

Prof. Bruce Ballenger  
English 401/401G  
Fall 2015

### Pitch Your First Story

Come to class on Sept. 29 prepared to pitch your first radio essay project to the entire class. You'll have about five minutes to do so. This will be a verbal presentation but you'll also write up a 200-250 word summary. Also included a focusing statement, a one-sentence summary of the idea. I'll collect these after class. Here's a pitch I drafted you might use as a model.

I've lived for twenty years in Boise's North End, an historic neighborhood that was platted at the turn of the century. It was one of Boise's first neighborhoods, well before the automobile was a dominant influence on residential design. Unlike modern subdivisions, in the North End garages were either non-existent, or tucked behind the house on an alley. This arrangement—the alley and its garage—is making a comeback as part of something called New Urbanism, and is now a feature of several new major housing developments in the city. What interests me, however, is the alley itself as an unusual social space. In the North End, the alley is where houses show their backsides, and in a way, homeowners do, too. It's where you put your garbage cans, and the stuff you don't know what to do with. Backyards, typically private spaces, might be visible. There's an informality and honesty about alleys and what they allow us to see about people. The alley is also a place where you have a different kind of relationship with your neighbors. Last year, Frank Dunne died. Frank, 91, lived across the alley from me with his wife Wilma. We had an alley friendship—occasional encounters over fences, often while taking out the trash. This story is about Frank but it's also about the alley as a place where people let their guard down. Lately, it's also a place where neighbors come to party, and even sometimes to mourn.

**Focusing statement:** This is a story about alleys in Boise's North End, and how they cultivate a different relationship between neighbors, one that makes the design of older neighborhoods like this one worth recreating.

Keep in mind some of the qualities of a good audio story (and in some ways, any good story).

- The narrator has a stake in the topic being explored. It is something he or she wants to explore because it might matter somehow.
- There's a story in the situation. It try to say something larger about its subject.
- It incorporates anecdotes and reflection.
- There are characters. You might be the character or there may be others.
- There may be conflict or problem that these characters are struggling with. These characters may change and come to realizations.

These stories may ultimately be between 3 to 15 minutes, using as many soundtracks as you feel is appropriate.