



DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters



Listening to Memento Stories...

Our second Sunday fell on Super Bowl Sunday this year. As you know, the Super Bowl is a big deal in the U.S., but this year was even more special for Los Angelenos because it happened right here at the *new* SoFi Stadium in Inglewood! LA hosted the first Super Bowl in 1967 and the last time was 1993. Los Angelenos being excited would be an understatement. Everybody was ecstatic! Considering the low attendance, did we change the date? Nope! We still had more than half of the membership and a few guests, and we did have a pleasant afternoon together. Interestingly enough, each story had treasured mementos, which happened to be the Word of the Day.

Antoinette Byron – Always remember a heart that is breaking sighs for affection and not for gold

Antoinette Byron paid a tribute to her late father, Anthony George Byron, who passed away last October. Calling Antoinette “Miss Muffet” and her sister the “Dear Little Soul,” he never lost his sense of humor even when he was in a bad place, like being mugged or sick. Listening to her story, we could see her resemblance to her father. Antoinette is funny, wise, and kind. And she’s great at making up stories on the spot. The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree, does it?

Camille Miller – Sit for a While

Camille Miller’s best friends were her dolls. She loved playing with them when she was a kid, but one day, her mother told her to go outside and make real friends. That’s when she learned how to pop a wheelie on her banana seat bike, catch tadpoles in the willow creek, and not come home until the street lights came on. Sharing a few anecdotes of different times and places, she taught us how important it is to take our time and connect with others. When was the last time you took time to connect with others and listen to their stories?

Bharat Sangekar – The Ultimate Regret

If you ask a dying person, their ultimate regret is often that they didn’t have the courage to live life true to themselves by following their dreams and shaping their destiny, **Bharat Sangekar** told us. He was always motivated, even when he was small, and he didn’t understand why his older sister Bobby didn’t follow his way to success. Unlike his perfect report card, hers was always read “can do better.” When a car accident took Bobby’s life away, the ultimate regret hit Bharat. The ultimate regret for the living person left behind is that they were not more kind to their loved ones on the journey with them. His story reminded us to treasure our time with our family and friends.

Miyo Yamauchi – Steep Narrow Stairs

Yakuza, Japanese mafia, are known for making money from extortion, gambling, pornography and prostitution, but **Miyo Yamauchi** doesn’t think of them as evil because she was saved by Yakuza once. After she told this thrilling story last October for the first time, she reworked on it based on the feedback StoryMasters gave her. The new version gave more clarity and richness to the story. And somehow, it was funnier! Great work, StoryMasters!

Meeting functionaries included Toastmaster **Cynthia Moore**, General Evaluator **Jill Vanderweit**, Timer **Mallery McMurtrey**, Wordmaster/Grammarians **Tina Tomiyama**, and Evaluators **Hiba Hamdan** and **Jill Vanderweit**.

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Next meeting is March 14. ([GUESTS](#), [RSVP FROM HERE](#))

FAREWELL TO DAVID CHITTENDEN

With great sadness, we learned that our member, David Chittenden, passed away on February 1, 2022. He joined StoryMasters in October 2021 after he saw us at the Storytelling Association of California Genre Storytelling Series last summer. Although new to StoryMasters, he was a long time Toastmaster as well as a storyteller. Since he joined, he kept telling new stories whenever he got a chance, including at our Storytelling Cafe. He will be dearly missed.

An in-person memorial service for David will be scheduled in spring.



RIP TO MICHAEL S. JONES

Sadly, David Chittenden was not the only member we lost this month. We also lost our long-time friend, Michael Jones, on February 5. Here is a tribute to Michael written by one of our founders, Tina Tomiyama, in collaboration with his wife, Jacki Williams-Jones.

Remembering Michael S. Jones

By Tina Tomiyama

Michael S. Jones. Oh, what a man. We shall not see his like again.

We'll miss his handsome face, his rich baritone voice, and the warmth of his smile.

We'll miss his stories and his willingness to serve, as long as he was able to.

Michael joined Toastmasters in 2013 and belonged to Justicemasters, University of West Los Angeles Toastmasters, And the Winner Is, and StoryMasters. He earned his Distinguished Toastmaster award serving as Area F4 Director and Division F Director, and was a key member of the training team for the 2019 Charles R. Drew University Enhanced Post-Baccalaureate Speechcraft.



As a business and professional coach, Michael was the President and CEO of Success Management, LLC, helping clients discover, develop and deploy their purpose, an author, TV and radio personality, and motivational speaker.

But more than that, he was a loving husband to his wife Jacki Williams-Jones, DTM, French teacher and Toastmasters leader. Jacki and Michael's love story had deep roots. They were high school sweethearts; he took her to the prom and was her escort at her debutante ball. But he went to Pacific University, in Oregon, and she went to Stanford. They married other people and started families. In the early 90s both marriages came unstuck, and in 1998 Jacki and Michael were married at Shanghai Red's in Playa del Rey, with Jacki's daughter Charisse and Michael's children Gabriel, LeAnne, Michael Emanuel and Oquendo in attendance.

In Oregon, Michael had been a pharmaceutical rep. Back in LA, he worked for the Crenshaw Y until starting his own consulting business. They traveled widely—Michael accompanied Jacki when she chaperoned groups of students from Flintridge Prep, where she taught, on trips to Italy, Spain, England and of course France. And they visited both their families all over the US.

As Jacki says, "Michael talked to everyone. It didn't matter where we were—on a train, in a restaurant, even on the street—Michael would strike up a conversation with people around us. And he always made them feel good."

Michael battled a virulent kind of lymphoma for several years. Sometimes his StoryMasters friends would see him seated with Jacki in a Zoom rectangle, smiling his famous smile. And then we didn't see him, and Jacki told us he'd entered home hospice. On February 5, 2022, Michael died peacefully, in the early hours of the morning. He left this world better for his having been in it.

The StoryMasters Care Fund has made a memorial gift in Michael's name to the [Elva S. Riggins Fund](#), which provides scholarships for students of color.

Here's a link for information about Michael's Memorial Service at 2:00 pm on March 11, 2022:

www.caringbridge.org/visit/michaelsjones

Rest in peace, Michael.



UPCOMING STORYTELLING EVENTS

Many intriguing storytelling events keep coming up. Check them out on [our event page!](#)

FEB 24 New Spin on an Old Tale

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/new-spin-on-an-old-tale/>

6:00 PM PT / 9:00 PM ET

Category: Storytelling concert

Location: Zoom

Cost: Donation

A show where everything old is new again. Tried and true tale turned on their head, be it a modern twist or the merging of two stories or whatever our storytellers dream up.



FEB 27 StoryMasters Storytelling Café

<https://thestorymasters.org/storytelling-cafe/>

3:00 PM PT / 6:00 PM ET

Category: Storytelling swap

Location: Zoom

Cost: Free

StoryMasters Storytelling Café is a safe place where you can share your work of art. Bring one whether it's still a work in progress or a finished product. February's session focuses on poetry. Everybody is welcome!



MAR 3 Stranger Than Fiction

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/stranger-than-fiction-202203/>

8:00 PM PT

Category: Storytelling concert

Location: Marilyn Monroe Theatre

Cost: \$12

An evening of LIVE stories told by the people that lived them. These storytellers will have you thinking, feeling, and maybe even drinking! This block party style evening is the perfect time to get back to normal — with an evening that is far from it.



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.

JUST FOR FUN

Tell Me Without Telling Me

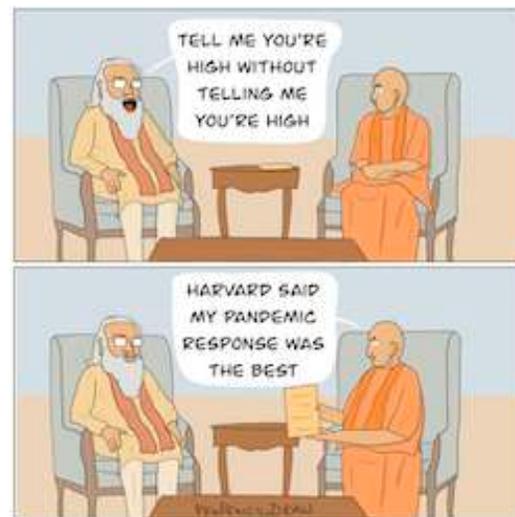
I don't step into the TikTok or Twitter worlds, but their *Tell Me Without Telling Me* challenge caught my attention recently. It's a social game in which social media users ask others to share personal opinions and beliefs without using a direct mention of the subject.

Here are some examples.

- Tell me without telling me you're from the Midwest: *When a trip to run an errand is "only" 15 hours.*
- Tell me without telling me how your brain malfunctions: *When we watch someone make an egg for breakfast and he slips the shell onto a preheated pan and drops the egg into the trash. (#facepalm)*
- Tell me without telling me you have a pandemic puppy: *Well... I opened this letter with that one!*

The questions may sound silly, but the answers are creative and clever, aren't they? I think it would be fun to apply the exercise to stories. If you want to tell that it's hot without saying that it's hot, how do you describe? Think: nonstop drenching sweats, the air is so muggy that even your dog doesn't go for a walk, or you feel burned by the sunlight bouncing back off the ground.

Now, tell me you have pandemic fatigue without telling me you have pandemic fatigue.



@PenPencilDraw

MEMBERS SPOTLIGHT

Founders of StoryMasters, Hiba and Tina, Shared the SAC Stage!

On January 19, seven storytellers told stories at the Storytelling Association of California (SAC)'s Genre Storytelling Series. The genre for the night was tall tales and all the storytellers told their original tales! StoryMasters' representative was one of our founders, **Hiba Hamdan**, who made her SAC debut.

Her story, *It's a Jungle Out There*, started off like a true story. She and her husband moved to Santa Barbara and started gardening. As the story went on, the story got crazier and funnier. That's my favorite type of tall tales! Hilariously done, Hiba!



The emcee for the night was another founder, **Tina Tomiyama**. When she's an emcee, I know we're in good hands. And I was right. Tina was such a warm, engaging, and graceful emcee, handling everything beautifully.

Oh, what a fun evening it was! Friends, stay tuned for the upcoming Genre Storytelling Series. We have great line-ups!

Miyo Yamauchi at Adult ONLY Stories and True Tales Live

On January 15, **Miyo Yamauchi** was invited back to Artists Standing Strong Together (ASST)'s Adults ONLY Stories. What was told at Adult ONLY Stories stays with Adult ONLY Stories, but here is what an audience member said about her story.

That was the most unique story I've ever heard in a very long time. I didn't know where her story was going, but somehow, everything fell into place perfectly. Brilliant!

She was also on the virtual stage of True Tales Live on January 25 and made the audience burst into laughter once again. During the Q&A after the show, she shared her story development process with the audience.



FOOD FOR THOUGHTS

Eight Things Learned About Creativity by *The Oatmeal*

The Oatmeal is a comic site which a cartoonist, Matthew Inman, created ten years ago. *The Oatmeal* never disappoints. It offers not only enchanting cartoons but also thought-provoking ideas.

One of my favorites is about creativity—what the author has learned in ten years. His tips made me think about my creative process and inspired me to try something different.

https://theoatmeal.com/comics/creativity_things

- Part 1. Erasers are wonderful
- Part 2. Your ears are plugged
- Part 3. Creativity is like breathing
- Part 4. There are only bad ideas in brainstorming
- Part 5. This is not a petting zoo
- Part 6. The wondrous utility of self-loathing
- Part 7. Killing your darlings
- Part 8. The business of art



You may agree or disagree with his suggestions. Regardless, I hope you'll enjoy his cartoons as much as I do!



STORYTELLING STUB

Craft a High Concept Comedy

I've been wanting to write about high concept comedies for a while. Since last month's SAC Genre Storytelling was tall tales, I think now is the time.

What is high concept? Typically, it's a *What if...?* scenario. There are different styles, but one of the common patterns is that you make the protagonist of your story a fish out of water, bring a high concept to the character, and make their world out-of-the-ordinary. High concept doesn't have to be funny, but oftentimes it is. The higher the stake is, the funnier it gets. But to make it funny, it's important to let your audience know who the protagonist is and what their daily life is like before bringing the extraordinary world into the story. The protagonist is a vital character to your story and we see the story through their eyes, but high concept is not character-driven. It's idea-driven. The concept needs to be clear.

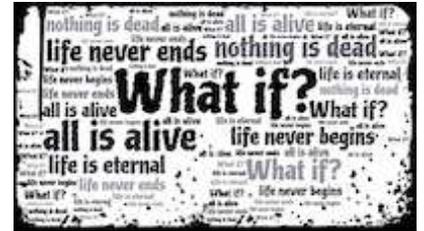
Here are some examples of high concept comedies.

- What if a fast-track lawyer couldn't lie for 24 hours? (*Liar Liar*)
- An Australian outback crocodile poacher goes to New York City ("*Crocodile*" *Dundee*)
- What if three buddies woke up from a bachelor party in Las Vegas with no memory of the previous night and the bachelor missing? (*The Hangover*)

Got the idea? Now, *what if...?*

Reference:

- [What is a High Concept Comedy? Crafting a Unique Comedic Premise](#)
- [High Concept Comedy: What It Is and How to Write It](#)
- [Why the 'Fish Out Of Water' Trope Is So Valuable to Screenwriters](#)



EDITOR'S NOTE

Location, Location...or Is It?

*Maybe it needs to be closer to the window.
Maybe the cardinal direction is not quite right.
Does my apartment have the right place for it?*

After I moved my electric piano to a different location, I played a little bit. Nah, I'm still not feeling it. It needs to find a new location...but where?

In past years, I relocated the piano from left to right many times in my little living room because something was not working. It didn't give me joy as it used to. My piano skill level used to be decent, but not anymore. It's a typical example of a vicious cycle. Because I didn't feel it, I didn't play much. The less I played the piano, the more rusty my skills became. The deterioration was palpable. Eventually, the electric piano became the elephant in my living room. Still, I played it for a couple of minutes at least once a year regardless of how badly I played. I just couldn't cut all ties with my piano yet.

When the year 2022 arrived, I reluctantly removed the piano cover as usual and stared at the sheet music.

Did I really play any of these?

All of the pieces looked more unfamiliar than ever. I flipped sheet after sheet because they seemed way too advanced for my skills, which made me start questioning myself. *What am I doing? Maybe it's all futile. Maybe it's time to call it quits.* Then, a sheet of Chopin's music caught my eyes. *I still remember this!* I sat up straight, placed my hands on the keyboard, and started playing. My comprehension of the score was pretty bad. My fingers didn't move as smoothly as they used to. My skill was pretty rusty, but — something clicked for the first time in a long time. Finally, I felt it was right. One by one, good old memories started coming back while I was playing. The day when I was seven and my little upright piano was delivered to my house. The year I played the piano for my friends in Canada every afternoon. The day I got this electric piano... I immersed myself, feeling jubilant. Before I realized it, hours had passed. Since then, I've been playing the piano almost every day...5 minutes here, 30 minutes there. I'm still bungling, but it doesn't matter. It delights me.

The location was not the problem after all. The state of my mind was. I don't think I was depressed or anything, but my mind was not in the right place to enjoy music. Before casting blame on external elements, I should've had an internal conversation with myself.

When was the last time you paid attention to your mind?

Excuse me, I need to go to play the piano now...

— Miyo Yamauchi

