



DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

StoryMasters Starts the New Year Right

by Margaret Mitchell

With its first meeting of the year on January 10, StoryMasters set a high bar for the months to come. The speakers brought their best, giving a variety of presentations for the audience's enjoyment. Here is a summary:

Mallery McMurtrey, in *My Journey to High Performance Leadership*, gave an inspiring report on the success of her HPL project. Leading a team of Toastmasters, she conducted a Youth Leadership Program for students enrolled in the Coalition for Engaged Education. Acknowledging that some of her original plans for the workshop hit some snags, she felt the project overall was successful. In addition to providing two groups of 10-15 students with valuable public speaking and leadership skills, she developed as a leader and gained the courage to try things she wouldn't have thought of doing before. Informative and inspiring!

Pieter Severynen told a delightful Polish folktale, *Misfortune*, about a poor man and his wife who lived next door to a rich man. The poor couple had no food, money or warmth from the cold because Misfortune lived with them and followed them wherever they went. Through a series of twists and turns, the poor man rids himself of Misfortune, and his fortunes change for the better. Misfortune then moves in with his neighbor, the rich man, which leads to the decline of his fortunes and the moral of the tale: Riches are no impediment to Misfortune. Delightful!

Anna Ziss-Patton, in *What Is a Name*, gave a light-hearted talk on the various names she has carried from birth to the present. At one time or another, she has answered to Cookie, Carol, AZ, AZP and more. She noted that her mother's name had been Anglicized when she arrived at Ellis Island; and the family's surname had been shortened from Zissnewsky to Ziss, breaking their connection to ethnic roots. Yet she does not lament the disconnection from ethnic and family roots. Instead, she sees it as an opportunity to create her own history and future. Thought-provoking and entertaining!

Cynthia Moore, in *No More Roses* painted a tender and nostalgic picture of her youth. She opened the story by describing getting up early to attend the funeral of her best friend, then took us back in time to describe what it was like to grow up in the South Los Angeles environment she and her friend enjoyed many years ago. It was a time where there was no bullying, people looked out for and trusted each other, and 50 cents could buy you a day at the swimming pool and a refreshing, striped popsicle. Absolutely charming!

Camille Miller transformed a children's nursery rhyme into adult entertainment in her presentation, *The Unabridged Version*. In this version of Hey Diddle Diddle, dishes and kitchen utensils are sentient beings who confess their love, get involved in love triangles, escape from the kitchen through a doggy door, and get run over by a motor bike. Hilarious and highly creative!

Filling functionary roles were: **Miyo Yamauchi**, Toastmaster; **Lin Van Gelder**, General Evaluator; **Jacki Williams-Jones**, Timer; **Antoinette Byron**, Wordmaster/Grammarian; **Aprille Isham**, Videographer; and **Jill Vanderweit**, **Catherine Magruder**, **Liz Smith**, **Tina Tomiyama**, and **Margaret Mitchell**, Evaluators.

Next meeting is February 14. ([RSVP FROM HERE](#))

PAST EVENTS

2021 just started, but StoryMasters is already in full swing! Thank you all for supporting our members and friends!

Think Like Google Workshops

Nope, it was not a storytelling event. It was a workshop to learn about Google products! As technology has been constantly changing, the information that we learned just a few months ago may not be relevant any more. On January 16 and 23, StoryMasters and our friends upgraded our "so 2020" knowledge to the latest and learned some new tricks. Do we think like Google now? Well, maybe not, but Google certainly looks less scary!

Turbine Arts Collective — Mosaic Night

An incredible night with music, poetry, personal stories, and performance. We celebrated joy, memory, humor, sadness, and the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. From our group, **Miyo Yamauchi** told her *I Hate 'Hello Kitty'* story, entertaining the audience with her wry humor.

And guess who made a major debut on January 20?



Our Champion, Catherine!

Catherine Magruder wows 'em at SAC's Tall Tales night.

One of the "lemonade" aspects of pandemic-era meetings on Zoom has been watching a number of StoryMasters and friends, following President Miyo's lead, appearing on Zoom shows such as *Strong Words*, *The Otter Story Hour*, *Tales by the Sea*, *The Antidote*, and the *Turbine Arts Collective*, to name a few. When the Storytelling Association of California approved our nominee **Catherine Magruder** to represent StoryMasters at SAC's Genre Storytelling night on January 20, it became Catherine's turn to appear on the big stage, telling her original tall tale, *Angus Haggis*.

Catherine was the last of seven speakers, many of them long-time regulars on the SAC stage, and this was a professional (paid) gig for her. We heard amusing tall tales, many told in a sort of cowpoke drawl, and a couple of downright scary ones. Meanwhile a quick check of the participants list showed that Catherine, all by herself, was responsible for more than a quarter of the viewers that night, thanks to her fan club: Anna, Aprille, Camille, Cynthia, Jill, Jim Somerville, Kathy Falco, Mallery, Margaret, Miyo, Roberta Shintani and me.

And when Catherine finally appeared — oh my! She looked enchanting in her bright tartan scarf. Her sound and lighting were professional. She knew her story by heart and she stood up to speak so we could appreciate her body language and gestures. Her Scottish dialect was authentic, with plenty of vocal variety as she skillfully wove her tale about the heroic giant Angus, his pregnant wife, the worried midwife and the London doctor whose jokes . . . no, no, stop me, I don't want to spoil the story for anyone who hasn't yet heard it.

What a delight it was, and how proud you made us, Catherine!

If you missed it, check out SAC's YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEqfz1Jgy5deH-UtUnUsgCA>. Past Genre Storytelling shows and Stories in Living Color events are posted.

BREAKING NEWS: There's another SAC Genre Storytelling show coming up on February 17. The theme is "romantic stories" and we just heard today that our nominee **Kathy Falco** has been confirmed! Please register now: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sac-story-swap-genre-storytelling-series-romantic-stories-tickets-124353375293>. It's free, donations are optional and go to the tellers.

Have you visited the "Events" page <https://thestorymasters.org/events/> on our StoryMasters website lately? Miyo does an admirable job of curating it — be sure to check it regularly! Psst, I hear Miyo's appearing in *Bold Faced Secret on January 29* and *The Otter Story Hour on February 1*. I'll see you there!



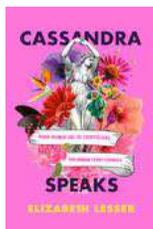
— Tina Tomiyama

UPCOMING EVENTS

As Tina mentioned, our event calendar is filled with so many interesting events. Here are our hand-picked storytelling events that our members and friends are involved in. Please check them out!

- Jan 29** **Bold Faced Secret — Going to the Distance** 7:30 PM PST/ 10:30 PM EST
<https://thestorymasters.org/events/bold-faced-secret-20210129/>
No RSVP is required.
- Feb 01** **The Otter Story Hours — What I Did for Love** 7:00 PM PST/ 10:00 PM EST
<https://thestorymasters.org/events/the-otter-story-hours-what-i-did-for-love/>
Facebook live — you can watch it without a FB account
- Feb 17** **SAC Story Swap Genre Storytelling Series — Romantic Stories** 7:00 PM PST/ 10:00 PM EST
<https://thestorymasters.org/events/sac-story-swap-genre-storytelling-series-romantic-stories/>
- Feb 19** **Surviving Ty – Tales of a Well-Intended Restless Soul (Ty Fance solo)** 5:00 PM PST/ 8:00 PM EST
<https://thestorymasters.org/events/surviving-ty-tales-of-a-well-intended-restless-soul/>

Check out more events at: <https://thestorymasters.org/>



BOOK REPORT

Cassandra Speaks by Elizabeth Lesser

by Margaret Mitchell

I recently read Elizabeth Lesser's *Cassandra Speaks*. What a pleasure it was to discover this fresh, insightful book on the power of women storytellers to change the world!

The central premise of Ms. Lesser's book is that cultures everywhere are shaped by their origin stories, myths, religious parables, and other so-called "great" literature. However, because these stories are overwhelmingly created by men, they present a uniquely male perspective on "women and men, power and war, sex and love." She points to Eve in the Bible; and Pandora, Cassandra and Galatea in Greek mythology, as examples of women whose heroic qualities are either ignored or misrepresented. In each of these well-known stories, the women are variously portrayed as weak, fickle, evil or untrustworthy—and all are considered inferior to men.

But what if women had written these stories? Would Eve have been portrayed as the original "woke" woman, filled with intellectual curiosity, bravely exploring to see the world for what it is? Would Cassandra, the prophetess, have been applauded for her courage in continuing to speak the truth, even when no one believed her? Would Pandora have been heralded as the heroine who discovered the open jar and quickly closed the lid so that Hope would remain to help humans cope with the difficulties of mortal existence?

Lest we think modern culture has outgrown such tales, the author reminds us of the popularity of such stories as *Cinderella*, *My Fair Lady* and *Pretty Woman*. The main female character in each of these stories needed the assistance and approval of a superior male to raise their status in society.

The author points out that while old myths, religious parables and origin stories are decidedly misogynistic, other works by "dead white men" are equally so. Included in these are works by Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Saint Paul, Machiavelli, Karl Marx, and the fathers of American democracy, to name a few. Additionally, these admired thinkers and authors promoted ideas of leadership based upon competition, deception, domination, aggression and war.

Women are certainly not immune to such destructive tendencies. But the author observes that women's first instinct when faced with conflict is to seek collaboration and cooperation.

Cassandra Speaks is far more than a book about the power of stories. Ms. Lesser uses her superb storytelling skills, as well as insight into her own life experiences, to prescribe ways in which women can begin to heal and change the world. The first step is to begin the process of inner change. Thus, inner change is essential to freeing oneself from the corrupting influence of the old stories. The next step is to become an agent of cultural change by using pen or computer to write one's own stories.

Cassandra Speaks is thought-provoking and makes excellent reading. I highly recommend this book to storytellers of all genders, as well as anyone who wishes to gain a better understanding of how stories not only shape the world, but also influence how we see and manage our relationships to our fellow human beings.

MEET OUR NEWEST STORYMASTER

Camille Miller

Camille got her foot in StoryMasters's virtual door from the East Bay last October. Since then, we kept seeing her everywhere — not only at StoryMasters' meetings but also other storytelling events — and we were instantly hooked with her storytelling skills. Her stories are always highly original and hilarious.

Welcome to StoryMasters, Camille! We're looking forward to hearing more of your stories!



STORYTELLING STUB

Get Twisted ~ Develop Clear Articulation!

by Anna Ziss-Patton

Excelling as a storyteller requires many skills. Of course, the ability to craft a story that engages and enchants the audience is primary. But to be a truly powerful storyteller, delivery is central.

Actors, singers, public speakers, politicians, and storytellers all use tongue twisters to improve their pronunciation, fluency, and vocal dexterity. Practicing these short, snappy sentences can even help storytellers and Toastmasters deal with those pesky mouth clicks, sharp S sibilance sounds, and plosive pops when pronouncing T, P, K, D, G, or B.

Perhaps best of all, tongue twisters help develop clear articulation. Articulation is the formation of clear vocal expression and distinct sounds which can be varied with tone, volume, pitch, and quality. All of this, of course, creates a more professional and exciting storytelling experience for your audience.

When doing tongue twisters, you don't need to be fast. Start off slowly and aim for clarity. Build up speed as you master each one. Proficiency will bring confidence in your speaking. And then, when you're ready to speak publicly, use tongue twisters before your performance to prepare and warm up your voice.

Below is a selection of classic tongue twisters to try. Try each one 8 times, perfecting and speeding up as you go. Some are quite challenging, but they are all beneficial. Have fun!

1. Red leather, yellow leather
2. Which wristwatches are Swiss wristwatches?
3. She sells seashells by the seashore, and the shells she sells are seashells.
4. Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked. If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?
5. How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?
6. You know New York, you need New York, you know you need unique New York.
7. Friday's five fresh fish specials
8. Fuzzy Wuzzy was a bear. Fuzzy Wuzzy had no hair. Fuzzy Wuzzy wasn't fuzzy, was he?
9. Rubber baby buggy bumpers
10. Nine nice night nurses nursing nicely
11. Thin sticks, thick bricks
12. If a dog chews shoes, whose shoes does he choose?
13. Amidst the mists and fiercest frosts / With barest wrists and stoutest boats / He thrusts his fists against the post / And still insists he sees the ghosts.

And finally, just for fun, but be careful who you're with when you're trying this one:

14. I slit the sheet, the sheet I slit, and on the slitted sheet I sit.

WORD GAME

Can you use a simpler words, please?

Let's play a little game now. First, I'll explain how a website works.

A domain name is an identification string that defines a realm of administrative autonomy, authority or control within the Internet. Hosting providers allocate space on a web server for a website to store its files. DNS is the Domain Name System, which is a hierarchical and decentralized naming system for computers, services, or other resources connected to the Internet or a private network.

How many of you rolled your eyes? Now, let me rephrase the gibberish.

Hosting providers are like landlords. When you need space, you sign a contract with them. Depending on your budget, you may get an apartment, house, or mansion, which determines how many friends and furniture you can have in the space. Once you get a place, you register your address. DNS plays the role to connect you with the address so that your friends can find you.

It's easier to comprehend the concept, isn't it? When you talk about something technical, you need to put it simply without using technical jargon. Your "common languages" may not be so common to others.

The Up-Goer Five Text Editor is an online tool to encourage you to use only the 1,000 most used words. My sample above uses fifteen (15!!!) non-permitted words (hosting, providers, landlords, contract, depending, budget, mansion, determines, furniture, register, address, DNS, role, connect, address).

Try one of your stories. I'm sure that you'll find it challenging as well as fun.

EDITOR'S NOTE

A Little Change May Turn Your Bad Day into a Good One!

I gasped when I saw the numbers on my scale a few months ago. It was six months after I started working from home. I knew that I would lose muscle mass to some extent, but the decline of numbers like bone mass and muscle strength was beyond my imagination. It was a sharp drop — an almost 90 degree drop! I remembered a trainer's words — non-athletes would start losing their muscles two weeks after stopping exercise. No wonder I lost so much strength!

So...I took it out on my geeky friend who introduced the smart scale to me. He always has compelling reasons and answers for everything — from Apple products to sitcoms. About a year ago, he convinced me to learn and track my body fat, BMI, bone mass...and everything! It was fascinating to see my numbers in all those categories...until it wasn't.

I asked him 1) if he noticed any issues like I did, and 2) if he did, were there any solutions. Of course, he had noticed the number drop way before me. The solution was easy, he said. "Throw your smart scale away!"

Huh? Was he serious? He was! He didn't throw his scale away literally, though. He put it away and bought a basic scale, which tells him only his weight, because the smart scale made him depressed. Now, he's back to being his happy self again.

Did I throw my scale away? No, I didn't. But his solution helped me see things from a different angle.

Come to think of it, every step counts. I used to take a bus to work, which forced me to walk to the bus stop. At work, I had to take stairs to go to the bathroom, which happened more than once a day. And I used to go to the gym a couple of times a week. Everything came to a halt in mid March, 2020. Now that I work in my single room apartment, everything can be done within 10 steps.

As my lifestyle has changed, I just need to change my perspectives. Years ago, I didn't even care about muscle mass or BMI and I was totally fine with it. What I'm saying now is that those numbers are still important, but I shouldn't be obsessed with them. When I stopped worrying so much, I started enjoying the scenery again while walking.

A little change in perspectives may turn your bad day into a good one. Now, it's time to take a walk!

— Miyo Yamauchi

