



StoryMasters: The Judicious Art of Stories

I thought I would be the first person on StoryMasters' Zoom screen when I signed in Sunday at 2:45 PM. No, I wasn't the first, nor the second, not even the third. Our Sergeant-at-Arms, **Jill Vanderweit**, was already chatting with our members and guests. *Oh, it is going to be a wonderful afternoon*, I thought. And how right I was. StoryMasters had another *immense* meeting on August 8, 2021.

Jon White – *When White Ain't Right*

Jon White had never thought his white skin color was a problem until he fell in love with a gorgeous woman with beautiful dark skin. Their interracial love seemed to be denied by the entire rainbow coalition. His story took place in 1998, when he stood at the altar of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Central Los Angeles to baptize their baby. In spite of his doubts and despair after feeling stared at and judged for years, what he saw that day was the congregation's rejoicing and their unalloyed happiness. Although Jon's story happened over 20 years ago, it still hits the crux of today's issues. At the same time, it makes us feel hopeful.

Camille Miller – *Thirteen Years*

Tyrone was a homeless guy begging for a cigarette on the street, and one day, **Camille Miller** saw two females sitting with him near the bus stop. When she saw their teary eyes, she wondered if they were his relatives, which made her think of her own situation. Thirteen years ago, Camille's mother – even though she had a place to call home – decided to pull the plug from reality and live on the street. Camille's soul-stirring and heartbreaking story moved us to tears. It reminded us that sometimes, we need to suffer the choices others make. When this happens, there is nothing much we can do other than watch, with love, from afar.

Rick Hall – *Lessons Learned from a Silverback Gorilla*

At the age of 13, **Rick Hall** knew what girls wanted (*yeah, right*), but he didn't fit any of the "profiles" girls were looking for. When the whole 4-H Club of Greene County was going to the Saint Louis Zoo, Rick thought it was his chance to meet new girls and prove he was not a loser. That's where he encountered a silverback gorilla and learned what girls really wanted – a guy who makes them laugh (*Amen to that!*). His story made the audience roar with laughter the whole time. Oh, humor is so underrated, isn't it? Check out his delightful podcast, *So Sez Rick*. (If you see me laughing on the street like a crazy person, I'm probably listening to one of his stories.)

Bertram Reed – *Choose Your Word, Change Your Life!*

We were treated by a contest speech for the 2021 World Championship of Public Speaking (WCPS). After being fired for the third time, **Bertram Reed** felt broken and abandoned like a penny on the sidewalk. When he started seeking answers, his mentor told him to choose a word that changes his life and make it his own mantra. *Courage* was the word Bertram chose. As the word began to overpower his doubt and fear, he saw changes coming. Eight months later, he was invited to speak at the 2019 Tree Lighting Ceremony at the White House. His inspiring story taught us how powerful a word can be. What word would you choose to change your life?

Antoinette Byron – *How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?*

Antoinette Byron sang songs beautifully throughout a story about Maria. Maria's life was full of predicaments. Her first problem was losing both parents when she was still a baby. Although she was adopted by relatives, her childhood was fearful because of her uncle's violent and abusive behavior. As a bright and smart lady, like Maria from *The Sound of Music*, she tried to solve her problems, but every time things started looking good, something terrible happened to her. As time went on, health issues started attacking her. When Antoinette revealed that Maria was her mother, who is now in hospice care in Australia, the audience teared up.

Each story was like a distinct stamp. Each storyteller had their own unique voice; yet, their stories were interwoven with seamless complexity. What a fine way to spend a Sunday afternoon!

Meeting functionaries included Toastmaster **Anna Ziss-Patton**, General Evaluator **Tina Tomiyama**, Timer **Miyo Yamauchi**, Wordmaster/Grammarians **Harold Gee**, Videographer **Mallery McMurtrey**, and Evaluators **Aprille Isham**, **Pieter Severynen**, **Kathy Garr**, **Lee Amatangelo**, and **Lin Van Gelder**.

Next meeting is September 12. (GUESTS, [RSVP FROM HERE](#))

NEW STORYMASTERS

Arihant (Andrew) M.

Arihant (Andrew) M., MBA, PMP, CISSP, is a global IT leader, public speaker, career and life coach living in Southern California for 20+ years. He holds a Bachelor's in Computer Science & Engineering, and an MBA from University of California, Irvine. He holds many certifications such as PMP, CISSP, MBTI, etc. In his spare time, he enjoys teaching, volunteering, growing fruit trees, and traveling the world. He can be reached on Twitter @Arihant_M



UPCOMING STORYTELLING EVENTS

Many interesting storytelling concerts and workshops are coming up. Check them out on [our event page!](#)

Aug 18 SAC Story Swap Genre Storytelling Series ~ Margaret Mitchell

<https://thestorymasters.org/events/sac-story-swap-genre-storytelling-series-personal-stories/>

7:00 PM PDT / 10:00 AM EDT
Category: Storytelling concert
Location: Zoom
Cost: \$0 - \$15

Every month, Storytelling Association of California (SAC) picks a different genre and invites various storytelling groups to share their stories. The genre for this month is “personal stories” and our own **Margaret Mitchell** will represent StoryMasters!



Aug 22 The Winner ~ M. J. Kang

<https://thestorymasters.org/events/the-winner-m-j-kang/>

5:30 PM PDT / 8:00 PM EDT
Category: Solo Show (Fringe)
Location: Virtual
Cost: \$15

Koreans don't believe in therapy. They're tough. They're winners. M.J. Kang proves she's a winner, too. But when an everyday activity turns into a painful encounter, she doesn't know how to win any more...



Aug 29 Bridgeport PechaKucha – Vol. 11 “Larger Than Life”

<https://thestorymasters.org/events/pechakucha-larger-than-life/>

2:30 PM PDT / 5:30 PM EDT
Category: Visual Storytelling
Location: Hybrid (CT)
Cost: Free

PechaKucha (Japanese for “chit chat”) is the world's fastest-growing storytelling platform, used by millions around the globe. 20 slides. 20 seconds of commentary per slide. That's it. Simple. Engaging. [Kamishibai \(paper play\) - the origin of this visual storytelling form](#)



Aug 31 I Am series from Storytellers Project - I Am Asian

Mark your calendar and stay tuned for more details!

4:00 PM PDT / 7:00 PM EDT
Category: Storytelling
Location: Virtual – Websites, Facebook, YouTube
Cost: Free

The best way to understand someone is to listen to their story. Told in their own words, about their lived experiences. Join **USA TODAY** for an hour of true, first-person stories celebrating the ways race and ethnicity weave through American identities. Guess what? **Miyo Yamauchi** is one of the tellers!



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

Disclaimer: Events are posted as a service to our members, friends and the storytelling community. Posting is not an endorsement.

A STORY TO READ

Hyperbole and A Half

This story is so adorable that I can't keep it to myself. Not only the story itself but also the illustrations are delightful! I'm sure it'll make you smile, too.

Enjoy [Hyperbole and A Half!](#)



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT IN RECENT EVENTS

Strive for Excellence ~ Storytelling Workshop

I may sound bragging...because I am! StoryMasters presented another invaluable storytelling workshop, "Create Compelling and Memorable Messages Through Storytelling" at District 1 Toastmasters Leadership Institute (TLI) on July 17.

Trainer **Lee Amatangelo**, presenters **Camille Miller** and **Margaret Mitchell**, moderator **Mallery McMurtrey**, and tech support **Tina Tomiyama** wowed the attendees with their abundant knowledge and beautiful collaborated work.



Lee gave us comprehensive explanations about the art of storytelling. Camille presented her beautiful and compelling story, "Big Mama," which hit all the points Lee made earlier. Then, Margaret Mitchell explained "story arc" and "character arc," using Camille's story. Mallery moderated the Q&A masterfully and Tina controlled the PowerPoint slides with ease. Their delightful energy made the audience feel welcomed and encouraged to speak. When an event is big like this, it usually comes with unexpected challenges. TLI was no exception. Regardless, they handled challenges professionally and enthusiastically. Over fifty people attended and some of them stayed for the both sessions although the second session was a repetition.

After the workshop, I interviewed Lee about his experience.

How did you feel about your first workshop as StoryMasters?

I was greatly honored and appreciative that this esteemed club put faith in me to deliver the workshop. Because of that, I assured myself that I would deliver because I was not just representing me, I was representing this club. When a team formed to be part of the workshop, that made it much more enjoyable and the end product was much better than if I did it all myself. The collaboration effort stood out to me as the most valuable aspect I took away from the experience.

Were you nervous, excited, comfortable, or all the above?

I never get nervous before presenting in front of an audience. I view the audience as a blank canvas that I am going to paint a picture on for them. I am always willing to change up my speech if I see that what I had prepared is not reaching them. I always have additional material at the ready. I am excited to deliver my message to them and if I believe I was successful, then I am satisfied. The speech is always for the audience, never the speaker; that is the rule that I follow.

When the technical glitch made the first session shorter than scheduled, were you panicked?

No, I knew we could use most of the 15 minute break, as it only takes 30 seconds to leave one room and go to another in Zoom. I didn't faze me at all. When the planned end time came, I suggested Margaret deliver her segment, as we knew it would only take about 8 minutes. We still had 6 minutes to wrap up and one minute to close. Never sweat as a presenter when issues arise that are not under your control. That glitch was the facilities area not the presenters. We handled it gracefully and professionally, and still completed our material in time.

What was your most favorite moment?

My most favorite moment of any presentation is audience interaction: polling of the overall audience and specific questions to specific members in the audience. This is how we really gauge what the audience knows, thinks, and feels as the presentation unfolds before them. I really liked hearing the comments on Camille's speech because they showed us [StoryMasters] how the outside world views a great speech filled with stories. (Camille and I worked on that speech for many months and in the process, I was able to teach Camille speaking and storytelling techniques. As you can see, she is an amazing student. But her speeches come from her, from her heart, her experiences, and her creativity. I just help shape them.)

What were the challenges?

I take each moment as it comes. I think of worst-case scenarios prior to presenting but we were ready from the moment Tina had to take over the operation of the Powerpoint. Even with the technical glitch during the first session, we still completed the presentation for that session in time. The team had put so much effort, energy, and expertise into the presentation prior to the workshop, we did not have to worry about any issues with the Powerpoint itself. That was a big deal. We all got to stay focused on delivering our material while being able to focus on our audience. This is how it should be done. I was very impressed with the StoryMasters members who participated. This is my favorite Toastmasters club of all time. I'll be a member till my end.

How did you feel afterwards? Exhausted, satisfied, or even more energized?

Whenever I speak, whether in-person or on Zoom, I continually have a dialog with my audience with my eyes. On Zoom, I always use Gallery Mode when I am speaking so that I can see the faces/eyes of my audience. I could see that our presentation was very

informative, educational, entertaining, and overall very professionally crafted and delivered. I felt we had more than accomplished our goal so for that I felt very satisfied and energized.

Did you learn anything new?

Every time I do a zoom meeting, I learn something new – from dealing with technical glitches to the audience wanting a PowerPoint presentation to help them follow along. As we have all learned, crafting and delivering a speech/story for a zoom meeting is very different than for an in-person meeting.

I thought the plant behind you was a nice touch. Do you always set up like that? Or did Tina's previous comment about your gray background make you try something different?

That was all due to Tina's comment. I am still experimenting with my background and lighting. Initially I draped different colored material behind me but it looked weird so instead I went with the plant that has really shiny vivid red flowers and shiny dark green leaves (it looks plastic but it is real) and had it placed offset to one side.



"For me, the biggest take-away of the Workshop was the **collaboration** with fellow club members (whom I am still just getting to know) to produce a very successful PowerPoint presentation and an overall professionally delivered workshop," he smiled.

Thank you, Lee, for your enthusiasm and professionalism! Bravo, team! You all made StoryMasters proud!

What our attendees said...

I liked how comprehensive the presentation was with its attention to detail and documents that listed important information in a concise way. I also liked that there were a few different presenters, along with a speech presentation to illustrate points.

Thanks for welcoming me as an audience member for this invaluable opportunity.

J.F.

Mr. Lee Amatangelo gave a most interesting and informative presentation on the building blocks of storytelling. His presentation had a simplicity that was captivating.

Toastmasters could use his presentation as the gold standard for constructing a meaningful story.

Mallery your helpful cheerful presence enhanced the program.

H.G.

I really enjoyed learning and going deeper with the art of storytelling. It is certainly something I will incorporate more of in all my speeches.

It was great to be around knowledgeable individuals working in and their craft.

B.R.

Your presentation was a delight! It was extraordinary and extremely well-planned and presented! I enjoyed how you incorporated and delivered the ingredients necessary for an amazing program.

R.G.

SAC Story Swap Genre Storytelling Series — Humorous & Laughing Stories

This month's genre for the Storytelling Association of California (SAC) Story Swap Genre Storytelling Series was Humorous & Laughing Stories and **Miyo Yamauchi** entertained the audience with her "romantic" story, *Love for Joe's*.

The genre for the next month is Personal Stories and **Margaret Mitchell** will tell her story. The registration is now open.

[Click here to RSVP](#)



Stories in Living Color — Panel Discussion

Stories in Living Color, a project of the SAC, conducted an inspiring panel discussion at the National Storytelling Network (NSN) Conference on June 22. The panelists shared their collaborating story craft process, which was fascinating. Guess who moderated the Q&A session! **Tina Tomiyama**! If you know her, you know how it went already. Oh, her facilitating skills were exquisite!



STORYTELLING STUB

Everything is Science. Even Humor!

I sort of knew that science was behind even humor. Every reaction has a reason – a reason why the audience laughs, the timing of the laugh, how long they laugh, how the laughing wave goes up and down, etc. Although I knew, I've been playing and adjusting it by ear. Then I learned the existence of Humor Research Lab (HuRL)! Whaaaaat? I know! That's what I said when I heard it for the first time. The Benign Violation Theory is one of their research theories:

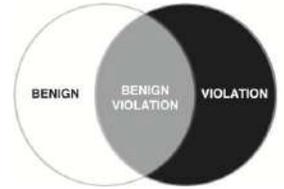
According to the theory, humor occurs when and only when three conditions are satisfied: (1) a situation is a violation, (2) the situation is benign, and (3) both perceptions occur simultaneously. For example, play fighting and tickling, which produce laughter in humans (and other primates), are benign violations because they are physically threatening but harmless attacks.

A violation refers to anything that threatens one's beliefs about how the world should be. That is, something seems threatening, unsettling, or wrong. From an evolutionary perspective, humorous violations likely originated as threats to physical well-being (e.g., the attacks that make up tickling, play fighting), but expanded to include threats to psychological well-being (e.g., insults, sarcasm), including behaviors that break social norms (e.g., strange behaviors, flatulence), cultural norms (e.g., unusual accents, most scenes from the movie *Borat*), linguistic norms (e.g., puns, malapropisms), logic norms (e.g., absurdities, non-sequiturs), and moral norms (e.g., disrespectful behavior, bestiality).

Whether you agree with the theory or not, check the lab and their reports. You may discover new findings!

References:

- [The Humor Code](#)
- [Benign Violations: Making Immoral Behavior Funny](#)
- [Psychological Science](#)



EDITOR'S NOTE

You're the Only One Who Knows Your World!

Has anybody told you that they didn't "get" a part of your story although everything was perfectly clear to you? That's because not everybody knows your world entirely. We need to be conscious about what people know and what they don't.

After being postponed for one year, the Olympics finally happened. There were countless challenges and troubles besides the pandemic even before the event. Then, as the Olympians started landing in Japan, I started hearing questions and complaints.

When I saw video of an Irish gymnast, Rhys McClenaghan, jumping up and down on his bed at the Olympic Village, I wondered why. Soon, I learned that there was a rumor about cardboard bed frames being used in the Village for "anti-intimacy" purposes (in order to prevent athletes from spreading the virus) and he was testing the bed to prove the rumor wrong.

A little after that, I heard another complaint — the A/C remote controls were only in Japanese and the athletes didn't know how to operate them. (*I assume there were instructions somewhere, but that's another story.*)

I could understand where those claims and questions came from. If I were an Olympian, I might've complained, too. I'm sure they were expecting to receive impeccable service and goods from Japan. But here is the truth. Japan is still recovering from the nuclear disaster of March 2011, even after 10 years, and they've been making an effort to improve sustainability. When Tokyo was picked as the venue, they set a goal to make 99% of goods for the Olympics recyclable or sustainable, so the cardboard bed frames plan started way before the pandemic. The looks might be deceiving, but each athlete received a mattress individually customized for his or her own competition, height, weight, and muscle build, which was a first in Olympics history. On top of that, all the bedding was recyclable. The A/Cs will be donated to schools in disaster areas soon – that's why they needed to keep the remote controls in Japanese. Even the medals were made of used phones and computers.

Probably those who live in Japan knew behind-the-scenes stories and understood their reasons for each decision, but most of us don't.

Nobody knows your world unless you let others know about it.

I think Japan missed an opportunity to tell their stories. Had they done so, people might've been more understanding and appreciative. Okay, okay, I hear you. Japan has had a lot (I mean, A LOT!) on its plate. What they accomplished was beyond remarkable. Now, I will stop nitpicking and applaud the athletes, volunteers, and organizers – because, you know, I don't really know their world, after all.

— Miyo Yamauchi

