

BEHIND ENEMY LINES

A Review by Susanna Holstein of Sandyville

I first learned about Harriet Tubman through Ilene Evans' first CD. I enjoyed Ilene Evans' program as a *History Alive!* performer of Harriet Tubman in a dramatic first-person presentation. Evans' CD, *General Moses: Stories from the Life of Harriet Tubman* explored Tubman's role as a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad, and her many daring escapades in that role. Ilene's newest CD release, *Behind Enemy Lines: The Port Royal Experiment* took me into less familiar territory the role of Harriet Tubman in the Union Army as a scout, guide, nurse and organizer in the cause of freedom.

Behind Enemy Lines presents six glimpses into Tubman's activities in the Civil War as part of the Port Royal Experiment. She was a support person to generals Hunter and Saxton, helping in the effort to prove that freed slaves could work and support themselves on land that formerly belonged to Southern plantation owners. At the same time, Tubman worked as a nurse in Army hospitals, tending to both white and black soldiers, and served as a scout on raids and expeditions into hostile southern territory.

Although the CD does not go into detail about the Port Royal experiment itself, the descriptions of Tubman's experiences as a nurse and Army scout are fascinating. Told in first person and interspersed with snatches of spirituals, the stories are electrifyingly immediate in their imagery and impact. Who would not laugh at the picture of a woman carrying babies, a pig and a pot of rice while hurrying onto a steamboat to gain freedom? Who would be able to listen without a lump in their throat to the horrifying description of the murderous battle that claimed most of the 54th Massachusetts unit under Colonel Robert Gould Shaw?

With story, song, tears and laughter Ilene Evans brings to sharp relief the life of a visionary and determined woman 150 years ago when war, freedom, slavery and ideals fought for survival on American soil. Evans includes a relaxed discussion of five key questions about Tubman's life that provide further insight into this remarkable historic figure. Knowing a bit about Tubman in advance will increase appreciation for this presentation and it is probably best for children from 4th grade and up who have at least some knowledge of the Civil War and the role of slavery in that conflict. The arrangement of the CD into short segments allows teachers and parents to prepare students with historical background either before or after each segment, and the discussion at the end provides further exploration opportunities.

This is not an "easy listening" experience; you will not go away feeling lightly entertained. Rather, you will be enriched by the story of how one black woman with a debilitating illness strove with strength, compassion and often terrible dignity to gain freedom and fairness for so many.

Available from: Voices from the Earth * www.vfte.org * info@vfte.org * 304-463-4561

UPCOMING TELLABRATIONS!

WVSG Members will be participating in Tellabration! National Storytelling Celebrations along the east coast!

November 6: Gluck Theater, Mountain Lair, West Virginia University 5:00

Jane Gilchrist, Jason Burns, Susanna Holstein, Rich Knoblich, June Riffle, Jo Ann Dadisman, and Suzi Whaples

November 20: Gov. Hulett C. Smith Theater, Tamarack Arts Center 2:00 - 3:30

Susanna "Granny Sue" Holstein, William Scott Hill, Sue Atkinson, and Danny McMillion
For more information, call (304) 438-7404, evenings best.

November 21: Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts
Gail Herman

