



DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

A Fine and Fervent Afternoon with Friends

On Mother's Day in 2022, StoryMasters and friends gathered and shared a wonderful storytelling afternoon. One of the best treats was to meet our members' children and listen to their stories. What a lovely way to spend Mother's Day!

This month, we heard four stories. Each story made us laugh, cringe, ponder, and feel.

Jon White – *AARP—I'm Ready, Come Get Me*

In February, 2020, **Jon White** dropped his girlfriend off at LAX. He was sad about her returning to NYC, but he was happy because they had a plan to meet up in Kauai, Hawaii in April. Seven days with a beautiful woman in paradise sounded like a perfect way to celebrate his 60th birthday, didn't it? Then...yeah...the pandemic hit. Instead of paradise, he celebrated his birthday on Zoomland. And with the number 60, the world seemed to start going downhill financially and mentally. Even good news had compromising bad news in it. Whose fault was it? Jon's or the world? When his girlfriend decided to visit him in LA after a seemingly-eternal two-year interval, the real comedy (or should we call it the Greek tragedy?) began.

As always, his story was filled with smart humor and kept us engaged. Jon, tell us more!

Cynthia Moore – *Angels*

After watching *Out of Africa*, a 1985 American epic romantic drama film starring Meryl Streep and Robert Redford, **Cynthia Moore** fell in love with the beautiful scenery and wildlife in Africa. In a favorite scene, Karen Blixen (Streep) took a train from Nairobi to Mombasa. "I need to go to Africa and experience that myself," Cynthia cried fervently. Ignoring her travel agent's advice not to take a flight that would get her to Kenya late at night, since she was traveling alone, Cynthia booked a flight that would land her in Nairobi at 10:00 pm. On the plane, she fell asleep for hours, until the plane started to land. "Finally, I'm in Nairobi," she thought. But she was not. She was in a Rwandan war zone, being escorted off the plane by armed men.

It was horrifying, but no worries: Cynthia is fine. In fact, her story left us with heartwarming feelings in the end.

Jill Vanderweit – *Unicorns*

Unicorns are It. They are a mythological celebrity. Every little girl has to have a unicorn birthday party. That's nonsense, **Jill Vanderweit** says. Being a practical person, she doesn't believe in such balderdash nor poppycock! But her husband, surprisingly, disagrees. He says if you look hard enough and you don't care about the age, color, or sad story, you will find unicorns.

Last February, Jill decided to take a road trip for a family wedding in her 16-year-old Camry which had 300,000 miles on the odometer. It was running fine, but just for precautions, she took her car to a mechanic and asked if she could drive to Florida. The answer was NO. She needed five thousand dollars to fix only the immediate needs. That's when the journey to find her own unicorn began.

Catherine Magruder – *To Murder or Not To Murder, That Is the Question*

What would you give your new mortal enemy for their birthday present?

Catherine Magruder answers, "I would catch and release a brown recluse spider into my brother's condominium. Eventually, the spider would bite him and he would die." What? you ask. Why would she want that? If you'd been on the roller-coaster ride she has been on since 2019, your answer might be the same. All was well when Catherine became the live-in caregiver for their 89-year-old mother at her home in Rancho Palos Verdes, but when Catherine continued living there after her mother passed away, things started crumbling. Her brother wanted to sell the house and took it to court.

For your curiosity, her brother is still alive, living in his condo without any spiders.

Meeting functionaries included Toastmaster **Tina Tomiyama**, General Evaluator **Kathy Garr**, Timer **Mallery McMurtrey**, Wordmaster/Grammarian **Margaret Mitchell** (whom we were delighted to see again!), and Evaluators **Camille Miller**, **Aprille Isham**, **Hiba Hamdan**, and **Harold Gee**.

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

UPCOMING STORYTELLING EVENTS

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

May 15 Backstory: Promising Young Woman

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/backstory-promising-young-woman/>

7:30 PM PT / 10:30 PM ET
 Category: Storytelling concert
 Location: Zoom
 Cost: \$10 (Suggested)

Get ready for an all-female Backstory! We love our theme this month: Promising Young Woman! Don't miss these amazing artists: Anne Cherian, **Ashton C. Clarke**, Kate Gale, Elizabeth Iannaci, Sapna Kumar and Kimsu Theiler.



May 18 SAC Genre Storytelling Series: Legends

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

7:00 PM PT / 10:00 PM ET
 Category: Storytelling concert
 Location: Zoom
 Cost: Free - \$15

SAC Members from various Storytelling groups around California will be telling stories. The genre for May is Legends. Our co-founder, **Hiba Hamdan**, will represent us with a story about the legendary Dido, Queen of Carthage.



May 21 Strong Words #82

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/strong-words-20220521/>

7:30 PM PT
 Category: Storytelling concert
 Location: St. Francis Center
 Cost: \$10

STRONG WORDS is back and bigger than ever for their 11th amazing year. A beautiful night under the stars filled with the sweet sense of community. **Miyo Yamauchi** is speaking, and there will be taiko drums!



May 22 StoryMasters Storytelling Café

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

3:00 PM PT / 6:00 PM ET
 Category: Story 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.



May 22 Revealed

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/revealed/>

7:00 PM PT
 Category: Storytelling concert
 Location: The Glendale Room
 Cost: \$5

"Revealed" is a true and personal storytelling show, hosted by Erica Blumfield. It brings together the best storytellers of LA, who share stories that will range from the ridiculous, humorous, magical and heartwarming. **Miyo** and **Ashton** are both speaking, as well as several StoryMasters guests.



June 4 How To Be Japanese

<https://miyo.net/how-to-be-japanese>

**&
 June 18**

June 4 @ 7:00 PM PT
 Location: Stephanie Feury Studio Theater (Hollywood)
 Cost: SOLD OUT
 June 18 @ 3 PM PT / 6 PM ET
 Location: Zoom
 Cost: \$10

Normal: Conforming to a standard; usual, typical, or expected. All of us at some times or in some ways feel like outsiders. That whatever it is that is normal does not include us. But when we enter a new culture, we actually are the outsider. An excellent vantage point to question the status quo.

The in-person show on 6/4 is sold out, but the online show is still available. The video will be available for ticket holders.



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

Lee Amatangelo at SAC's Historical Stories

By Ashton Cynthia Clarke



I Zoom'ed in to SAC's Historical Stories show on April 20 to learn more about the genre. Perhaps this was an area into which I might expand. Watching Lee Amatangelo tell *"The Day the Sun Rose Twice,"* I felt like I was sitting at the feet of a master. Well, from my living room couch, anyway.

From the beginning—and I mean starting with the SAC host's introduction—Lee completely cloaked himself in his main character, the so-called "father of the atomic bomb." As "Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer" he carries us through the day of the first successful test detonation of an atom bomb, July 16, 1945, in the New Mexico desert.

I love it when a story sends me to Google to research details and educate myself about subjects new to me. Through detailed and sometimes humorous anecdotes, "Oppenheimer" name-drops his colleagues in the Manhattan Project, bringing them to life with colorful description and character voices. These include Ken Bainbridge, described as "one of the gentlest of scientists"; George Kistiakowsky, who's a betting man; and General Leslie Groves, a "very big man" with "his typical gruff voice."

He pulls out a pipe at one point, "as I often would do." Comparing himself to General Groves, "Oppenheimer" lets us know that he himself was a mere "5 foot 10 and 120 pounds."

Now if I were a bona fide theater reviewer, I might presume that Lee was using the Konstantin Stanislavski method of acting, where understanding the world of your character is absolutely vital in providing a believable performance. But I'm not. So I'll just tell you that Lee had me engrossed with his portrayal!

Lee hits us with some well-placed gems in language, such as the "blinding brilliance of the blast." He illustrates the bomb's mushroom cloud in feet and color by color.

His lighting was effective and I really appreciated the totally blank, near-white background. Lee performed in the center of his stage, but used his hand and arm gestures to fill the space more than half the time.

And Lee, where the heck did you find a slide rule in this day and age?!

There are other well-placed surprises in this story and I'm not going to tease any more. To see the replay, go to the Storytelling Association of California on YouTube. Look for "Genre Series Historical Stories Apr 20 2022." Or here's the direct link: <https://youtu.be/2fH0jif6IUy>

The show includes several storytellers, but if you'd like to enjoy Lee first—including must-see intro—then fast-forward to 39:36.

Way to represent StoryMasters, Lee Amatangelo!



Ashton Cynthia Clarke has been telling true, personal stories since 2019. She became a member of StoryMasters in February 2021.

MEMBERS SPOTLIGHT

Lee is not the only one who was thrust into the limelight. Check them out. Keep up the great work, StoryMasters!



Seven storytellers including our own **Tina Tomiyama** told delightful personal stories at the Tell Me A Story concert conducted by **Barbara H. Clark**.

[Learn more about Institute of Musical Arts.](#)



Camille Miller entered the [Sacramento Storyteller's Guild's Liars Contest](#) and won the third place with her hilarious story about a battle with a cockroach.



Ashton Cynthia Clarke wowed the audience at the virtual stage of the [Telling Favorites](#) in Chicago by telling her favorite gathering story.



Miyo Yamauchi told how the brain works as "Dr. Genius" at the Story Salon.



STORYMASTERS' FRIEND SPOTLIGHT

On the other side of the world, our former member, **Bharat Sangekar** won the first place in the Inner City Division Humorous Speech Contest and will advance to the District 73 Conference in Australia.

Go Get'em, Bharat!



STORYTELLING STUB

Break the Fourth Wall

What is the fourth wall?

The **fourth wall** is a performance convention in which an invisible, imagined wall separates actors from the audience. While the audience can see through this *wall*, the convention assumes the actors act as if they cannot. From the 16th century onward, the rise of illusionism in staging practices, which culminated in the realism and naturalism of the theatre of the 19th century, led to the development of the fourth wall concept.

From Wikipedia

The fourth wall is the screen we're watching. We treat this wall like a one-way mirror. The audience can see and comprehend the story, but the story cannot comprehend the existence of the audience. If you break that wall, you break that accord. This is called "Breaking the Fourth Wall." It can also be described as the story becoming aware of itself.

I think we need to be careful when and how to break the fourth wall while telling a story because if you do it wrong, it ruins what you have built with the audience. But if you do it right, it may take your story to another level. The audience can get into your psyche and see your story from different perspectives.

Tips for Breaking the Fourth Wall:

- ✓ Be extreme: This means you need to break the fourth wall all the time, or very rarely.
- ✓ Be thoughtful: Consider opportune scenes and moments within the scene for wall breaks.
- ✓ Be controversial: Don't waste your big decision with an underwhelming fourth wall break.

References:

- [Breaking the Fourth Wall: Definition, Meaning and Examples](#)
- [How Breaking the Fourth Wall Works in Film and TV](#)

EDITOR'S NOTE

Everything Happens for a Reason

In 2019, I declared that I was going to do a solo show in 2020. I found a venue, signed a contract with the Hollywood Fringe and the theater, and started creating promotional materials. Then, as you might guess already, everything was cancelled in 2020. I was disappointed as well as discouraged by how it ended; it was a mental and financial hit. But at the same time, I was a bit relieved because I was running toward a goal without a clear vision. I was still far from being ready. I had more than an hour's worth of stories, but the storyline didn't flow well. The tales were well-crafted, but they didn't complement each other and I couldn't figure out how to weave them into an hour-long show. Something was missing. Probably the cancellation was a sign that a solo show wasn't meant for me, I thought. At least, I can say I tried, which was good enough, right?

But just when I had forgotten all about the idea, it came back. One evening more than 1.5 years after the cancellation, my eyes stopped at the line, "Now Accepting Fringe Proposals." It was an online solo show opportunity from National Storytelling Network (NSN). I looked at my watch. Three hours until the deadline. Wait! The timezone is different, so I only have one hour. To be honest, I wasn't even thinking of doing a solo show at this point, but I put my name in the hat to see what would happen anyway. Two weeks later, NSN notified me that I won the spot.

Picking stories and setting the storyline were easy this time. I was surprised to see how many new stories I wrote during the pandemic. Now, I have enough stories for more than one solo show. As I started working on the online presentation, the theater producer called, asking if I was interested in doing the Hollywood Fringe this year. Doing a show at the Hollywood Fringe requires you to be not only a writer/performer but also a marketer, promoter, recruiter, and a show producer. Also, doing two different formats (in-person and online) would demand more performance work than I originally anticipated, but my answer was "Why Not?" The cancellation in 2020 has gotten me in shape. Yes, I am ready to take the challenge.



The countdown began. The ball is rolling. Stay tuned for my next story. I have more to tell!

— Miyo Yamauchi