



DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

A Salient Afternoon with Alluring Stories

Flowers are blooming, birds are chirping, and Easter is coming. What else is happening in April? Our own Aprille hosted our meeting on April 10. Was it a coincidence or fate? Regardless, our members and guests enjoyed the lovely Sunday afternoon. The five stories we heard were very different, yet somehow they connected with each other in mysterious ways.

Anna Ziss-Patton – *Self Help*

“I LOVE bookstores!” **Anna Ziss-Patton** smiled. Books give her chances to experience the world through somebody else’s eyes, open up her world in a way that she’s never thought of before, or educate herself. The possibilities are endless. Her story took us to her favorite section in Barnes & Noble, the *Self Care* section, where a young woman said to her, “What are you doing in the psych aisle? You don’t look crazy to me.” She was interesting, smart, funny, and liked to talk to strangers. She seemed confident yet needy somehow, certain but unsure also. Is she lonely? Does she have an abusive mother? Or no mother at all? Anna’s whimsical and intriguing way to tell the story unfolded a mystical world for us.

Lin Van Gelder – *Lessons I Never Wanted to Learn*

Lin Van Gelder has committed herself to life-long learning. Painting, poetry, crafting, public speaking...you name it, she’s done it. When she retired, she even started playing the ukulele. But her learning path took her in a whole new direction when her loved one had an emotional breakdown in 2021. Anxiety and stress had built up to the point where he became suicidal. Nothing she said or did was helping. And, Lin found, he had a lot of company in his distress. According to the World Health Organization, depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide. “We’re the community, so let’s reach out,” Lin told us. We can start simply, by asking “How are you?” or saying, “I’m here for you.” It will make a big difference.

Miyo Yamauchi – *Are You There, God? It’s Miyo!*

Earthquakes were nothing to **Miyo Yamauchi** because Japan is known for them, but this quake was different. It was loud and violent and seemed endless. She started despairing. When you are in danger, what would you do? She decided to pray. Then, it hit her. Whom was she going to pray to? Buddha, Jesus, or somebody else? If she picked the wrong God, she could die! Miyo replayed her inner monologue during one of the deadliest earthquakes of the 20th century. It was scary, entertaining and educational at the same time.

Lee Amatangelo – *The Day the Sun Rose Twice*

It was a wee hour in New Mexico on July 16, 1945, when the sun rose in the west with a brilliance of a thousand suns and soon after, it went straight down. Half an hour later, the sun rose up again in the east and stayed up all day. **Lee Amatangelo**, portraying J. Robert Oppenheimer, the American theoretical physicist credited with being the “father of the atomic bomb,” brought the final days of the Manhattan Project to life in preparation for the Storytelling Association of California’s Genre Storytelling Series, Historical Stories. Please check out the Upcoming Storytelling Events section (page 2) and come and listen to his story!

Mattie Singleton – *My Life Change*

Mattie Singleton was having a blast that day. The hair salon staff took her and her business partner to a champagne brunch. Then they went out bar hopping and karaoke singing until midnight. When the night ended, her friend offered to drive her home—but neither of them belonged on the road. In short order they were surrounded by five police cars and ten officers. That’s right. They were arrested for DUI and taken to the Las Colinas jail in Santee. Handcuffed in the back of the police car, fear hit Mattie. As a Buddhist, she started praying, “*Namu Myōhō Renge Kyō, Namu Myōhō Renge Kyō.*” This story was just the beginning of her fascinating life-change journey.

Meeting functionaries included Toastmaster **Aprille Isham**, General Evaluator **Mallery McMurtrey**, Timer **Camille Miller**, Wordmaster/Grammarian **Cynthia Moore**, and Evaluators **Pieter Severynen**, **Tina Tomiyama**, **Jon White**, and **Kathy Garr**.

Next meeting is May 8. (GUESTS, [RSVP FROM HERE](#))

UPCOMING STORYTELLING EVENTS

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

Apr 20 Storytelling Association of California: Historical Stories

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

7:00 PM PT / 10:00 PM ET
 Category: Storytelling concert
 Location: Zoom
 Cost: Free

SAC Members from various Storytelling groups around California will be telling stories at these events. The theme for this month is Historical Stories and our own Lee Amatangelo will represent StoryMasters!



Apr 24 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. Everybody is welcome! You're welcome just to listen, too.



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.

MEMBERS SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations, Hiba and Camille!

On March 19, Hiba Hamdan and Camille Miller won second places in the District 1 Area F1 Evaluation Contest and International Speech Contest, respectively.



Oh, they did make StoryMasters look great, didn't they?

Hiba's evaluation was filled with jewels of wisdom. She shared many invaluable points for the Model Speaker to take away.

Camille's story was charming, heartwarming, funny, and powerful. That's the kind of story we always enjoy and appreciate.

Congratulations, Hiba and Camille!

Ashton Cynthia Clarke at Adults ONLY Stories

On March 12, **Ashton Cynthia Clarke** grabbed the audience's heart by telling a captivating story at the Artists Standing Strong Together (ASST)'s Adults ONLY Stories.

She also charmed the Otter Story Hour's audience on April 10. Beautifully told, Ashton!



Miyo Yamauchi at the Fanatic Salon

On March 27, **Miyo Yamauchi** told her new Intruder story at the Fanatic Salon. *New*, you ask? Right, another intruder entered her life in December 2021. This one scaled a six-foot wall to access the grounds of her peaceful guest cottage. What? Who? How?

Putting that scary part aside, she entertained the audience with her wry humor. hilariously done, Miyo!



STORYMASTERS' FRIEND SPOTLIGHT

A Little Bit of Heaven

Tina Tomiyama



On a brilliant Saturday afternoon in March, amidst flowers and trees, birdsong and cheerful chatter, 20 exhilarated guests assembled in a spacious back patio in View Park, CA. They were the lucky ones who'd gotten seats for a rare storytelling concert by their friend and teacher, **Barbara H. Clark**.

In honor of Women's History Month, Barbara performed "*They Lived Their Best Lives*," a quartet of stories about memorable women who had crossed her path and enriched her life.

The loving portraits she rendered in *Rebecca's Wisdom*, *Her Name Was Peggy*, *Lucy Wrote Letters*, and *Independent Lovie* fired us with zeal to memorialize our own relatives and friends in similarly enchanting stories.

Throughout the pandemic, Barbara has held firm to her belief that storytelling requires a live audience, physically present. This indomitable 88-year-old teacher has held classes on her back patio every Thursday afternoon for two years, providing lap blankets in winter, fans in summer—always listening,

gently critiquing, and providing brilliant examples of storytelling at its best.

Barbara and her daughter Dawn plan to reopen the Institute of Musical Arts for its signature storytelling-concert-and-reception events this year, as soon as conditions permit. Stay tuned for announcements!



Find out more about Barbara and IMA [here](#).

BARBARA H. CLARK is a professional storyteller who performs original personal stories written for adults. They include events from life in a small east coast town and in Los Angeles, stories of her family heritage, profiles of memorable relatives, and accounts of spooky events. She has performed in storytelling concerts and festivals all over southern California. Her polished stage presence reflects the 30 years she spent as an administrator with Los Angeles Public Library. Her love of books is seen in her 14 years as secretary to a Literacy Council which provided books and storytellers to 26 preschools. Barbara is a five-time recipient of L.A. City Cultural Affairs grants to perform her stories at Senior Citizen Centers, and a four-time recipient of foundation grants to teach personal storytelling to high school students. She served nine years as Artist-In-Residence at Vineyard Recreation Center teaching storytelling to seniors. She was recognized as an "Unsung Hero of the Year" in 2005 by KCET-TV for her work with seniors, and her storytelling workshop TELL ME A STORY was highlighted on television for the full month of February. Now in its 18th year, that workshop is currently sponsored by the Institute of Musical Arts where Barbara also serves as Artistic Director for the Ray G. Clark Theater. She is a recipient of the "Storytelling Spirit Award" presented by the Los Angeles Storytelling Festival, and the "Unsung Shero Award" presented by Women In NAACP. Barbara has a B.A. degree from Howard University and a M.L.S. degree from the University of Southern California.



STORYTELLING STUB

Train Creativity in the Right Way

How do you train your creativity? Do you have any rituals to be creative? Researchers at Ohio State University have developed a new method for training people to be creative. According to the research, it works far more effectively than current methods. Do you want to learn more about it? Of course you do! Let's dive in.

The new method, based on narrative theory, helps people be creative in the way children and artists are: by making up stories that imagine alternative worlds, shift perspective and generate unexpected actions.

The current creativity training technique is divergent thinking, which has been in use since the 1950s. It works through exercises designed to, among other things, expand working memory, foster analogical thinking and promote problem-solving. A major issue with divergent thinking is that its computational approach relies on data and information about the problems and successes of the past, which means it cannot come up with true original actions or prepare you for new challenges you know little or nothing about.

That's where the new technique works beautifully, because the human brain's narrative machinery can weave new stories. For example, think about the distracting audience member at your speaking event. Now, imagine that all your audience members are like that. How would that change your writing or speaking?

"Creativity isn't about guessing the future correctly. It's about making yourself open to imagining radically different possibilities," Prof. Angus Fletcher of OSU said.

 [Read the whole article here.](#)

Other creativity related articles:

- [Do we get our most creative ideas when walking?](#)
- [Where in the brain does creativity come from? Evidence from jazz musicians](#)



EDITOR'S NOTE

Draw a Perfect Curve

One of my pet peeves is those who hit the brake before indicating a turn signal. Clearly, they don't understand the whole picture.

Driving is art. It's also science...like storytelling. You cannot go too fast or too slow. You need to be attentive to details, but you cannot be too obsessive about small things. When everything flows well, it's art. What you look at, when you hit the brake or the gas, how fast and slow you go...every movement has a reason.

When you make a turn, you need to flip your turn signal first so that drivers around you can prepare for your next move, and theirs. A driver right behind you releases the gas pedal because they expect that you're going to hit the brake soon. They may switch lanes if possible. The signal also tells drivers diagonally behind you when to switch lanes. But if you hit the brake first, the traffic behind you gets confused.

One little brake light produces a wave of stopped or slowed traffic. If one car brakes slightly, and the ones behind it brake just a bit more to avoid hitting it, the braking can amplify until it becomes a traffic jam for no reason. If everybody understands those WHYS and drives accordingly, beautiful music will be orchestrated flawlessly on the road.

My favorite part is driving a curve. Before entering a curve, I release the gas and slow down. Sometimes I shift gears if the curve is sharp. My eyes are fixed at the end of the curve. When I pass the halfway point of the curve, I hit the gas. That's when a perfect curve is painted. If any element is not executed right, the balance is lost. If I'm looking at the car in front of me instead of the end of the curve, the curve line gets wobbled. If I don't slow down properly, I'll have to hit the brake in the middle of the curve.



My driving skills are still far from perfect. So is my storytelling. Mastering one thing takes time and effort. I just need to keep analyzing my skills, practicing, and improving.

What skills do you want to master?

— Miyo Yamauchi