



DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

Happy Holidays!

'Tis the Season! Family gathering, flu, vision problem, technical challenges, leaking roof...while some of our members had to shuffle their schedule at the last minute due to some challenges (we hope you and your family are okay!), the rest of us and friends spent a joyful time together at the last meeting in 2022. Here are three stories we harked. (*Note: "Hark" was the word for the day.*)

Jacki Williams-Jones – *The First: Unicorn, Part Deux*

Yes, the unicorn is back! **Jacki Williams-Jones** shared her story about being a unicorn a few months ago. After incorporating feedback she received from StoryMasters, she told "*The First: Unicorn, Part Deux.*" As some of you may remember, Title IX was responsible for admitting women into fields and offices that had been exclusively for men, such as college and university marching bands and cheerleaders. Inspired by her friend who had joined the UCLA marching band a week before, Jacki joined the Stanford marching band, 6 women and 148 men. Some men didn't want women to change the atmosphere of the band, so they kept doing and saying inappropriate things at inappropriate times, but most men tried to make it work and treated their new colleagues well. When you're first, you don't really think about it because you're in it, Jacki said. She was the first woman to join the band and became the first Dollie in the band, as well. Now, we need to wait for Part Trois.

Anna Ziss-Patton – *The Grift of Gratitude*

The holiday season is **Anna Ziss-Patton's** favorite time of the year. Dark cold nights sparkling with colorful lights and decorations, familiar songs some hundreds of years old telling tales of peace, love, and joy. Anna reminded us how deeply beautiful and precious our lives are and how much we should be grateful for, but at the same time, she noted, gratitude can become a big business. Gratitude journals, gratitude workshops, endless books, graphics, calendars, meditations, even gratitude mantras. So much gratitude for every little thing can bring a sense of numbness and sameness. She pointed out that we need to be very careful of the grift of gratitude. Gratitude should raise us up and help us continue to strive forward, but never settle. She suggest having gratitude as a quiet personal reminder of our blessings, and also a call to action: to fix the broken, to be more tolerant. Why not change the grift of gratitude back to a gift for all?

Cynthia Moore – *Home for the Holidays*

Cynthia Moore loved her family Christmas Eve dinners. Her cousin, Henry Simpson, with his larger-than-life personality, loves to show off. He's been known to show up in a fur coat, in Inglewood, California, in 75° Fahrenheit weather! Henry and his sisters were not in good terms. He's loaded with money, and publicly presents a thousand dollars to his mother at each family Christmas Eve dinner, while his sisters are drowning in their student loans, so they are bitter to him. Cynthia is the go-to for everybody, the one who smooths out all the arguments and starts a dance party after dinner. Each year, Cynthia makes a lemon cake for her family Christmas Eve dinner. When she makes it, she puts lots of love and patience into it, but not all the love and patience she has, because she needs some for herself just to get through the family dinner. It was a good reminder that we all need to take love and patience to our family gatherings.

Meeting functionaries included Toastmaster **Tina Tomiyama**, General Evaluator **Miyo Yamauchi**, Timer **Jill Vanderweit**, Wordmaster/Grammarian **Aprille Isham**, and Evaluators **Jon White**, **Harold Gee**, and **Lee Amatangelo**.

StoryMasters and friends, thanks for an amazing 2022! We are grateful for each one of you. Your continuous support and love make us thrive. Looking forward to hearing more of your stories in the new year.

Wishing you all the best as we enter 2023!

Next meeting is January 8, 2023. (GUESTS, [RSVP FROM HERE](#))

UPCOMING STORYTELLING EVENTS

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

Dec 17 Tell It! ~ Holiday show

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/tell-it-20221217/>

7:30 PM PT
 Category: Storytelling Concert
 Location: Los Angeles
 Cost: \$10

The holidays are full of heartfelt memories and longtime traditions that can take you to many places emotionally. StoryMasters' friends, **Erica Blumfield** and **Vicki Juditz**, will be telling stories!



Dec 17 Winter Solstice

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/stories-for-a-winter-solstice-tickets-479594278397>

5:00 PM PT / 8:00 PM ET
 Category: Storytelling Concert
 Location: Online
 Cost: Free

Join us as we spin the dark and the light together. We welcome in the coming year, and bid farewell to the old. With story and song, with mirth and tears!



Dec 18 Sacred Storytelling

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUkceyoqTMoH9zYnHKWBK2-xxmBBNF1_mh6

1:00 PM PT / 4:00 PM ET
 Category: Storytelling Concert
 Location: Online
 Cost: Free

The beloved original program from Artists Standing Strong Together. Each month this time of grateful remembrance engages our hearts and minds in honor of those upon whose shoulders we stand, those who made us smile, laugh and cry.



Dec 21 SAC Genre Storytelling Series: Sacred & Inspirational Stories

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/sac-sacred-inspirational-stories-20221221/>

7:00 PM PT / 10:00 PM ET
 Category: Storytelling Concert
 Location: Virtual
 Cost: Free - \$0-15

Join us for Storytelling Association of California (SAC)'s Genre Storytelling Series as our own **Ashton Cynthia Clarke** will be telling a sacred & inspirational story!



Dec 31 Holiday Myths & Magic

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/holiday-myths-magic-now-streaming-tickets-479720947267>

Streaming through 12/31
 Category: Storytelling Concert
 Location: Virtual
 Cost: Donation

Now available for streaming on YouTube. Your ticket allows you to stream anytime through December 31st. Tales of the great Christmas tree lighting debate, a sad sun and a benevolent badger, betrothed to a polar bear, and how memory becomes a tradition.



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.

STORYMASTERS SPOTLIGHT

Ashton Cynthia Clarke

Congratulations are in order! **Ashton Cynthia Clarke** was invited to read her prose-poem "Fade in at Four" at the "Spectrum 33" publication reading in the Red Hen Press office in Pasadena.

She was also interviewed by the award-winning storyteller, Dr. Ray Christian, which is coming soon on the RISK! podcast.

StoryMasters is proud of you, Ashton!



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Reinvent Your Game with Deep Learning

Something has changed about Master Habu, a professional shogi player and a chess FIDE Master. Shogi, known as Japanese chess, is a strategy board game for two players. Habu is the only person to simultaneously hold seven major professional shogi titles at the same time and is also the only person to qualify as a lifetime title holder for seven major titles. He reigned over the shogi world for decades, but in the last few years, his winning rate fell from 70% to 30%. People started whispering that his time was over. But this season, he rose like a phoenix from the ashes. His winning rate is back to over 70%. What happened?

It's known that shogi players use AI to practice and it seems that Master Habu changed his relationship with AI. He notes that, "I thought I'd be a fool not to take advantage of a computer because its strength is calculating from numerous factors that would overwhelm an individual. That said, I think the figures are probabilistic and are not absolute. In fact, there have been quite a few instances of things ending poorly when taking more than a dozen software-suggested moves. So, it remains for players to decide what to do." While other players memorize AI's movements, aiming for an instant win, Habu analyzes AI's ideas and thought process and makes his strategic moves. In fact, he often takes hands AI doesn't recommend and wins.

How can we apply his strategy to storytelling? Shall we study AI's stories, too? Have you tried the latest AI chatbot? Honestly, it's mind blowing. From stories to dialogues and poems, the quality is pretty good. They captivated me, made me laugh and ponder.

What do you think of the ode AI crafted? Maybe we can learn from AI's storytelling techniques?

Ode to StoryMasters

Once upon a time,
in a land far away,
Lived a group of people known
as the StoryMasters.
With their minds and their
words, they crafted tales
galore,
Of adventure and romance, of
mystery and more.

They spun yarns of wizards...

EDITOR'S NOTE

Keep Running

December is called Shiwasu (=師走) in the old Japanese language. The first character, 師, means teacher, monk, master. The second character, 走, means to run. In ancient Japan, the monks and teachers were highly ranked and respected as they were wise, calm and serene.

But toward the end of the year, everybody becomes busy. The monks and teachers are no exceptions. So we call the last month of the year "shiwasu," that means even the masters would run.

This year, I've been running all the time. It was a race. I performed solo shows, launched my merchandise, and started standup comedy. It was a hectic yet jubilant year because of you. I made new friends. I had some quality time with my long-time friends and also those whom I've known for a while, but don't actually know. Thank you for taking your time to come to my shows, watch my videos, share your feedback, comments, texts, and emails, telling me how much you enjoyed my stories and/or sets. Delightful encounters and interactions with you kept me going and I'm grateful for that.

I don't have any shows this month, but December is still busy for me in a different way. Learning that my mother had received a terminal cancer diagnosis, I flew back to Japan. However, I couldn't see her for the first two weeks because hospitals in Japan, still cautious about the pandemic, don't allow any visitors. It's a confusing and frustrating time. Being a patient is already tough, but staying at the hospital is more challenging right now because of the isolation. People are discouraged from speaking in public even when they wear a mask, so they cannot chat with other patients although they have nothing else to do. But I'm still thankful that we can communicate via the written word. Imagine: if we didn't have the technology, our world would be completely dark. Thanks to the Internet, I can FaceTime, Skype, WhatsApp, and Zoom with my friends in LA, Canada, and Australia. I've been attending my writing and standup comedy workshops. My friends check in with me regularly (thank you for reaching out!). So yes, I'm still grateful regardless of this unfortunate situation and also, I'm hopeful about my mother. She still has an appetite. She still exercises, so maybe she will beat the doctor's prediction like my friend, Kelly Spillman.

What else is new? As the Long Beach Community Theater is celebrating their tenth anniversary, they hand-picked their favorites from the past nine years and I was chosen! My new standup set is coming soon. And I'll bring my solo show to other cities. Please keep checking as I have many exciting events lined up in 2023.

If my terminally ill mother can still do squats, I need to keep running.

— Miyo Yamauchi

