it in, and he's yelling at me like on the dock like when we're passing by the dock. He's like, "Hurry, jump! Go, go, go!"

Pat: You guys were pressured so bad. It was a busy, hot day. People were dropping their boats in the water left and right, and if you don't know what you're doing

Logan: Oh my god they're gonna be pissed. So, we're staying. There is like a whole row of cars just waiting

Pat: We have the littlest boat out of anybody.

Logan: We have a little John boat, and we're we're finally like and I get on the shore, and I grab it, and he's like, "Logan, you forgot to grab that rope!" I'm like, "Oh no." And I he hands me the rope and I'm starting to like I put one rope around this, like, little anchor that's on the, um (pauses)

Rachel: The hook.

Logan: The hook that's around the dock. I like put one rope around it and I clicked it and he's like, "No, You need to put more," and I put another and he's like, "You need to put a lot more than that Logan, " and I keep pushing it around 'til where it is almost unable to go around again and he's like, "That's good." I'm like, "Uhh yeah."

Pat: Yeah, like, "Any more rope and we need to spawn it, Dad. God, we don't have it! Okay?"

Logan: And then there's like these things that you use that's plastic that you push over so your boat doesn't hit the sides, and he's like, "Logan! You forgot to grab that!" And he's like, "Pull the boat over so you can put it over." I'm like, "Papa, you can do it yourself! You pull it over. It's not hard!"

Pat: He was a little embarrassed about all the people staring at him

Logan: Yeah!

Pat: waiting to put their boat in the water.

Logan: Everyone's pissed with their huge trucks with their giant boats and we're just standing their like little stupid (laughs) little idiots trying to, like, pull in a boat.

Pat: Flustered Papa.

Logan: And there's these guard we don't have any guardrails help us to pull it in, so were stand so we're trying to pull it in and he's like, "You need to push it more left, Logan," and I'm bringing it around and he's like, "Stand on the trailer!" So I'm

Pat: Yeah!

Logan: stepping over (imitates stepping), I have two feet like this

Pat: Well the trailer is submerged in the water, by the way.

Logan: Yeah! We pull it in, we finally crank it in, and Papa goes around the dock, and he looks over, and he's like, "It's not straight." Goes back, he's like, "We need to redo it." I'm like, "Oh my God!"

Pat: Who cares if it's not straight! We can pull it out of the water, and do it up in the land! Yanno, fix it.

Logan: Yeah, he's like, "No " he's like, "No, we gotta do it now!" And we were there for, like, a half hour. We're just trying to pull it in in the scorching hot sun. We finally get it in, and (pauses)

Pat: Yanno, he can strap it down in the parking lot

Logan: Yeah.

Pat: but he made everybody wait, after they'd already been waiting for us to strap it down.

Logan: Yes. We're just standing there trying to strap it down, we're like, "Papa Papa, we can we can do it later."

Logan's view of the event seems to be fairly similar to Pat's, beginning with the same scene and touching on many of the same pieces and moments that Pat viewed as memorable himself. He talks about how his grandpa overlooked the idea of staying in the wake region where it would be safe to figure out if the boat worked just like his father. While he wasn't as frustrated as Pat seemed about the situation since he wasn't the one that was forced to pull the boat back, he remembered this moment more for amusement rather than irritation. Logan also focused on other introduced points from Pat, including Rick having difficulty trying to get the engine to start, which was mentioned in both of the other stories, the extreme temperature, and the other surrounding people who were also boating on the lake that day. However, Logan also discussed different moments from the story that weren't mentioned in the other two narratives. One of his main differences was found in the way he perceived Rick. Since he was the one who was receiving all of Rick's orders, he pictured his grandpa more as bossy than his father did. He was given directions by him the moment he got on the boat to get it into the water to when he was assisting with getting the vessel off the lake, and he also felt more pressure from these orders since there were others watching the situation unfold. Logan also focused more on fishing than the other accounts, demonstrating that his focus for the trip was spending less time on trying to understand the boat and more on catching fish. This focal point helps to highlight the differences of the generations between the three through showing their status of responsibilities within this situation. While Rick and Pat were attempting to grasp how the boat functioned, Logan was able to avoid becoming a part of that situation by going to fish instead. On the other hand, it is understood that he is expected to take some sense of responsibility since he was involved in

getting the boat into and out of the water. However, his ability to escape the situation demonstrates his youth and status among the other men.

Throughout each narrative, the differences among the men can be seen in the ways they perceived the event, each other, and even themselves. In Rick's side, his main focus was identifying the boat trip as specifically a learning experience for himself. In his telling, he focuses mainly on making "I" statements, such as "I proceeded to go out to the lake", "I said, 'Let's go back to the dock'", and "I felt pretty good because I figured it out." It is obvious that he did this most likely due to how this story and project focuses on him as the main subject of discussion, so he felt the need to tell the story through a more defensive, informative stance. However, when compared to his son and grandson, he discussed others the least, barely mentioning his grandson and only mentioning his son when he felt that he was poking fun at his inability to get the engine started. He doesn't even talk about the crowd of other families at the lake and his interactions with these individuals, such as the jet skiers and others that towed the boat back who were both discussed in Pat's story. Rick also fails to mention many other struggles that occurred during the trip, such as the difficulty getting the boat into and out of the water along with what happened after the boat continued to stall numerous times, leaving his son to row the boat back to shore. The extreme weather for that day isn't discussed. The condition of the boat and how it was not started or had its gas changed in twelve years goes completely unsaid. He doesn't even touch on the wake zone until questioned by me, and even then, his meaning of the wake zone was way different than his son's, his focus more on a comment that Pat made when they were sailing in that region rather than Pat's perception on how he avoided listening to his advice for that area completely. Instead of discussing these occurrences, he talks more about the successes of the story, including how he figured out how the engine worked and how everyone enjoyed their time

on the trip although there were troubles. Rick's overall perception of the event shows that his focus was more on his success with the boat rather than his interactions with family members along with other detailed occurrences that took place while he was trying to get the boat to work, leading him to be more of an outlier when it comes to how he understood the (event) when compared to the other two.

Pat's perception, on the other hand, seemed to differ (a lot) from his father. Pat's main focus of his narrative surrounded the struggles that occurred between him, his father, and the boat. He discussed more on how his father seemed to ignore his son's advice multiple times about how to handle the old boat, and because of this, they continuously kept getting themselves into a bad situation that he believed could have been avoided in the first place. Pat's story also goes more into detail with what was happening other than the boat not working, which helped to explain why there were frustrations between the pair. He discusses how his father not only seemed to be having difficulties with understanding how the boat worked, but also had difficulties getting the boat into and out of the water, struggled to get into the boat himself, and other smaller things that caused him irritation. These struggles show that Rick became flustered and annoyed before the boat ride truly started. When his son continued to give him advice or tried to help him with how to control the boat, Rick just became more annoyed, perceiving that his son believed that he didn't understand what he was doing. He wanted to prove to Pat that he could figure out how the boat worked himself without listening to any of his advice, although he was the one who asked Pat to come on the boat trip in the first place to help him figure things out. When Rick refused his suggestions, continuing to do his own thing, Pat became irked himself since he was forced to help his father get out of situations that he stated they stay away from in the first place. This miscommunication between the two, along with the boat continuously

malfunctioning, was the main reason to why the father and son were aggravated with the other. While Rick's story was more informative in telling, Pat's was more for entertainment purposes. Throughout his story, he continues to bring up key points that highlights the struggles and frustrations he went through that are entertaining for others to hear. His favorite points were discussing how the boat had not been used or had it's gas changed in over twelve years and how, no matter how many times he suggested playing it safe, his father ignored his comments and continued to do what he wanted stubbornly. Pat even spent so much focus on the frustrating events that occurred that he completely overlooked the most ironic part of the story, the engine having a button, until his wife mentioned it later. This shows that Pat's main takeaway from the story was his father's actions and their experienced struggles with the boat and not the ending, arguably most entertaining, realization itself. Instead, through using his frustrations and struggles, he was able to turn a story that could've been negative into one that was overall more entertaining for both his audience and himself.

Logan's side of the story appeared to be more similar to his father's than his grandpa's. The main focus of his narrative was mostly surrounding his grandfather's actions and interactions with his family members, primarily himself. Logan describes his grandpa as struggling and giving orders from the start, recounting how Rick was giving him demands on how to do certain actions and commenting on all the things that he appeared to be doing wrong. Logan's story tends to differ from the others in that he is more of an outsider in this experience since he was not in the boat during the entire length of time where Rick and Pat were attempting to understand why the boat was malfunctioning. He was more focused on the fishing aspect of the trip, leading him to completely avoid most of the frustration between both his father and grandpa. However, he was also able to experience time alone with his grandpa when he was

pressured and flustered, allowing him to understand his dad's own frustration with Rick and the boat. Logan liked to focus on all of the ridiculous things Rick made them do, particularly highlighting them for entertainment purposes to his audience. Since Pat was a part of Logan's audience, he couldn't help but add in his own input on the story and his father's actions. Logan's retelling of the story helped Pat to remember different aspects and moments that he forgot occurred, such as Rick becoming too impatient to wait until the engine was not flooded and the orders he was telling both boys to do. Pat adds other comments to Logan's story as well, helping to emphasize certain actions from Rick that both agree are ridiculous and make their situation more complicated, such as the scene where Rick continuously pulled on the engine handle, trying to get the boat to start up, and when he made all of the other families with boats wait so he could strap his onto the trailer even though he could've done it on shore to convenience others. Both Logan and Pat also often brought up the ironic fact that they had the smallest boat on the entire lake, and they were the ones struggling the most and causing all of the problems. They used these qualities of the boat, Rick's actions, and the frustrations they went through to effectively tell an entertaining story to their audience, efficiently demonstrating how an experience like this with Rick can lead to the making of him as a local character.

Overall, each story collected contributes important information which assists in piecing together the event while also demonstrates the significance of the relationships between each family member. Pat's story was necessary in that it filled in on important background information that wasn't found in Logan's narrative and elaborated on scenes by describing them in more detail than Rick's side provided. While Pat's story was used for both informative and entertainment purposes, Logan's was mostly told for just entertainment, getting the most laughs out of his story while also laughing the most while telling it himself. Of course, Pat's

contributions to the story could have assisted in the audience's reaction as well. Logan and Pat's stories tended to be the most similar, both of them beginning with the same scene and having many of the same key moments from the memory. They both focused on the other people around them while Rick's story primarily had to do with himself. They also go into greater detail than Rick does when it involves explaining their side of the story. This causes their stories to be longer than his, Pat's story being the longest out of the three since he had the most experience alone with Rick, leaving him to have more things to talk about. Rick's story, although short, holds some of the most importance since it not only displays his view of the event, but also accentuates some of the important aspects of his personality that make him a local character. His stubbornness found when he refuses his sons help, his determination in getting the boat to work, and his pride shown when he ignored his own mistakes by leaving them out of his narrative are all some of the examples that showcase his personality in a nutshell.

Other than the boat story, there are many tales that assist in describing the personality of Rick Mullen. Throughout the interviews, many people described some of their best stories that they think accurately describes Rick. One of my favorites was when Rachel talked about Rick's obsession with kites during their first interview in October, naming a few stories that happened when in Destin, Florida. Pat joined in, helping her accuracy with the stories:

Rachel: When we first went to to Destin, we used to go to Destin for like how many years in a row? I can't even remember... the beach house that we were in. The beach condo I guess we were in. All the funny stories of that week and, um, during that week, he always has been known to fly kites. He flew like 15 kites that week and (laughs) he couldn't get this one kite up. (to pat) What kite was it? Do you remember.

Pat: It was the pirate ship.

Rachel: The pirate ship! It wouldn't go up. So he literally tied a potholder to it.

Pat: Yeah, yeah.

Rachel Yeah. And then somehow

Pat: A potholder that helped from the oven temperature getting something out of the oven.

Rachel: From the oven! Yeah. A potholder. Tied it to it, and it's flying in the air with a pot holder behind it, just waving around.

Pat: He was trying to figure out the aerodynamics and he's like, you know what? For some reason he thought a potholder would make it fly and it made it fly.

Rachel: That was the same year, that all of a sudden, there was a shark kite that was on the roof. And you guys went and got the shark kite from the roof. And it wasn't even ours! But it was free. It was free.

Pat: We broke into the janitor's closet, got in there, and got a ladder to go up and get this thing because it was on the roof.

Emma: Oh I remember this! I remember this.

Rachel: He's flown for years since. Like, he flew to all the time. And that was also the same year

Pat: You know what? RIP, it doesn't fly anymore.

Rachel: Oh it doesn't?

Pat: It got dry rotted.

Rachel: Oh.

Pat: Yeah.

Emma: Darn. that thing lasted forever.

Even though Rick already had roughly fifteen kites flying in the air, he was determined to fix the broken one in order to get it up in the air as well. He couldn't let go of this kite since that meant he would be losing money, and he doesn't like to waste money that he has worked hard to obtain. His determination was also seen when he was set on acquiring an elephant kite, one that wasn't even his, off of a condo roof. Rick was even able to convince Pat to help him break into a janitor's closet and use a ladder to reach the roof in order to get the kite, which seems a bit extreme for their measures. Rachel and Pat's stories on Rick and his kites help to show the ridiculousness in his determination and strong-willed attitude. One particular story, however, truly captured his head-strong personality that the others couldn't:

Rachel: And that was the same year that the flight the (catching self) oh the flight, the kite got got um, all the way out to the field that was next to us, which ended up having all these burrs, and (to Emma) you were worried about the snakes and things that came around, and (to Pat) you got all these cuts on your legs, because you're getting a fricken kite that went down.

Pat: Well, actually, what you're trying to say is that it wasn't me. I didn't go in that marsh.

Rachel: No. It was your dad.

Pat: Papa went into the marsh. Yeah, only Papa went into the marsh.

Rachel: Oh, yeah. He was destined. (laughs)

Pat: He knew the kite went down into the marsh, and he had liquid courage, and he jumped over the fence, and I believe there was a sign that said, 'Please do not cross over here this is a natural preserve,' and you know what? It didn't matter at him. That kite cost seventy five dollars in the outer banks and he didn't want to lose it.

Rachel: Oh yeah.

Emma: Oh my God.

Pat: It literally was, like, 500 yards away through a thick marsh. He was getting cuts up his ankles.

Rachel: (Laughs)

Pat: Comes back, he was like, "Ugh. It was so worth it, though."

Rachel: Because he because he got the kite.

Pat: You know what? Long story short, he did end up retrieving the kite. I don't know how he found it. He came back. It was about dusk. You know, he was finding his way back home through the dark. I don't know what I don't know if he heard the dinner bell ringing.

Rachel: He was far.

Emma: How far do you think yeah how far did he walk?

Pat: Oh my Lord. Whatever. He he bit the line off, and he called Tricia on her cell phone and said, "Tricia, start winding the line in, I have it bitten off." And Tricia wound it forever. And by the time she got all wound in, Dad

Rachel: You saw it moving?

Pat: came back over the fence.

For an object of fairly small worth in the eyes of Pat and Rachel, Rick went to to the greatest ends to ensure that he wouldn't lose his kite. However, to Rick, losing this kite would mean losing money and time, two things that he finds extremely valuable. If he believes that he

can fix or save something in any way, shape, or form, he will try to do it until he fails, seemingly no matter the costs. This same idea of determination is seen when he is trying to start the engine on the boat by pulling it hundreds of times as described in Logan's story (interview three). Even when it seems the boat will not start, he refuses to give up, continuously pulling the handle until he realizes that it is a push start. He never has been one to give up on things easily.

The storytelling dynamic between Pat and Rachel demonstrates how the average Mullen couples tells anecdotes amongst each other. When telling stories to an outsider, it is not usually one person from the couple that is communicating the stories, but typically both that have an important role. Usually when giving the story, there will be one main storyteller who is explaining majority of the contents of the tale while the other assists with narration by filling in factual information and answering questions when needed. The person who is assisting in narration also doesn't hesitate on interrupting the actual storyteller when talking, unafraid to correct them in order to provide factual information. This type of family expression is similar to how Karen Baldwin describes her family's storytelling in her essay, "'Woof!' A Word on Women's Role in Family Storytelling." In her essay, she explains that it is important to her family to keep up on their individual roles in storytelling, because "understanding these rules for collaboration aids our appreciation of the differences in telling by women and by men in the family and gives us some notion of how the family maintains the privateness, the esoteric quality, of its traditions (Baldwin, 1985)." In her family, it tends to be the men who are the designated storytellers while it's the women's role to fact check the men to ensure their story is accurate and aligned with the family. She uses her Aunt Rheva and Uncle Roscoe as prime examples of this type of storytelling. For Pat and Rachel, however, in this recent anecdote about Rick and his kites, it is the other way around with Rachel taking the role of the main storyteller and Pat being the assistant narrator.

Unlike Baldwin's family, the Mullens are okay with switching the roles in storytelling from story to story. On the other hand, the Mullens also agree with the Baldwin idea that it is important to have these individual roles to assist a person when they are in the process of storytelling while also allowing the family member to appreciate the uniqueness that comes from their own family's storytelling that no outsider would understand. The storytelling represented in the kite anecdote is a typical example of Mullen storytelling and demonstrates the way in which Mullen couples pass along their folklore.

Another one of my favorite stories that displays why the Mullens use Rick as the subject of our anecdotes is found in the second interview when Karen explains a story about Rick and an English paper he wrote in college. She begins:

Karen: ...and also there was a time with his famous English paper. You remember this, Rick?

Rick: Oh golly.

Karen: He had to write this paper for English. We were not in the same English class, thank God, and he was not real good at writing papers. So, he said, "Karen, will you please read this over? Check this for me? I'm worried about this." So, I get the paper and I'm reading it and I'm going, "Oh... my gosh." There was so much I had to that was, yanno, wrong. I did I thought, I'm not going I don't want to take the time to correct all that. I mean, the biggest one I remember he says "mostly likely" and I'm thinking, "Well, there's a double superlative." Yanno? So (laughs) So, I told him, "You'll be fine. You'll " He says, "Will I pass?" Well, I said, "Yeah, you'll be fine. You'll be fine." Well, he turns the paper in and he gets it back. He got an F. Well, he was livid. He says to me, "I got an F. You told me I'd be okay, that maybe I'd get a C!" I said, "Well, I knew it was not good, but I didn't want to have to be the one to take the time to correct it and get it all fixed up." So, he went to his teacher. I can't remember your professor. You remember her name probably. What was it?

Rick: Miss Molin.

Karen: That's right, Miss Molin. He takes it to Miss Molin, and, you know, you know Papa pleads his case, you know, all these reasons why, you know, "Look it, I tried blahblahblah," giving her all these reasons why he should not have gotten an F, and I guess he wore her down because he told me she said to him, "Well, would it be okay would you feel better if I gave you a D." He said, "Yes." That's one point. You know, and F is zero points. A D at least one

point. So that was fine with him, and I guess right then and there we knew Papa was going to be a salesman because he could change his lett (laughs) his grade from an F to a D.

Rick: That was my sign to be a professional salesperson for forty five years.

Some of Rick's most impressive qualities are seen within this story. While most would project characteristics such as stubbornness and pride negatively, Rick was able to use these to his benefit in this situation. When he received an F on an essay he believed to have done better on, he reacted negatively, believing that he should have gotten a higher letter grade that accurately represented his work. As a result, he pridefully went to his professor and argued that his essay grade was incorrect, determined to get a higher grade. When he stubbornly wouldn't take no for an answer, he tired out his professor, leading her to agree to change his grade from an F to a D. Impressively, Rick was able to take these characteristics and project their use in a beneficial way, continuing to do this not only after this moment, but for most of his life as well.

The story regarding the boat trip between Rick, Pat, and Logan represents the differing mindset between various family members. This idea is similar to Diane Tye's article "When Mary Went Through the Hole: Constructing and Contesting Individual and Family Identity Through Narrative." In her article, she interviews two family members who are siblings and identifies the differences and similarities behind the same story told by both individuals. Tye analyzes how these differing perspectives connect and separate family members, how these siblings position themselves amongst each other and amongst themselves, and how the telling of these stories can lead to a sense of unity between the pair. First, she interviews Mary, who is the younger sibling who experienced the terrifying fall that made the event memorable. In the story, Mary was around three or four years old, and as she was looking down a ventilation hole in the bathroom like her brothers asked her to, she states she was pushed down into the ventilation, falling through the hole and landing on the kitchen floor. She describes herself as mistreated by her brothers,

making herself appear vulnerable. This story can make Mary feel separated by her family, explains Tye, since she feels she receives a lack of empathy and concern for her feelings. However, it can also give her a sense of unity with her family, specifically her brother Bill, since it is one of many stories she discusses with him often during their weekly phone calls. To Bill, this story has less meaning since he feels the story does not belong to him, the story belongs to Mary. Although his view of the story differs than hers, with him suggestively remembering that none of the brothers pushed her down the hole, he allows her to explain it from her own perspective, accepting that the way he uses and views stories differs from hers. The focal points in Tye's article for Mary and Bill can also be used to interpret the relationship between the three Mullen boys. The differing perspectives in the boat story help to both connect and separate family members, specifically connecting Logan and Pat due to the similarities found within their stories and separating Rick from the bunch due to his differing view. The boys position themselves against each other differently, with Logan and Pat positioning themselves against Rick and Rick positioning himself specifically against Pat due to his belief he was mocking and judging him. Finally, the classic boat story has also lead to a sense of unity among the group. In every side of the story, even though there were issues during the trip and miscommunication amongst each other, each person stated that they overall ended up enjoying their time together that day. This demonstrates that even through rough times, events like the boat story can bring a family closer together.

Overall, the creation of this project has been an extremely informative one, to say the least. I have discovered various ways to perceive and analyze the members of my own family, while also learning new information about my grandfather, who is near and dear to my heart.

The perception of my grandfather within this text is not supposed to be projected negatively, but instead supposed to help informatively understand why the Mullens use him to tell stories. His determination, persistence, and hardworking mentality lead him to being the most interesting member of our family, leaving him to be the subject of the most interesting stories. When he is around, everyone knows something good is going to happen (usually, unless you're stuck on a boat with him). Deciding to do this project on my grandfather has not only allowed me to understand him on a better level, but has collectively brought our family closer to each other through the retelling of this story and surfacing of older ones that bring back good memories.

References Cited

Baldwin, Karen. 1971. "Woof !?" A Word on Women's roles in Family Storytelling. *Women's*

Folklore, Women's Culture, ed. Rosan A. Jordan and Susan J. Kalčik, pp. 149-62.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mullen, John interviewed by Mullen, Emma. Columbus, OH. October 23rd, 2019.

Mullen, Karen interviewed by Mullen, Emma. Columbus, OH. October 23rd, 2019.

Mullen, Logan interviewed by Mullen, Emma. Cincinnati, OH. November 9th, 2019.

Mullen, Patrick interviewed by Mullen, Emma. Cincinnati, OH. November 9th, 2019.

Mullen, Patrick interviewed by Mullen, Emma. Columbus, OH. October 19th, 2019.

Mullen, Rachel interviewed by Mullen, Emma. Cincinnati, OH. November 9th, 2019.

Mullen, Rachel interviewed by Mullen, Emma. Columbus, OH. October 19th, 2019.

Tye, Diane. "When Mary Went through the Hole: Constructing and Contesting Individual and

Family Identity through Narrative." *Journal of American Folklore*, 130, no. 518 (2017):

419-437.

--	--

Tape Log 2

Time Stamp	Topics of discussion + spot transcriptions
0:00-5:32	Rick's version of the boat story
5:32-7:05	Class with Rick from Karen's point of view
7:29-9:23	Rick convincing teacher to change grade
9:23-12:13	Final exam story with Rick and Karen
12:13-19:25	"Spider-Man" story

Tape Log 3

Time Stamp	Topics of discussion + spot transcriptions
0:00-12:10	Pat's experience with Rick skiing for the first time
12:10-18:52	Logan's version of the boat story
18:52-27:00	Logan's personal boating experience with Rick
27:00- 37:27	No fish caught at this point, trying to get the boat back onto the trailer
37:27- 53:42	Catches sight of fish in the water, Logan traveling back home with Rick, fragments of random conversations
