

The Creativity

“On a personal note, I’ve enjoyed understanding Bass Reeves and how important he was to American History. It’s no wonder that we’re starting to ‘cotton to’ the man and get a statue erected. He deserves it.”

Rick Watson, Chief Operating Officer, Corrugated Specialties

“I explained to them what dry-gulch and slack-jawed was and asked them to do their best impression of both for a prize (the book itself). It was hilarious and priceless and it took several seconds to calm down our laughter. They were a great bunch!”

Linda Williams, Assistant Vice President, First National Bank

“My favorite moments were when I got the boys to dance with me while we listened to the recording of Herschel Parker singing about Bass. It’s really a toe-tapping song.”

Anita Paddock, Branch Manager, Fort Smith Public Library, and freelance writer

“I asked Mrs. Mathis if she would play the Herschel Parker CD, specifically the Bass Reeves song, which she did. I then explained who Bass Reeves was, introduced myself as a retired Arkansas State Policeman, and explained how I could relate to his job as Deputy U.S. Marshal.”

Buddy Acoach, Noon Exchange Club, Retired State Policeman

“I started out by explaining what I do, working to bring tourists here to learn about our city’s history, and how important Fort Smith is in U.S. history. I told them it’s a super cool thing to be from Fort Smith because people come here from all over the world to learn about people like Bass Reeves.”

Jennifer Boulden, of Fort Smith Convention & Visitors Bureau

“I enjoyed best getting to sing the song I had written. Ms. Duncan made the students aware of the specialness of getting to hear a song that was ‘hot off the presses’ sung by its author.”

Peter Lippincott, Potter and Owner, Mudpuppy Studios

“If I really love the book I’m reading (and I do love *Bad News for Outlaws*) I want the listeners to go away thinking, ‘What a great book!’, not necessarily what a great reader I am. I will have read it over any number of times so that I can get the rhythm of the words and know how to build excitement in the right places, know when to be quiet and calm and when to pick up speed.”

Louise Turner, Retired Fort Smith Children’s Librarian

“Bass walked 28 miles to the hideout of two brothers. The students knew where Alma Water Park is, so I told them that the walk each direction was like walking to the Water Park and back again.”

Robert Morgan, Alzheimer’s Association Volunteer

“They were amazed that Bass and Judge Parker were born only 3 months apart in 1838. (I later learned that at the time of their respective deaths they coincidentally both died of Bright’s Disease.)”

Dave Ross, retired freelance and agency writer

“I wore the garb of a schoolmarm of Bass’s era, complete with huge decorated hat. I also wore the “schoolmarm mien,” which I had remembered from watching some of my own

ancient teacher/ancestors from that era. I told about re-enactors and how they told the stories at various locations in Fort Smith, and I handed out the badges and ‘deputized’ the class members.

“I closed with distribution of the Bass Bucks and discussion of the statue, then I pulled out my Victorian change purse, which I dumped into a small pottery bowl, one I had made several years ago in a class at Peter Lippincott’s Mudpuppy Studio. I left the bowl with Ms. Britt so students could contribute their pennies later if they chose, and I left her with a ‘Life’s Worth Living . . .’ button to bestow on the best paper written in response to the ‘Character’ prompt.”

Clara Jane Rubarth, Professor Emerita of Rhetoric & Writing at University of Arkansas - Fort Smith

“One of my favorite parts was at the beginning, when I told them Bass was black in a time when that wasn’t the race to be, and he had the character to overcome any drawbacks he experienced.”

Ivy Owen, Executive Director, Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority

“We looked at a picture I had brought of Cal Whitson’s store. He was my great-grandfather and also a deputy for Judge Parker.”

Laura Whitson, of the Friends of the Fort Smith Library and a former teacher at Howard Elementary

“[We had] a little time to spend on how the Five Civilized Tribes came to be in eastern Oklahoma and the role of Fort Smith as outpost at the edge of the frontier. A little geography never hurts anyone, to my way of thinking. Even got into a little lesson, there at the end, of north, south, east and west.”

Doug Kelley, Chief Pilot for Arkansas Best Corporation and Author of “The Captain’s Wife”

“The students seemed to be impressed with Bass for being black and getting positive attention. Most of the students are black or Hispanic so in my opinion, I felt that when I discussed closing their eyes because you can’t judge ‘Right,’ they all got it. It was a big Inclusivity & Diversity moment for all of us in the room. They can’t wait to see the monument and have a field trip to the U.S. Marshals Museum.”

Michelle Cernak, Owner, Westark Plumbing

“I encouraged the students to look out for the life-size statue of Bass Reeves that is going to be located downtown, and, when it is revealed, to share their knowledge of Bass Reeves with their family and friends. Students are empowered when you challenge them to share their knowledge.”

Trish Byrd, Coordinator, Upward Bound Classic – UA Fort Smith

“I wrote a note in the book, ‘To Trusty Elementary in honor of the 2011 sixth grade,’ and signed it with the notation “as Judge Parker” and asked that they all sign the book. I think they liked that.”

Floyd Robison, Overcharge Claims Analyst, Arkansas Best Freight Corp., and “Judge Parker” for Fort Smith historical events

“Being a history buff, I would have to say that being able to read about a real person, who lived in our city, who had a great life full of character and stamina, and to see the faces light up when they heard the story, was the best part. Any chance to tell a history lesson about real events is super to me.”

Linda Clanton, Sales Representative at ABF Freight System, Inc.

“I had them stand up and raise their right hands and swear to uphold all the laws of the Indian Territory and United States of America. They also swore to be honest and respectful to others. I then told them they were Deputy U. S. Marshals now.”

Fran Hall, a Deputy Sheriff and the Administrator of the Sebastian County Juvenile Detention Center

“We had some very frank discussions about slaves, acceptance of blacks later on, and so forth. They were amazed at some of that. I also enjoyed when we all looked ‘slack-jawed’ and the teacher said they looked that way when she was teaching sometimes. We also practiced riding proud and riding lazy.”

Rick Foti, Retired Principal of Trusty Elementary and Executive Director of the Community Services Clearinghouse

“I started by introducing myself and telling them I work for the City of Fort Smith. I asked if they knew anyone who worked for the city, and explained that city employees typically pick up their trash, keep their water clean and deliver it safely to their homes, and keep the playground equipment at the parks safe. I told them people who work for the city are public servants, a lot like Bass Reeves was.”

Tracy Winchell, Economic Development Coordinator for the City of Fort Smith

“They were not aware of the statue of Bass that is being planned for Fort Smith, so I was able to share with them where it will be located and show the picture of what it will look like, and I also explained that we will have the U.S. Marshals Museum in the coming years.”

Sandra Armistead, Marketing Assistant at BancorpSouth

“The children became excited when I told them I had brought Marshall Badges for each of them, and Bass Reeves bucks. One boy exclaimed ‘I’m going to be rich!’ We all laughed at that.”

Helen Medley, Owner of Medley & Sons Autobody

“I suggested that the students might want to write their own story of Bass Reeves, or his family, using the information they’ve learned from the book. Many hands shot up saying yes, yes. I told them I’d judge the stories and the winner would get a Bass Reeves book. I showed the class my autographed copy of the book, and I told them an autographed book was as important to me as a diamond bracelet. (That maybe is an exaggeration like petting a skunk.)”

Anita Paddock, Librarian, Miller Branch, Fort Smith Public Library

“We began by telling them what we did for a living, and that we had lived in Fort Smith a long time. One of the students later asked us if we had known Bass Reeves! The rapt looks on so many of their faces were proof of what an excellent book this is.”

Scott Monroe, senior systems analyst and programmer at Data-Tronics, and his wife, Rhonda Monroe, registered nurse at Vista Health

“I started with a map of the U.S. and we talked about where Indian Territory was located. I went in costume and talked about some of the places we have in Fort Smith to visit and learn about our history.”

Genia Smith, Corporate Secretary/Manager of Arkansas Glass & Mirror Co.

“One student asked if the technology difference between the weaponry then and now was better and if it helped modern police to do their job better. I thought this question was particularly insightful, and an excellent example of how the book helped students think about the situation Bass faced.”

Kevin Lindsey, Chief of Police, Fort Smith Police Department

“We purchased 90 cookies from Paul’s Bakery in Van Buren and gave them out. The cookies looked like the badges with U.S Marshal written on them. Needless to say, that was a hit. We also raffled 2 books (1 to each grade) that we had purchased. The winners seemed really happy.”

Sal Salamone, Vice President -- Taxes, Golden Living