

STORYLINE

Dedicated to Promoting Storytelling as a Living Art Form.



Newsletter of the
Storytelling
Association
of California

Dear Storyline Readers,

This issue of Storyline begins a new practice—themed issues. The Fall issue introduces a few applied storytelling ideas. Applied storytelling can be thought of as the situations in which storytelling theory and skills have been brought into or shared with children or adults who would not ordinarily consider themselves storytellers. In this issue, you will find three such examples. In the Winter issue of Storyline, we will share some applied storytelling practices within in educational settings. If you have a story to share, please let us know! Submissions for Winter Storyline are due December for January publication. Thanks, Sara Armstrong and Terry Stokes, Co-Editors

From Skeptic to Convert: My Healing Story Journey *by Joan Stockbridge*

I have to confess that I bristled when I first heard the term “applied storytelling.” A fan of Ruth Sawyer’s *The Way of the Storyteller*, I reacted negatively to a phrase that seemed to suggest a reductionist approach to story. Was I ever wrong! Once I consciously explored using story for growth and healing, I discovered that skillful use of story can lead to transformation.

My journey into healing story began unintentionally. A friend who was a social worker invited me to tell a story to her group of women at a domestic violence shelter. After I finished telling the “Stolen Child,” a Scottish tale about a woman whose child is stolen by the fairies, I felt a wild surge of energy in the room. “She’s like me!” a woman erupted. “I’m doing everything to get my kids back.” Another said, “My ex is like that dark king. He stole my baby.” Another murmured, “Drugs were my cliff.” And, “I need a wise granny.” Never before had my storytelling led to such an outpouring. Fortunately, my friend was there to guide and facilitate the conversation. I left the shelter determined to learn more about using traditional stories in therapeutic settings.

The learning journey has been rich and long. My

teachers have included the Healing Story Alliance (healingstory.org) and its many members along with the books of Alida Gersie. Mostly, though, I’ve learned by doing. For sixteen years I’ve led story groups in a program for homeless women and in a court-mandated residential drug treatment facility. This volunteer work is amongst the most rewarding in my life. I’m humbled and awed by the women, almost all of whom have been incarcerated, abused and/or traumatized. They are the first to tell you that they are not angels. Most carry heavy burdens of shame and guilt. Many have hit bottom and urgently desire change. Into this dark forest of suffering and longing, story can shine a strong and steady light, showing a way forward.



Joan Stockbridge

Recently I told “Shingebiss and Old Man North Wind” to five women in the drug treatment facility. The mood was somber. One resident was away at the Emergency Room with a sick baby. Another had received bad family news. I was silently thankful that I’d chosen a story with themes of courage and strength. After I told the story, I asked my standard question, “Can you see yourself in the story?” Some identified with Shingebiss feeling lonely and

frightened as her family left; others with Shingebiss facing her adversary; and one saw herself as victoriously greeting her returning family.

After sharing, the group’s mood was much lighter. They had inwardly accompanied Shingebiss on her journey. They had explicitly connected her story and their own lives. Hope was stirring along with the thought, “I too can face what I fear, and prevail.” I invited them to recall times in their lives when they faced challenges. They journaled, then shared their stories. As a final activity, they created personal affirmations.

This was a typical healing story session. Check-in begins to create a safe container where truthful sharing is calmly heard. A traditional story or myth is told. The metaphors, themes and arc of the story become the basis for the listeners’

personal explorations. Dark and painful experiences can be safely surfaced because the trajectory of the story provides reassurance that pain is ultimately transformed.

I don’t limit this approach to therapeutic settings. I look for simple and appropriate ways to invite audience reflection every time I tell a story. When people connect personally to myth, they access resources for growth, hope, and increased meaning. We also feel more closely connected to each other and to the archetypal patterns that stir in all of humanity.

Joan Stockbridge tells traditional, historic, and personal stories, and likes to listen to stories, too. A resident of the Sierra foothills, she received an Oracle Award from NSN in 2016 for service and leadership in the Pacific states. Her website is joanstockbridge.com

Shingebiss and the North Wind

From a 19th Century literary tale attributed to Chippewa sources, liberally adapted and retold by Fran Stallings; used with permission.

Long ago, the People could not stay in their northern homes all year round. It was pleasant in the summer, cool, and breezy. But in the fall they knew they would have to go south like the birds, like the buffalo. Because of Old Man North Wind.

Old Man North Wind’s headdress was not made of feathers, but of icicles. His clothes were made of ice and snow. And the features of his face were fierce, twisted with hate for other living things.

When he came down from the far North country and blew his frosty breath — Pah! — everything froze. There was no more food. The animals who could not sleep through the winter had to go south. The People went, too.

But one year a young woman of the tribe, whose name was Shingebiss, said, “It’s not fair that we have to leave our homes because of Old Man North Wind! He’s just a creature like the rest of us. I’m not afraid of him.” And she sang,

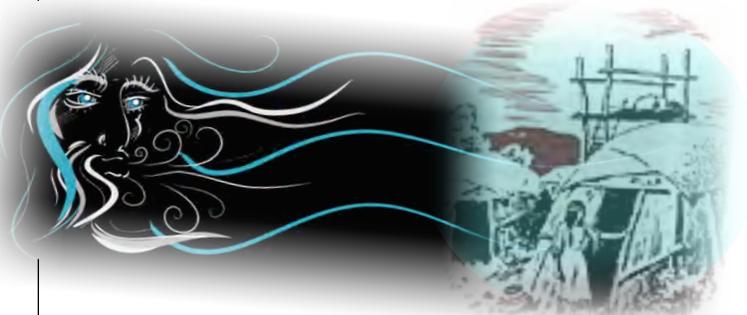
*North wind, North wind, fierce of feature
You are still my fellow creature.*

*Blow your worst; you can’t scare me
I’m not afraid, and so I’m free.*

The other People said, “No, Shingebiss, you must not stay. You will freeze. You will starve! Come South with us.”

But Shingebiss refused. “I have ideas for ways to stay warm and find food. I want to try them. I’m not afraid.” *And she sang her song.*

The other people pleaded with her, but she was stubborn. So they said goodbye. They were sure that they’d never see her alive again.



When they had gone south, Shingebiss began to work. She built a new kind of lodge, not open and breezy like the summer lodges of the People, but with double walls — which she stuffed

with dry grass and moss, to keep out the cold and wind. Then she collected great piles of dry wood, so that she could keep her fire going at all times.

She waited. *And she sang her song.*

Then Old Man North Wind came down from the far north country. He blew his frosty breath — Pah! — and everything died. Everything was still... except for the smoke rising from Shingebiss' lodge.

"What is this?" he asked. "Who is this, who dares to defy me? They can't live without food." He blew his frosty breath — Pah! — on the lakes and streams. Thick ice covered them.

But Shingebiss just walked out onto the ice and chopped holes. She went ice fishing! She took her fish home to her lodge, cooked them, and ate them. She was warm and comfortable, *and she sang her song.*

Old Man North Wind blew around and around Shingebiss' lodge, but she just built up her fire and was warm and comfortable.

"So," said Old Man North Wind, "I will come inside." And he stepped in the door.

Shingebiss was sitting by her fire, with her back to the door, but she felt the chill when Old Man North Wind came in. She added more wood to the fire *and she sang her song.*

Old Man North Wind came closer. He sat down next to her!

But she just added more wood.

The flames rose higher, and higher.

Old Man North Wind began to notice that his headdress of icicles was drooping.

His clothes of ice and snow were becoming soggy, and full of holes.

Drops of water ran down his face.

"What is this? It can't be tears, because I never cry. This can only mean that I'm — melting!!!"

Old Man North Wind ran out of Shingebiss' lodge and rolled in the snow until he was cold again.

"This Shingebiss," he said, "she is too strong for me."

In the spring, when the People returned, they were amazed to find Shingebiss alive and well. "We thought you would freeze and starve! We thought we would find nothing but your bones!"

Shingebiss said, "I have learned ways to keep warm, and ways to find food. I can teach them to you. But you can't stay here if you're afraid."

So she also taught them *her song.*

For the song/chant and story notes, see:

<http://bit.ly/2d11Pnq>

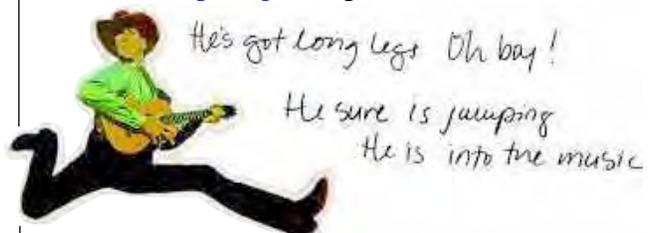
TimeSlips: How to Tell Stories *With* (not to) People with Memory Loss

by Liz Nichols

TimeSlips is a creative storytelling method that opens storytelling to everyone by replacing the pressure to remember with the freedom to imagine. Although it is fun for anyone, it was created by Dr. Anne Basting, a drama professor at the University of Wisconsin, who is a brilliant and tenacious pioneer with a big dream — transform the quality of life of people with dementia by creating pathways for them and their care partners to share in creative expression together. She named it TimeSlips to convey the idea that *these* stories don't need to

have the normal "beginning, middle, and end" — instead, the priority is on accepting and celebrating whatever ideas, images, and emotions the tellers bring to the storytelling process.

Since its inception in 1998, TimeSlips has trained hundreds of professional and volunteer facilitators, created a wonderful website, www.timeslips.org, and put out a convenient



4-hour online training course. It's become a model of making it simple, meaningful and FUN for people to grow and connect across the challenges

of cognitive disability. Most of the people who use it do NOT consider themselves storytellers – which is great. It can be used in so many settings – from one-on-one with a family member with Alzheimer’s, to adult day centers, to small or large groups in assisted living residences, to community organizations. But I believe we storytellers have what it takes to really bring out the very best in TimeSlips – and in ourselves once we take the leap into it.

What is that leap? And why should we take it? Well, my own leap came when I was Director of Storytelling Programs at Stagebridge. One of my jobs was to take our active senior storytellers into places like skilled nursing or assisted living to share stories. While some audiences were responsive, when we’d go on the “Memory Care” wing we’d get mostly sleepily nodding heads and blank stares. Other arts Stagebridge offered, like music or movement, worked well even with Alzheimer’s’ folks, but stories weren’t getting through. So when I heard about TimeSlips I jumped at the chance to be trained in it and learn to train others. Now we could tell stories WITH them, not TO them. It was remarkable – the participants were engaged, connected to each other, and us and were not passive listeners. The challenge was this: we had to turn the direction of the stories over to them.



We have a long way to go. We're going to take him on a lot of adventures.

The basic steps are these:

1. Go in with an open, playful attitude where the process is more important than the product and it is a “failure free zone.”
2. Choose a thought-provoking, possibly humorous photo as a prompt (the TimeSlips website has over a hundred – with suggested questions for each!). Avoid family photos, celebrities, printed signs or captions, or famous places that the teller(s) may or may not recognize.

3. Make sure tellers can see and hold the photo – it becomes a touchstone they can reconnect with.
4. Ask open-ended questions about it (journalism’s “who-what-where-when... is a great start).
5. Reassure the tellers they can say anything; that there is no right answer – “we’re making it up.”
6. Write the story down so when the story is done, you can share it back to the tellers (who may not remember 10 minutes in the past) and others.
7. Retell the story back – whether it makes sense to you or not. Don’t censor or “fix” it. Here’s where your storyteller’s tools – vocal variety, gesture, etc. – add so much.
8. With permission, publish the story on the TimeSlips website to let the world see the talent and creativity you unleashed (this only works if you used a photo from the website).

The results can become a story, a poem, or a song, and can interweave imagination, memory, and emotion to create humor, empathy, poignancy – everything, in other words, that a good story really needs. Feel free to try it out using the website’s resources. Or take the online training if you’re looking for more guidance. (If you are a family caregiver for someone with dementia, it’s free!). Either way, let me know how it goes!

To learn more and read some sample stories, visit timeslips.org and liznichols.net (click on Creative Aging).

Liz Nichols is a professional storyteller and educator. She is the former Storytelling Director of Oakland's Stagebridge. Liz has over 15 years experience teaching, performing and developing storytelling in schools, museums, and other community venues, including programs for people with memory loss based on the TimeSlips method. She will present a workshop on this topic at the Sierra Winds Story Retreat in Murphys (October 14-16).



Arts In Corrections Needs Storytellers

by Michael D. McCarty

Since September of 2014, I've been working steadily in the California Arts Council's (CAC) Arts In Corrections (AIC) program. This was part of a pilot project to determine whether to reinstitute the AIC program, which had run in all California prisons from the late 80's until 2003.

A friend whom I'd met when I first entered the world of professional storytelling in 1992, Zoot Velasco, had been involved in the program as both an artist and an Arts Administrator. When the program was revived, Zoot, then the director of the Muckenthaler Cultural Center in Fullerton, CA, invited me to participate. I also received a similar invitation from Quetzal Flores, then Program Manager for the Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA). I accepted both.



As far as I can tell I was the only performance storyteller participating in the pilot project. The only other artist I'd met in the program billed as a storyteller is actually a screenwriter, so what I brought to the program was quite unique. There are a variety of theater programs (including Tim Robbins' Actors Gang), musical instrument classes, poetry, bead making, drawing, and so on.

The original program showed that arts classes in the prisons had a powerful effect on the inmate population. Inmates who participated in the arts programs were less likely to engage in violence, and those who got out were less likely to return. And over time there was a ripple effect in the prisons, which resulted in less violence in the general prison population.

The focus of my storytelling workshop is to help the participants find, develop, and tell their stories. I use a variety of storytelling exercises, old and new. The main oldie but goodie is my story bag, a bag filled with miscellaneous objects that the volunteer uses as the focus of a story. Two new exercises came out of

teaching the prison classes. The first I call Titles. I have them think of five or ten incidents based on a theme such as a time when they'd helped someone or someone helped them. Then they talk about the various titles in depth, which can lead to stories.

The second uses little cards from a company called Thoughtfuls-Compendium (<http://www.live-inspired.com/Thoughtfuls-C227>). There are twelve sets of cards with categories such as Be Happy, Carpe Diem, Thanks, etc. I have them share an experience related to the quote on the card.

Recently an inmate asked me why I didn't have them doing theater games. I replied, "I'm a storyteller. I don't do theater." Theater exercises are often used for team building. I'm showing them how to tap into their individual creativity and their own personal story. I also model folk tales and historical stories. Often they create allegories based on their life's experiences that are quite telling.

Of all of the classes offered methinks mine is the only one where the inmates ask me, "So what hell is storytelling???" They haven't a clue. But after I model a few stories, answer their questions, and have them do my story bag, they're in like Flint.

My program has been well received by both the inmates and prison administrators. This has resulted in a demand for storytellers throughout California. The budget for AIC has been tripled and now includes all California prisons from San Diego to Susanville. The artists involved are of all races, men and women, young and old, and from varied backgrounds.

Check out this link to read other artists' experiences and to see a video of some of the inmates during classes and talking about the program:

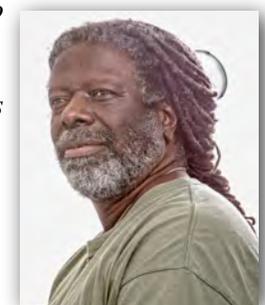
<http://conta.cc/2cGq5zh>

If you're interested in getting involved, contact me: agriot@earthlink.net, 310-67708099 H, 310-927-1029 C.

"To have once been a criminal is not the disgrace. To remain a criminal is the disgrace!"

Malcolm X

In 1992, Michael D. McCarty discovered there was such a thing as a professional storyteller. Storytelling is something he'd been doing since high school and beyond, so he leaped full body into that world, telling, learning, and teaching around the country and around the world. Since 2014 he's been working in the Arts-In-Corrections program, giving storytelling workshops to inmates in over half a dozen California prisons. HE LOVES HIS JOB! agriot@earthlink.net



**Third Fridays at the Silk Road House,
2016-2017 Call for Proposals**

The Storytelling Association of California invites proposals for events to include in our monthly series, Third Fridays at the Silk Road House, for the 2016-2017 season.

SAC@SRH is held on the 3rd Friday of the month, as follows:

October 21, 2016, 7-8.30 pm: “If Our Lives Be Short, Let Our Fame Be Great: Nart Sagas from the North Caucasus.” Produced by Dana Sherry, with performances by Csenge Zalka, Cassie Cushing, and Tim Ereneta.

November 18, 2016, 7-8.30 pm: “Tales from the Wayside.” Produced and performed by Lance McVay.

December 16, 2016: Open

January 20, 2017, 7-8.30 pm: “Money, Money, Money!” Produced by Marian Ferrante.

February 17, 2017, 7-8.30 pm: “Regional Gem: Marilyn McPhie.” Produced by SAC.

March 17, 2017: Open

The Silk Road House is located at 1944 University Ave, Berkeley, CA, 94705. 35 chairs and 3 tables are provided. The piano in the room is to be used only with prior permission from the Silk Road House. Only non-alcoholic beverages may be served as refreshments. Capacity: 30 in audience, 7 performers and producers.

All SAC members in good standing are invited to submit a proposal to produce a storytelling event. If you would like to use the space or have any questions, please let us know as soon as possible by email at story.sac@gmail.com or you may contact Dana Sherry, Third Fridays Committee Chair, by phone at 925-258-6803.

As host, you are responsible for the following:

- Selecting performers and providing the list of performers to SAC 3rd Fridays Chair
- Designing event flyer
- Publicity beyond the SAC website, Meetup, ePulse, and Facebook page
- Set-up and clean-up for the event, including:
 - Arrange tables and chairs as desired prior to performance, and return them to original positions at end of performance.
 - Clean room so that it is restored to original condition.
 - All clean up must be complete by 9 p.m.

As sponsor, a SAC board member will:

- Open and close the venue.
- Provide publicity on the SAC website, Meetup, ePulse, and Facebook page.
- Welcome the audience.
- Make tickets available through BrownPaperTickets.com and at the door, if space is available. All proceeds from ticket sales go to SAC.
- Generate a guest list, check off guest names as they arrive, and sell tickets at the door as needed.



Your proposal should include the following information:

1. Name of Producer(s):
 - Phone number(s)
 - email(s)
 - Website or other online resource (if applicable)
2. Title of Event:
 - Written how you would want it on the SAC website and in other publicity materials (10 words max)
3. Brief Description:
 - Written how you would want it on the SAC website and in other publicity materials (50 words max)
4. Intended Audience:
 - Is your event for adults, families, or other specific groups?
5. Start and end time:
 - While most SAC@SRH concerts have been held from 7-8.30, the space is available any time between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m.

FROM THE CHAIR:

Sara Armstrong, SAC Board Co-chair



We're reinventing ourselves! The SAC Board had a lively and productive retreat recently, in which we reviewed the recommendations by the SAC Task Force that was convened last year, and affirmed our commitment to developing the capacity of Board members, increasing relationships with Swap groups, developing policy to work in partnership with other groups, and continuing successful programs and projects. Our work with the Silk Road House, Out-of-Towners, Regional Gems, Tellabration!™, Hearth Tales, and the Jenny Fund offer our members a variety of experiences, and support our mission: To promote Storytelling as a living art. Grow and nurture small storytelling groups; create opportunities for communities to hear storytellers from many cultures; disseminate information about traditional and contemporary storytelling; and cultivate storytelling opportunities through networking, training and education.

SAC Board of Directors

Co-Chair:
Sara Armstrong
saarmst@telis.org

Co-Chair:
Juliet Pokorny
djampokorny@att.net

Vice-Chair:
Cathryn Fairlee
cfair@monitor.net

Secretary:
Carol Nyhoff
cnyhoff@gmail.com

Third Fridays:
Dana Sherry
dlsherry@hotmail.com

Treasurer:
Shags Shagrin
shags@planningforlife.info

Malcolm Grissom
malcolm@malcolmgrissom.com

Lashon Daley
l.daley@berkeley.edu

Molly Raynor
zipora.ray@gmail.com

Nick Smith
nsmith@cityofpasadena.net

Advisor:
Karin Werner
karin.p.werner@gmail.com

Marilyn Rudzik
marilynrudzik@gmail.com

Garth Gilchrist
garth@wordsoftheland.com

Terry Stokes
toffstokes631@yahoo.com



NSN LIAISON REPORT:

— by Tim Ereneta

NSN Liaison for California's 9 Bay Area Counties

Shop for the Holidays and Support Storytelling

NSN's auction will run online from November 1–10, 2016 at www.storynet.org. Get ready to bid on unique items like beautiful handmade clothing and jewelry, coaching sessions to grow your storytelling, and registrations to popular storytelling conferences and festivals. Beginning November 1, bid online, and you will be automatically notified if someone outbids you, so you can raise your bid. NSN membership is not required to participate. Funds raised will go to NSN's Member Grants program, which supports storytelling projects across the country.

Have You Considered Board Service?

You believe in storytelling as an art form, and believe it deserves a national voice. Do you have nonprofit or financial experience that you could bring to NSN? Consider serving on NSN's board. If you'd like to inquire further about board service now or in the future, please contact NSN board development chair, Molly Catron at mollywcatron@gmail.com.

Next Year's National Storytelling Conference

Mark your calendars for June 29–July 2 (with June 28–29 pre-conferences) for the 2017 National Storytelling Conference in Kansas City, Missouri. Details about fringe, workshop, and showcase opportunities will be posted soon at www.storynet.org



2016 TELLABRATION!™

Tellabration™! was conceived of as a day in November every year when everyone all around the world would tell stories. You will note that the local celebrations take place on a number of days—so you can attend more than one!

Sunday, November 6 4:00-6:00 PM **RICHMOND**
 SAC Tellabration!™ Kaleidoscope Coffee, 109 Park Place. This is a SAC MythOff, where eight tellers will perform myths of Latin America. Limited number of seats. Tickets \$10 at mythoff.brownpapertickets.com or by calling 800-838-3006. More info at cfair@monitor.net

Saturday November 12 2:00-4:30 PM
ANTIOCH Delta Wordweavers Tellabration™!
 Antioch Public Library, 501 W. 18th Street. Reservations 925-757-7919 \$12 adults, \$8 students. Tellers: Linda Moore, Bertha Reilly, Ruth Stotter, Lawrence Crason. MC: Laurie Pines. Contact Marian Ferrante at: deltawordweavers@att.net or 925 437-1360.

Saturday November 19 7 PM **PALO ALTO**
 For location and teller information check

southbystorytellers.com and Silicon Valley Storytelling Meetup. Tickets at door. Contact: Joy Swift @ joy.swift@sbcglobal.net

Saturday November 19 7:00-9:00 PM **SANTA ROSA**
 The Glazier Center 547 Mendocino Avenue. FREE admission; refreshments available for purchase. Tellers: Cal Johnson, Jacquelyn Lynaugh, Kenneth Foster, and Diane Ferlatte Contact Elaine Stanley (707) 539-3642 for further information.

Sunday, November 20 3:00-5:30 PM **DAVIS**
 Odd Fellows Lodge, 415-2nd Street. We will have our 4th annual Tellabration™! FREE admission, with any donation going to the storytellers. Tellers: Marian Ferrante, Tom Wade, Ed Lewis, and Tim Ereneta. Contact Ed Lewis for flyers and information at: ed-lewis@sbcglobal.net

November 6th, 2016

4-6 pm • Sunday • \$10
 Kaleidoscope Coffee • 109 Park Place • Richmond



Our mythical tellers!

- Caroll Dickinson
- Neshama Franklin
- Jeff Byers
- Sara Armstrong
- Linda Yemoto
- Elizabeth Overmyer
- Karin Werner
- Beatrice Bowles

\$10 • Tickets at Brown Paper • 800-838-3006
mythoff.brownpapertickets.com

A Tellabration sponsored by
 Storytellers Association of California
 SAC • www.storysac.org

Gregg Neilson
 1938-2016



We all miss our favorite story listener and story supporter. Gregg was a world traveler and an engineer. Once he married storyteller Cathryn Fairlee, he warmly hosted 24 Epic Days and 20 House Concerts.

FINDING THE FUNNY

Prospect your past to dig up humorous experiences for future stories

by Craig “Hackin’ Boo” Harrison

(A version of this article first appeared in the Sept. 2016 edition of *Toastmaster* magazine)

As a storyteller and co-founder of the Toastmasters specialty club LaughLovers, I am often asked about how to find funny material from which to craft future stories. People always say, “Nothing funny ever happens to me.” And yet when I’m coaching them, as we explore their lives we find myriad experiences that are, in retrospect, funny. Even better, the humor found in their unique stories is universal. We can *all* relate to their seemingly personal experiences.

What about you? Can you readily recall experiences that would make for humorous stories? Even past travails and traumas may now be ripe for comedic retelling. After all, that classic comedy formula often rings true: Tragedy + Time = Comedy.

For you as a storyteller searching for humorous material, I recommend you eschew using other peoples’ experiences, the retelling of apocryphal stories or gussying up of clichéd jokes found on the ‘Net. Instead, I invite you to become a raconteur of your *own* stories.

You are seen as a confident teller when you can tell humorous stories that are self-effacing, making light of your own weaknesses, foibles and mistakes. We’ve all fallen short, said the wrong thing, meant well and messed up, and made boneheaded mistakes. Laughing at them is actually therapeutic.

Laughing at the Woman & Man in the Mirror

“You endear yourself to listeners when you share vulnerability,” according to Mr. Jollytologist®, Allen Klein, a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP). Klein is the author of *The Healing Power*

of *Humor and Learning to Laugh When You Feel Like Crying*. “Poking fun at yourself in stories shows your humanity,” he says, “and helps listeners relate to your experiences, which they relive with you when you retell your stories. When we laugh together, we bond!”

Interview Yourself

Next are some questions to ask yourself (or have a partner ask you) to identify personal material from which to fashion humorous stories for speeches.

Describe a time when something went wrong! What was it? Give us the gory details. What were the ramifications? Were the stakes high? Were the penalties painful? Do tell!

Have you ever been in the wrong place at the wrong time? What was that like? How did you feel? Describe the inner dialogue that accompanied those fateful moments. Did you experience dread, trepidation or consternation? We want to know.

Faux pas! Did you ever put your foot in your mouth by saying the wrong thing to the wrong person, or say something inappropriate at the wrong time? Were the authorities involved? In-laws? Parents? Children? Recreate that dramatic dialog!

How about the *first* time you did something? The first time you drove a car, traveled overseas, went on a blind date, met your boss, or cooked a soufflé. Relive the experience and all that it encompassed.

Did you survive a traumatic experience you can now look back upon with a fresh perspective? Once we’ve had time to accept or understand what happened, we can share the horror and its humor with others.

Ever gotten really, really lost? Oh, it can be a matter of degrees! Were maps involved? Landmarks? Misunderstandings? We want to know the choices and consequences.

“Laugh and the world laughs with you.”
- ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

✓ Ever broken something expensive, rare or sacred? Did someone see you? Did you try to fix it? Did you make it better or worse? There’s nothing like calamity compounded by ineptitude. Share your foibles!

Congratulations, you’ve now uncovered great stories to tell in your presentations, story concert, workshop, training, or keynote presentation. Now what?

Developing Your Stories

After answering the questions above, take a particular experience and now, close your eyes and relive the experience in all its rich detail.

According to humorist Ray Engan of **SenseiHumor.com**, and member of Toast of Petaluma Toastmasters club, people often fall down on remembering and relating the story details. “They leave out details that would make something funny. They’ll just say, ‘I drove a car to the bar.’ Yet if they really went back and remembered, they’d recall that they were driving a *pink 1972 Ford Pinto* that had half its side caved in ’cause it *rolled three times* and it really looked like a *terrarium on wheels*, and they walked up like a human *gecko*.” These details delight the audience and add to your story’s humor.

You may choose to record your reminiscences into a microphone, or perhaps recount the experience to a friend or family or club member. You may want to tell it a few times to different people to see what *else* you remember, and also to gauge how others react to it. Consider telling it at a local story swap or guild, or a gathering where tales are told. For some, this may be at a café; for others, a tavern!

Crafting Your Content

Now, write your story down for telling conversationally. Details are key here. Remember, *specific is terrific!* Answer the following questions about each particular experience:

✓ What was the context for a given story?

✓ Who were the characters? (Describe them by their physical attributes: the way they sounded, thought, dressed, stood, and carried themselves.)

✓ Can you attach distinctive voices and appropriate accents to key characters? (This helps the listener track the story effortlessly and adds richness to the tale.)

✓ What were the stakes? (The more severe, the more dramatic!)

✓ Can you remember key dialogue? (Recreate it.)

✓ What were the pivotal plot points?

✓ Are there surprises in your story? (Understand them, where they fit, and how and when they are to be revealed for maximum impact, whether comedic or dramatic.)

Consider telling at a local story swap or guild or gathering where tales are told.

Finding the Funny

Through the use of this process I’ve reviewed experiences in my life and uncovered numerous events that turned into stories to entertain, educate, and inspire others.

As a child I erected my lemonade stand — during the Berkeley (California) riots of the late ’60s, with tear gas and mayhem in the air. My best customers...

National Guard chased my customers away!

For a junior high school English assignment to write original poetry, my friend and I instead plagiarized lyrics from popular songs printed inside album covers—only to be undone when our instructor asked us in class to recite our poems and other kids who knew the songs started to recite along with us. (I’ve since embraced honesty unconditionally!)

As a college student, a summer job at an Emeryville industrial factory saw me ill equipped to operate heavy equipment. Calamities ensued as I dropped a forklift load of supplies on nearby railroad tracks as a train approached, ran out of gas while driving a flatbed truck—only to learn such trucks have *two* gas tanks—and unintentionally learned multiple ways to jam and ruin expensive radial arm saws.

TALK, EAT & WALK



Ranger Tim explains the habits of packrats



Linda Yemoto describes recapturing 200 bullfrogs



Lucky "potluckers" digging in



Always time for announcements



Sara with 2 storytellers from New Zealand

Saturday, October 1st, was the picture-perfect day for a fall picnic – clear blue skies, perfect temperature with a slight breeze, and trees beginning to turn color. Over forty members of SAC gathered in Tilden Regional Park in the Berkeley hills for afternoon barbecue and potluck.

After visiting with old friends, meeting new ones, and enjoying all the great food, the SAC members went on a storytelling nature walk led by “Rangers” Tim Gordon and Linda Yemoto. Both Linda and Tim had worked as naturalists in the Tilden Nature Area for over thirty years and were happy to

share a few stories of their nature experiences. Linda began with a Chinese folktale that explained the origins of the Buddhist practice called “feng sheng, releasing of an animal that would otherwise be eaten. This set up her story, “*The Chinese New Year’s Frogs*,” which actually happened in the Tilden Nature Area. She told the first part of the story, and then in cliffhanger-style, said she would continue the story when they reached Jewel Lake.

Along the walk to Jewel Lake, the group learned about packrats and their nests, spiders, poison oak, and more, all while enjoying the beautiful weather and natural environment. Upon reaching the lake, Linda continued and concluded her story about recapturing half of the 200

bullfrogs released at Jewel Lake. Tim shared two wonderful stories, “*Newt Man Tests His Wind Suit*,” and “*The Skunk in the Garbage Truck*.”

After enjoying the stories, one group followed Tim along a trail to listen for “the door in the forest,” hear more reminiscences, and sing some Tim-songs. Linda led another group on a little more adventurous hike back to the picnic site. It was a wonderful day filled with good friends, good food, and good times.



The Why in Funny

What makes such stories funny? I asked Engan, a past Toastmasters District Humorous Speech Contest winner, about his definition of humor. He cited the work of HuRL, the Humor Research Lab (humorresearchlab.org) and the definition put forth by Peter McGraw and Joel Warner, the authors of *The Humor Code*: “Humor is a benign violation of a norm that surprises you.” As Engan explains it, “If I fall down and don’t hurt myself, it’s hysterical to you. If I’ve hurt myself then it’s not funny, but if there’s no pain, then that’s funny.”

No doubt you, too, have stories that can be funny when related to others. We’ve all had bad hair days, bad school days, and bad workdays. We’ve all had family functions that flopped or performances that fell flat. It’s what makes us human! If we can laugh at it, our audience can too.

Keeping Your Audience Safe

According to standup comedian, actor and motivational speaker Larry Wilde of the Carmel Institute of Humor www.larrywilde.com/carmel.htm, audiences would rather laugh at your foibles than their own! The author of 53 books on humor, Wilde contrasts the attack approach of comics like Don Rickles, who insult their audiences, with the ways in which most comedians and entertainers will serve themselves up as the subject for laughter. “Audiences need to feel safe,” he says. “They come to be entertained, not attacked. Protect your audience by making yourself the butt of the jokes and humor in your presentations and they’ll laugh more, and more genuinely.”

Horror to Humor

Missteps, accidents, lapses of judgment, naïveté and bad luck tend to be funny to others when they listen to stories. Your personal story has universal implications. And remember, audiences love stories! Even when embedded in training, keynotes, consulting, or coaching.

Engan cites a London Business School study

about what audiences remember. “If I fill my presentations with statistics, my audience remembers 3 percent. If I show a pretty picture behind me (the PowerPoint effect), it goes up to 15–20 percent. If I tell a story, the rate of retention rises to 50 percent, and if that story is funny, retention skyrockets to about 70 percent.” And that’s the story of why personal stories of a humorous nature trump studies and statistics, win contests, and get told and retold.

It’s time to go prospecting in your past to uncover hidden story treasures from your own life, and share them with the world! To paraphrase a popular quote, “When you can laugh at yourself, the world laughs with you.” So sharpen your pencils, sharpen your wit and story on!



Craig “Hackin’ Boo” Harrison of Berkeley, believes in recycling. Craig retells tales of humor and humanity from his childhood in his keynote presentations and training programs. For more on Craig, please visit www.HackinBoo.com

STORY SWAPS

June 2016. Call Marion at 925-437-1360 to update your listing.

Story Swaps are gatherings of storytellers and story listeners that are open to the public. We recommend you make contact to confirm that the swap is meeting as listed, and then go listen, as well as tell your stories! Find Storytelling Guilds and Organizations by state with the National Storytelling Network at: www.storynet.org/resources/organizations.html

GREATER S.F. BAY AREA

ALAMEDA

Alameda Island Swap is on hiatus while Frank Bette Center is upgraded. The swap hopes to reconvene in the fall. Contact: Cathy Dana 510-523-7853 or email cathydana@gmail.com.

ANTIOCH

Delta Wordweavers - 2nd Tuesdays from 7 to 8:45 PM. Bring your stories, poems, and ballads to these appreciative listeners. It's always a surprising mix, and we go home the better for coming! Meet at Antioch Public Library, 501 W 18th St., Antioch. No swaps in July or December. Contact: Marian at 925-437-1360 or deltawordweavers@att.net

BERKELEY

Mixed Bag - 1st Thursdays 7 - 9:00 PM at 828 59th Street, Oakland. One of our longest running swaps where stories traditional and personal are swapped in an informal setting. All tellers and listener are welcome! Contact: Kate Frankel 510-710-6644 or email: katefrankel19@earthlink.net

LOS ALTOS

Southbay Storytellers & Listeners
2nd Sunday of every month - 7 to 9 PM at Los Altos United Methodist Church in the Garden, Rm #3, 655 Magdalena, Los Altos. Adult, and youth tellers and listeners. Contact: Joy Swift 650-494-1383 joy.swift@sbcglobal.net
www.southbaystorytellers.com

MONTEREY

Storyteller's Studio - 1st Mondays monthly (except holidays) 6:30 PM. Monterey Public

Library, 625 Pacific, Monterey. Here is your opportunity to practice your part or whole stories for support and feedback. We'll provide a sanctuary where you can practice your work up to 10 minutes. Must call if you need more than 10. Contact: Jeanne McCombs, Special Services Coordinator 831-646-3949 mccombs@monterey.org

OAKLAND

Sing, Say or Play meets on 3rd Saturdays at 7 PM in homes. We are a singers' circle, a story swap and a tunes session all in one! Join us for a lively evening of old-fashioned friends doin' it for friends around the kitchen table. Contact: Ed Silberman 510-853-1749 for home location.

ORINDA

Contra Costa Talespinners - 4th Thursdays 7pm Gallery Room, Orinda Public Library, 26 Orinda Way, Orinda Village near BART. Free parking. New tellers with 5 minute stories & listeners are welcome. Contact Liz Nichols: 415-505-7941 liz@liznichols.net or Sally Holzman at 925-478- 8488.

SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco Story League - 2nd Thurs. 10 am - noon. This long-running swap which began in 1953 meets at the Golden Gate Park Senior Center, 6101 Fulton (corner Fulton & 37th Ave). Welcome, and stop by with your story or listening ears. Contact: Rhoda Meer at 415-566-9050 or email rhoterose@att.net

SAN RAMON

Tales & Tellers - 2nd Sunday, 6-8 pm. This Toastmasters club focuses on storytelling skills. Round Robin evaluations include comments about writing, staging, voice, and gesture. Members must belong to a weekly Toastmaster Club with dues to practice their speaking skills. Visitors are welcome without charge. Contact Dennis Dawson, Pres., or Brenda Murphy, Vice Pres. epistomolus@hotmail.com or bm8527@me.com or talesandtellers.toastmastersclubs.org

VALLEY

Aesop's Fables - 1st Thursdays 6:30 pm, this Toastmasters Storytelling Group meets at the Sacramento County Admin Bldg. 700 H St., 3rd floor break room in Sacramento. Free parking on roof after 6 pm. Contact: Arne Sampe 916-362-9013.

Sacramento Storytellers Guild - 3rd Saturday 2:00-4:00 pm at Eskaton Monroe Lodge, a senior citizens' residence at 3225 Freeport Blvd in Sacramento. Members take turns hosting with themes suggested. For next theme, contact Lawrence Crason 916-399-1999. And Larry will tell you a joke on any day of the week.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

ARCATA & EUREKA

North Coast Storytellers meets periodically. Our meetings are always open. We are a program of the Ink People Center for the Arts in Eureka. Visit our website: northcoaststorytellers.inkpeople.org/ For more information or to attend the next meeting, please contact Ali at: ali@mattole.org.

FAIRFAX

Tales With Tea on most 1st Tuesdays 7:00 - 8:30 pm at Wu Wei Tea Temple, 1820 Sir Francis Drake Blvd, Fairfax, features professional/experienced tellers by invitation. The Tea Temple is a wonderful intimate setting for both tellings and listening where we are building an enthusiastic community of story lovers. No charge, but we pass the hat for donations to our featured teller. To find out who's scheduled (or introduce yourself as a potential featured teller), contact Nancy Binzen at nancy@wisdomtracks.com

PETALUMA

West Side Stories A Story Slam! - 1st Wednesday monthly 7:30 PM Sonoma Portworks 613 2nd St., Petaluma. \$5 admission from brownpapertickets.com. Ten names drawn out of a hat get to tell 5-minute personal stories with a winning cash prize of \$50. Contact: Dave Pokorny 707-477-4416 or d-po@att.net or www.westsidestoriespetaluma.com

REDDING

The Traveling Bohemians Spoken Word Night - 2nd Wednesdays 7:00-9:00 PM at the Bohemian Art Loft, 3404 Bechelli Lane, Redding. An Open Mic time for poets, writers, playwrights, storytellers, comedians, and actors. Five minute true stories, told live on stage without notes. Audience welcome. Donations, refreshments. Contact 530-229-7818 or info@travelingbohemians.org

SANTA ROSA

Do Tell Story Swap - 2nd Tuesdays, 7:00-9:00 PM. First Congregational United Church of Christ, 2000 Humboldt St., Santa Rosa. We ask for a \$2 to \$5 donation to help cover the cost of the room. Teen and adult storytellers and listeners are welcome. Stories are to be told not read in a 5-7 minute time. Snacks to share are appreciated. Contact: Elaine Stanley 707-539-3642 or Katy Mangan 707-545-5977.

SIERRA NEVADA

PLACERVILLE

El Dorado Storytellers Guild (El Dorado County): Please contact Patsy Thompson at bothfarms@netzero.net or call 530-621-4154

AUBURN

The Sierra Foothill Storytelling Guild (Placer & Nevada Counties): Please contact Chery Anderson at taleteller@gmail.com or call 539-613-1153

SONORA (and vicinity)

Mother Lode Storytelling Guild (Tuolumne & Calaveras Counties) 3rd Saturdays 4:00 - 6:00 PM, August to May. Moves around, but most meetings are held at Senora Joe's Coffee Shoppe, 140 S. Washington St., in historic downtown Sonora. Need to confirm location each month. Contact BZ Smith at bz@hive-arts.org or call 209-532-7697.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

CULVER CITY - W. LOS ANGELES

Community Storytellers - 2nd Tuesdays (except August) 7:30 PM Culver-Palms United Methodist Church, 4464 Sepulveda Blvd., Room 11, Culver City. Free. Contact: Audrey Kopp 424-234-TALE (424-234-8253) communitystorytellers@gmail.com www.communitystorytellers.org.

PALM DESERT

Desert Storytellers - 3rd Thursdays 4:00 - 6:00 PM Joslyn Senior Center, 7350 Catalina Way, Palm Desert. We are a lively eclectic group of storytellers that challenge the limits of storytelling! Contact: Kathy at 760-360-1046 or kklug52@hotmail.com

SAN DIEGO

San Diego Story Swap - 4th Wednesdays 7:00 PM at Barnes and Noble, 19775 Westview Parkway, San Diego 92126. Contact Marilyn McPhie at 858-484-1325 mmcphie@gmail.com www.marilynmcphie.com www.storytellersofsandiego.org
First Wednesday Storytelling - 1st Wed. 7:00 PM Rebecca's Coffee House, 3015 Juniper Street, San Diego, CA 92104 Donations. 619-284-3663 Contact: www.rebeccascOFFEEHOUSE.com or www.storytellersofsandiego.org

STUDIO CITY

Story Salon - Every Wednesday., 8:00 PM at Coffee Fix, 12508 Moorpark Street, #373 (west of Whitsett Street), Studio City. \$4 minimum donation. Some Friday nights too, at 8:00 PM too.) Contact: Beverly Mickins 818-754-4354 or storysalon@gmail.com



Get your Article in the Storyline

Have some storytelling news? *Storyline* is a quarterly published newsletter and may accept submissions of copy and photos from Swaps and storytelling organizations based on article size, content, and interest to SAC audiences.

Submit your copy: 50-150 words in Microsoft Word format. Color or B&W photos should be 2.2 or 3.3 megapixels. Larger counts will not improve photo for publication.

Send your articles to Sara Armstrong, Co-Editor, newsletter@storysaac.org, *Storyline* in the Subject area, so that they will arrive on or before the following dates:

April (Spring) Storyline, submission by **March 1st**

July (Summer) Storyline, submission by **June 1st**

October (Fall) Storyline, submission by **September 1st**

January (Winter) Storyline, submission by **December 1st**

Support Your Storytelling Community! Join SAC or Renew your Membership today.

Includes *Storyline* quarterly newsletter, listing in SAC's Directory, website link, & discounted tickets for Out-of-Towner series, concerts, workshops, the Bay Area Storytelling Festivals, and Galas.

Fill out the form and return to SAC, P.O. Box 11891, Berkeley, CA 94712 or go to: www.storysaac.org.

\$30/1 year Individual
 \$50/2 years Individual
 New?
 Renewal?
 \$45/1 Year Dual
 \$60/2 years Dual
 \$75 SAC Patron
 \$120 SAC Best Friend
 Will Volunteer?
 Name _____ E-Mail _____
 Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ Cell _____

Do NOT give my information to other storytelling organizations or events.
 I want my Storyline via e-mail or _____ regular mail
 I am interested in giving a tax-free donation to SAC

Disclaimer: The editor(s) may edit the article content, grammar, punctuation, spelling, or readability at their sole discretion. For photos of individuals and children, photo releases for individuals may be required before publication. Errors in submissions as to facts, dates, locations, or other information is not the responsibility of SAC or the *Storyline* staff to re-search or correct. Please consult the <http://www.storysaac.org/calendar.html> website for the most current information on dates and places. *Storyline* is an official publication of Storytelling Association of California (SAC), a non-profit organization, P.O. Box 11891, Berkeley, CA 94712. Sara Armstrong Board Chairman; Sara Armstrong and Terry Stokes, *Storyline* Co-Editors.