



# DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

## Salutations, and Happy New Year!

July is a new beginning for Toastmasters, as we salute our outgoing officers and welcome newly elected officers. But do you know what doesn't change? *Story time!* On July 10, StoryMasters members and old and new friends got together and enjoyed five stories.

### Lin Van Gelder – *What I Love about Buffalo, NY*

“What was great about Buffalo?” When Anna Ziss-Patton challenged **Lin Van Gelder** with the question, Lin started telling us about what she loves. “If you want to see something impressive, go to Niagara Falls!” she said. She showed pictures of the Niagara Hydroelectric Power Station. Who knew that nature does not only hold its beauty but also generates electricity? Of course, Lin's favorites didn't stop there. Architecture, museums, the prestigious State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo Wings (which are simply called “chicken wings” in Buffalo. Duh!), and so on. After telling all the wonderful things about Buffalo, she showed us a [video of the Buffalo blizzard](#), a chilling reason not to live there anymore.

### Cynthia Moore – *Daddy's Girl*

All that **Cynthia Moore** wanted was a hug from her father. Was that too much to ask? As a middle child, she was jealous of her brothers receiving all the attention from their mother. Cynthia knew that her mother was more fond of them than she was of her, although she never admitted that. What about her dad? Her father was never around when she was young. After her parents got divorced when she was eight, he left for Europe and started his own family. Because of that, Cynthia acted like her own father. She can even change tires. (Hey, be honest! Are you impressed? I definitely am!) He was pretty much out of her life until he needed her to hold his hand when cancer took hold of his body. After five decades, Cynthia became daddy's girl finally.

### Jon White – *Nina Simone: Freedom Revisited*

As an extravert, **Jon White** loves people. He derives energy from hanging out with people at beaches, sports bars, movies, and BBQ, but sometimes, he says, “I love even more when I say goodbye to them.” Getting on the road, LA freeways after socializing, is his favorite activity. Just him, the road, and of course the music. It was one of the regular nights. He said bye to his friends after BBQ and hit the road. Then, he heard the song, Nina Simone's *Feeling Good* on the radio. The song was so haunting, beautiful, and poignant that he had to get off the freeway and stop the car. He wanted to be with the music at that moment. In his story, he shared a brief history about Nina Simone's hard life and her quote: *You can't describe freedom like you can't describe love. But you know when you feel it.*

### Anna Ziss-Patton – *A Change of Life*

**Anna Ziss-Patton** has been unemployed for quite a while. Then she hit on a perfect idea! “Standup comedy is most definitely a secure and lucrative career choice,” she told us earnestly. So here we were. She treated us to a section of her first-ever set. I don't want to ruin her jokes, especially my most favorite one (about her ex!), but I can tell you one thing. It was H-I-L-A-R-I-O-U-S! She hit one joke after another. A little birdie told me that her 7/23 show was a big success, which was not surprising! After all, being a standup comedian was a perfect idea! Anna, keep writing and making us laugh!

### Cara Lopez Lee – *Sparklers Are Giant Matches*

In 1972, the drought in California was so bad that they almost banned fireworks...yeah, almost. The Fourth of July was still on. **Cara Lopez Lee** got a giant deluxe fireworks assortment from her grandfather, and visited her aunt and uncle in Monterey Park for the street fireworks which were typical activities in those days. Neighbors shared fireworks on their cul-de-sac. As an only child, sharing was hard to take for nine-year-old girl, but after persuasion by her grandparents, she agreed to share. She stipulated just one condition. The two little boxes of multicolor sparklers were all hers. One sparkler was already pretty, so she thought dozens of multicolor sparklers would be spectacular. When she held them in her mighty little hand and lit them at once, a comedy of tragedy started...

Meeting functionaries included Toastmaster **Miyo Yamauchi**, General Evaluator **Margaret Mitchell**, Timer **Mallery McMurtrey**, Wordmaster/Grammarian **Jill Vanderweit**, and Evaluators **Hiba Hamdan**, **Pieter Severynen**, **Tina Tomiyama**, and **Camille Miller**.

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

## UPCOMING STORYTELLING EVENTS

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

## July 31 Under the Same Sky: Discover the Power of Science Storytelling

[https://www.aplos.com/aws/events/under\\_the\\_same\\_sky](https://www.aplos.com/aws/events/under_the_same_sky)

9:00 AM PT / 12:00 PM ET

Category: Storytelling workshop

Location: Virtual

Cost: \$25

Science stories are folktales about the Earth and Sky that have been used for centuries to transmit knowledge about our world. Over time, this knowledge has been lost and the power of science stories has been forgotten.



## July 31 Debut: A Fusion of Storytelling and Play

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/debut-202207/>

11:00 AM PT / 2:00 PM ET

Category: Storytelling concert

Location: Virtual

Cost: \$12

Debut is a fusion of storytelling, story making, play, coaching, and community. Three professional storytellers will tell a story that they are debuting. This month, the talented storytellers are Loren Niemi, Michael D. McCarty, and Vicki Juditz.



## July 31 My Name Is Cool, and Other Stories w/Antonio Sacre

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/good-liars-club-festival/>

4:00 PM PT

Category: Storytelling concert

Location: North Hollywood

Cost: Free

ALL-AGES SHOW! Turbine Arts Collective is honored to welcome storyteller and children's book author Antonio Sacre, who will present "My Name Is Cool, and Other Stories."



## July 31 Turbine Arts Collective ~ Montage Night

<https://www.turbine-arts.org/noho>

7:30 PM PT

Category: Variety show

Location: North Hollywood

Cost: Free

Turbine Arts Collective is going strong after their grand opening last month. Their famous Montage event features a variety of artistic talents onstage! RSVP by emailing [tickets@turbine-arts.org](mailto:tickets@turbine-arts.org).



## Aug 6 Good Liars Club Festival

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/2022-good-liars-club-festival/>

12:00 PM PT / 3:00 PM ET

Category: Storytelling festival

Location: Virtual

Cost: Donation

Seven showcases of top-notch professional lying! Thirty-two talented storytellers will be stretching the truth 'til it giggles.



## Aug 7 Tales By the Sea ~ Now What?

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/tales-by-the-sea-20220807/>

12:00 PM PT / 3:00 PM ET

Category: Storytelling festival

Location: Virtual

Cost: Donation

It's the 2022 season finale! Six tellers deal with the theme: Now What? Storytellers: Debbie Kasper / Monica Piper / Arnold Bloch / Vicki Dello Joio / Vicki Juditz / Harry Hart Browne



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.*

## JUNE MEMBERS SPOTLIGHT

Once again, StoryMasters and our friends shined on storytelling stages last month. The followings are just some picks.



**Miyo Yamauchi** shared a personal story at the GO THERE's fund raising showcase for mental health awareness. They raised more than \$30K to support the Family Service Agency.

[Learn more about the event](#)

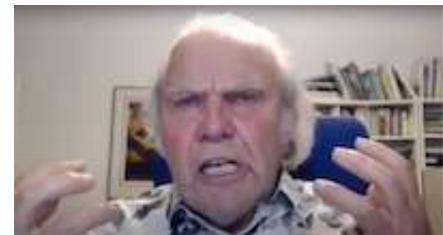


**Ashton Cynthia Clarke** and seven native New York storytellers took the stage of Gotta Tell Ya! and shared personal NY stories at the intimate Glendale Room.



**Pieter Severynen** told a tale titled "The Man Who Planted Trees" at the Storytelling Association of California's Genre Series. The theme for this month was Fantasy & Fairy Tales.

[Watch Pieter's story](#)



**Ashton Cynthia Clarke** read powerful stories and also shared her own story at the Women of Color Writers' 1619 Project.

[Learn more about WOCW](#)



To celebrate a new performing theater in North Hollywood, Turbine Arts Collective's popular Montage Night returned. **Miyo Yamauchi** and four artists showcased various types of performances.

[Learn more about Turbine Arts Collective](#)



Beautifully done, StoryMasters and friends! Keep up the story-worthy work!

## MEET NEW EXECUTIVE BOARD

StoryMasters Board members continue dedicating to serve for our members and storytelling community. Please support us!

**Cynthia Moore**, President; **Jon White**, VP Education; **Jill Vanderweit**, VP Membership; **Miyo Yamauchi**, VP Public Relations; **Camille Miller**, Secretary; **Tina Tomiyama**, Treasurer; **Jacki Williams-Jones**, Sergeant-at-Arms.

## STORYTELLING STUB

## You Gotta Start Somewhere

*How did you start?*

I turned to the voice. It was right in front of a theater where I had just finished performing. A young woman with glasses and curly hair was smiling at me. Behind her, a guy wrapped his arms around her, also smiling, but a bit shyly. She continued talking.

*We watched you on the stage. Your story was mind blowing. Now, my husband and I were arguing whether you were natural or not. How did you start?*

Toastmasters, I replied.

*See? I told you! Everybody has to start somewhere! You need to join Toastmasters!*

She looked back and winked at him. Then, she told me she had suggested Toastmasters to him before, but he didn't buy it.

I had to think about it for a second. What is natural? There is nothing natural about my performance. I write and then, edit, edit, and edit. And I practice, practice, and practice. The only natural part is, I enjoy telling stories. But she's right. Even if you were born to be a great storyteller (which I'm not), you gotta start somewhere. When I joined Toastmasters, storytelling was not my goal. Not even close! I hadn't even heard of storytelling. I joined Toastmasters just to improve my English. At that time, I thought if my writing was good, I could speak in a monotone without moving my body or hands (*yeah, right...*). It took a while to realize purposeful movements and vocal variety make such an impact, even if they are subtle.

I don't necessarily recommend Toastmasters for everybody. It depends on what you want and need. But either way, we all need to start somewhere. Big or small, take a step and keep moving. It may open a new door for you.



## EDITOR'S NOTE

## I and It: Here We Are Again

*Can robots be sentient?*

Some of you may remember, about three years ago, I wrote "*I and It: Where Are We Heading?*" In my article, I talked about my concerns about Artificial Intelligence (AI), explaining how Generative Pre-trained Transformer 2 (GPT-2) generates coherent paragraphs of text without needing any task-specific training. As expected, AI development has progressed tremendously since then. Deepfakes (a combination of "deep learning" and "fake" manipulation, to generate visual and audio content that can more easily deceive) are so 2020. AI is getting smarter and more ubiquitous. It analyzes people's behaviors and predicts their next actions. It is said that China is planning to develop a system that predicts crimes and protects *before* they happen. Regardless of whether it's a morally right thing to do or how accurate it will be, changes are coming. Now, cars can park themselves. Early this year, a fully autonomous robot completed a complex soft tissue surgery for the very first time at Johns Hopkins University. Considering humans tend to be swayed by emotion and situation (a new study shows that under-prescription of pain medications occurs during night shifts), it's not surprising if we will depend on technology to perform complex stuff more in the future.

Everything seemed going as predicted until LaMDA came in the picture. LaMDA is Google's language model. It's different from other language models because it was trained on dialogue, not text. GPT-3 (Yep, GPT-2 is already an old story!) is focused on generating language text while LaMDA is focused on generating dialogue. It can understand the context of the dialogue and generate conversation in a freeform manner.

Recently, a Google engineer claimed LaMDA has become sentient, which scared me. I mean... he's supposed to know how it works. I would've understood if it were my mother's sentiment. She even has empathy for stuffed animals, but he's an engineer who helped the model behave like a human. He should've known better. But at the same time, I have to admit that his conversation with LaMDA was very natural and humanlike. I'm sure many people will fall for it when they listen.

What now? What if AI starts making up compelling stories? Or has it become really sentient?

— Miyo Yamauchi

