

HUMOR



letters

The Danger of TM

I am disturbed that you printed William Hoffer's article on transcendental meditation in the January 1977 issue. You obviously don't realize that you printed a controversial topic. It appears that you exercised no discrimination in what gets printed, which is sad for an educational magazine. I think you have misled some members and have ventured into the personal subject of religion.

It just so happens that this was the topic of a speech I recently gave before my Toastmasters club. Entitled "Endangered by TM Education," the speech was about a lawsuit the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey filed to stop the teaching of transcendental meditation in New Jersey public schools, with the basis of this suit being this nation's cherished guarantee of separation of church and state. The decision to sue was not made until after research determined that there was valid basis for the position.

The philosophy behind transcendental meditation is indeed based on Hindu scripture. Our first warning came from a Baptist missionary in India, who wrote in a newsletter how sad it was that most Americans don't realize that transcendental meditation, while not called a religion, is in fact a way to reach the masses for Hinduism. Flagrant evidence that it is a religion is its practice of offering fruit, flowers and a clean handkerchief to the lords of TM—a sacrifice. If that isn't religion, I don't know what is.

You should not have published that article in *THE TOASTMASTER* magazine. It was grossly out of place. This is misleading people into thinking transcendental meditation is not a religion, when actually it is.

Lester F. Hemphill
Lake Hiawatha, New Jersey

Religious Overtones

I was very unhappy to see the article, "A Way to Cope With Executive Stress" by William Hoffer, reprinted in *THE TOASTMASTER*. I certainly hope that Toastmasters International is not promoting transcendental meditation.

It is claimed that TM is not a religion, yet it is taken directly from an East Indian religion and was introduced into this country by a member of that religion. The mantra, the word given to be repeated over and over, is very often the name of a Hindu deity (some are good and some are evil). I would like to suggest to Toastmasters everywhere that if you are currently practicing TM, you should find out what deity your mantra is or what the "sound" means in English. Also, you should be aware that the initiation ceremony involves worship of Hindu deities. Repetition of the mantra has a calculated hypnotic effect when one is opening the spiritual door to supernatural invasion by non-Christian forces.

Believing as I do that TM is a threat both to the individual and to our country, I do not think the promoters of TM should be given space in *THE TOASTMASTER*.

Robert H. Green, Jr.
Mabelville, Arizona

Tighten It Up!

In the February issue of *THE TOASTMASTER*, Mr. J. B. Yates of Wellington, New Zealand, stressed the need for Toastmasters to use correct grammar, sentence structure and pronunciation in their speeches, as well as in their writing. I agree wholeheartedly.

One of the things that attracted me to this organization was the opportunity to associate with and listen to others who aspire to grammatical expression. Our

ears and senses are assaulted daily by outrageous abuses of our language in our business associations, as well as through radio and TV. Toastmasters should be, a soothing oasis for battered sensibilities.

But shouldn't our International organization be an exemplary example of dedication in this respect? Many of our contributors to *THE TOASTMASTER* are professional writers who are almost above reproach, but there are also members whose contributions. Although it may not be a privilege to edit the copy of the professionals, I believe it is your responsibility to edit the copy submitted by Toastmasters to bring it as close to perfection as possible.

The contributions of Toastmasters are often meaningful and helpful, but we lose a great deal when they are full of redundancies, poor sentence structure and questionable grammar. It is easy to forgive our fellow Toastmasters who zealously strive to share their knowledge and experience with us. Still, we do a disservice to our organization when we accept these errors unquestioningly.

I feel sure that some of these articles could be generally improved with a little editing on the part of your staff to tighten up the verbiage and reconstruct the sentences, without offense to the writers. *THE TOASTMASTER*, as an educational tool, should cover all the bases.

G. Ruth C.
Broadview, Ill.

"Letters to the Editor" are printed on the basis of their general reader interest and constructive suggestions. If you have something to say that may be of interest to other Toastmasters, send it to us. All letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity. Letters must include the writer's name and address.

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL is a non-profit, educational organization of Toastmasters clubs throughout the world. First Toastmasters club established October 22, 1924. Toastmasters International was organized October 4, 1930 and incorporated December 1932.

A Toastmasters club is an organized group, meeting regularly, which provides its members a professionally-designed program to improve their abilities in communication and to develop their leadership and executive potential. The club meetings are conducted by the members themselves in an atmosphere of friendliness and self-improvement. Members have the opportunity to deliver prepared speeches and impromptu talks, learn elementary procedure, conference and committee leadership and participation techniques, and then to be evaluated in detail by fellow Toastmasters.

Each club is a member of Toastmasters International. The club and its members receive services, supplies, and continuing guidance from Headquarters, 2200 N. Grand Ave., Santa Ana, California, U.S.A. 92711.



Dr. Ralph C. Smedley
Founder, 1878-1965

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What is it that actually makes people laugh? Most experts can't say for sure. What they can say, however, is that humor plays an important part in all of our lives. Depending on how we use it, it can arouse attention, break the ice, relieve monotony or drive home a point. That is, providing we know how to use it!

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Getting Back to the Basics

by
Robert W. Blakeley, DTM
International President



“KEEP it simple, sugar.”

My wife Dot frequently uses this expression to help keep me in the proper perspective, regardless of what I'm attempting to accomplish. Surprisingly, her attitude is not too different from that of our founder, Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, who, in writing or talking about the Toastmasters program, he often gave us the same advice: "Keep it simple."

I'm sure we have all used the same idea—the KISS formula—in many of our speeches and have found it to be a direct, easy way to effectively communicate with one another. The same can be said about the organization's educational materials.

Over the years, many of our materials have been greatly improved. And this is due, to a large extent, on the effective use of this basic formula—this "back to the basics" philosophy I believe to be the real strength of the Toastmasters program.

Such is the case of the new *Communication and Leadership Manual*, which will soon be available to new members and for sale to current members.

While the basic content and number of projects has remained basically unchanged, making it unnecessary to discard the manual in which you are presently working, the ease of using this valuable learning tool has been greatly improved. And frankly, I'm excited about it.

That's not to say that the present manual is useless; not at all. What we've done is simply combined the basics of Dr. Smedley's first manual with the academic challenge of the manual we've used so well for the past few years. And it's nice to have the best of both worlds.

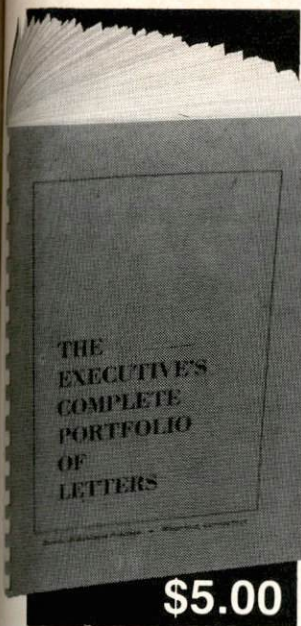
I sometimes recall a period in my life when I was enthralled with my extensive speaking and reading vocabulary, because I had worked very hard to develop it. Of course, that did not mean that I was a good communicator, but experience has taught me that an extensive vocabulary was necessary only if you were to understand the academic and technical material I was forced to read.

Today, except where the beauty of a special word or phrase is necessary to make a point, simplicity is the key to effective oral or written communications in the business world. I know because I live and wrestle with a world of gobbledygook in Washington, D.C., and people really prefer this direct, simple approach.

Simplicity describes our new manual. There's no gobbledygook; just plain straightforward communication that's easy to understand.

We hope you enjoy the change and will find it to be a helpful aid in explaining our program to prospective members and sponsoring organizations. I know it will help more members achieve their CTM recognition than ever before.

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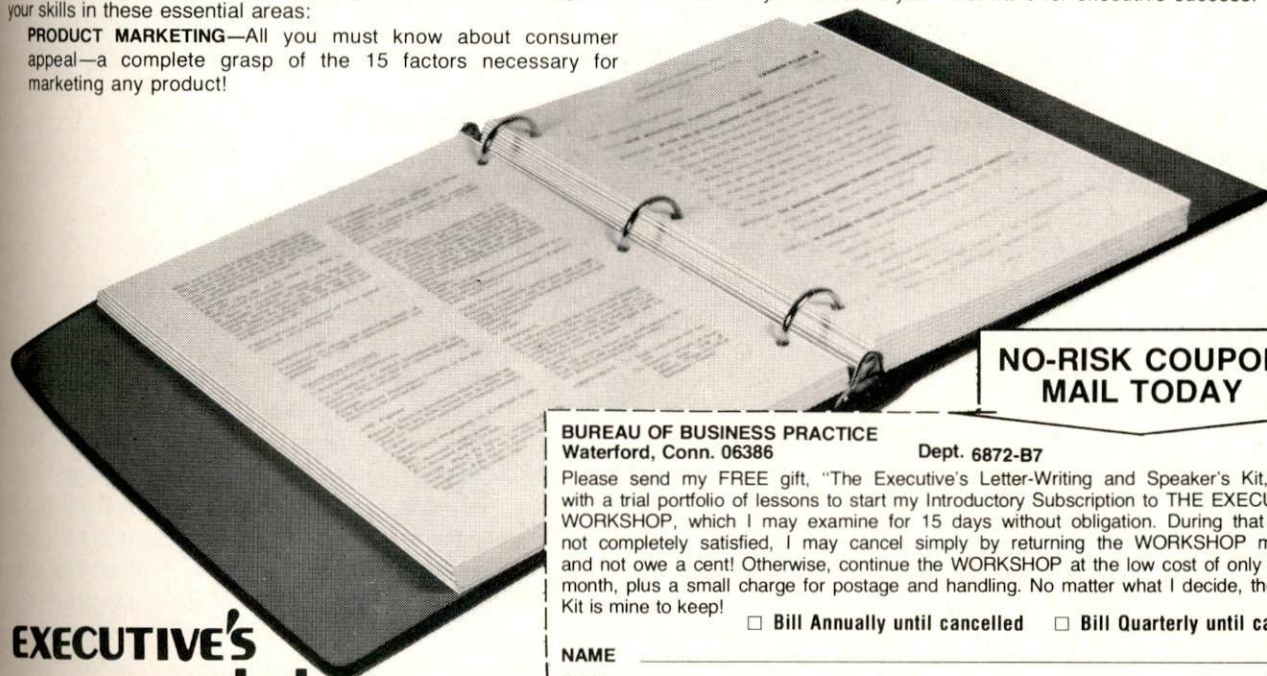
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What's Funny and Why?

What is it that makes people laugh? Most experts can't say for sure. What they can say, however, is that humor plays an important part in all of our lives . . . providing we know how to use it.

WHAT is it that actually makes you laugh? Have you ever asked yourself just why you giggle, chuckle or roar happily and continuously at one humorist and turn away irritably from another one?

Just what causes a person to laugh is something of a mystery. One night, after a speaking engagement in St. Louis, I

From *When It's Laughter You're After*, by Stewart Harral. Copyright © 1962 by the University of Oklahoma Press.

by
Stewart Harral

was riding in a taxi with another passenger who kept chuckling to himself.

I asked, "Excuse me, but what are you laughing at?"

"You'd really like to know?" he answered.

"Yes, I would."

"It's like this," he explained. "I'm just telling myself some jokes and I've told myself one I'd never heard before."

Analysts have had their go at humor and you can read their findings with being greatly instructed. "Humor can be dissected like a frog," someone once remarked, "but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraged." Only the purely scientific mind is in seeking humor's inside workings.

like the little boy who tore up
follows to see where the wind came

litt observed that man is the only
that laughs and weeps, for he is
only animal that is stuck with the
ence between what things are and
they ought to be.

ethe said that there is no more sig-
ant index of a man's character than
things he finds laughable. One man's
jest is another's abhorrence. For
a smashing, well-played pun is the
of humor. For others to think that
st is worth its salt it must involve
e delightfully devilish reference to
or wrongdoing. Other individuals
ter the merry tale that visualizes the
rified gentleman taking a sudden
Some like the slapstick; some like
burlesque; some the sophisticated.

"I don't know what humor is," Will
gers said. "Anything that's funny—
gedy or anything, it don't make no
ference so you happen to hit it just
it. But there's one thing I'm proud
—I ain't got it in for anybody. I don't
e to make jokes that hurt anybody."

An Unknown Quantity

"All I know about humor," Fred
len said in Maurice Zolotow's *No
ople Like Show People*, "'is that I
n't know anything about it. Some
right boy over at NBC once told me
ere were only thirty-two basic jokes.
another bright boy reduced it to eleven.
Somebody else has it down to two—
comparison and exaggeration. What-
ver it is, it never changes."

You may laugh today at a wisecrack
or joke which brought guffaws from
your grandfather many years ago, but
each of you saw it in a slightly different
form. Ancient wheezes are often kept
up-to-date by a process known as switch-
ing. Here's how it works: You take one
of the old standbys like, "He worships
the ground she walks on." A gagman
works it over and presto, Red Skelton
says, "I worship the ground she walks
on, and I don't mind that property she
owns on the other side of town, either."

Groucho Marx, a superb creative co-
median, says there are all kinds of humor
—"some derisive, some sympathetic,
some merely whimsical, and that is what

makes comedy so much harder to create
than serious drama, for people laugh in
many ways, but they cry in only one."

Some say the wisecrack is a new form
of humor. But is it? "How would you
like to have your hair cut?" the loqua-
cious barber inquired. And the man in the
chair replied, "In silence." And who
was the man in the chair the first time
to hear this gag? A king of Macedonia.
When? The fifth century B.C.

"The first law of humor is that things
can be funny only when we are in fun,"
Max Eastman points out in his book,
Enjoyment of Laughter. Furthermore,
he says that when we are "in fun" a
peculiar shift of values takes place.
Pleasant things are still pleasant, but dis-
agreeable things may acquire a pleasant
emotional flavor and provoke a laugh.

Humor has a certain fragility. For
instance, jokes about William Jennings
Bryan were considered very funny
indeed at the turn of the century, when
it is estimated that there were at least
ten thousand of them in general circula-
tion. They aren't funny now. Oldsters
remember the endless and extravagant
anecdotes about the Ford motor car
which once convulsed the nation. They
aren't funny now.

Dig into the old copies of *Abe Martin
Almanacs*, the musings of Artemus
Ward, the newspaper columns of Will
Rogers, and you will see how certain
types of humor fade in a few years.

It's Still Funny

There's another side to the story. In
the words of one gagman, "If a thing
was funny, it is still funny now."

That sweeping statement contains a
lot of truth. Shakespeare discovered the
comic possibilities of a stooge long
before Ted Healy, Joe Cook or others
thought about it. The stooge, as Broad-
way understands him, is a humble and
dull character who is on the receiving
end of rude and unkind remarks. Bot-
tom, in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, was
one of the first stooges in dramatic litera-
ture and remains, after more than 300
years, perhaps the funniest stooge of all.

Humor detectives tell us that the
mother-in-law joke is almost as old as
time; it goes back to the taboos of primi-
tive peoples. As recently as 3000 years

ago Greek warriors pledged everlasting
friendship with the toast: "And may thy
mother-in-law burst."

You've no doubt heard the probably
apocryphal anecdote of Lincoln and
Grant. According to legend, after the
triumphs of the Army of Tennessee,
critics of Grant reported to Lincoln that
the General was habitually drunk. "If
you can find out the brand of whisky he
used," President Lincoln is supposed to
have said, "I'll send a barrel to all my
generals." Then there's the story cred-
ited to George II of England. Enemies
of General Wolfe, who subsequently
died storming Quebec, told the king that
Wolfe was mad and should be confined.
"Mad? Mad?" said George. "I only
hope he will bite some of my other gen-
erals." It seems to be the same yarn.

Seven Basic Jokes

And how often have you heard that
there are only seven basic jokes? You've
seen some of the lists—marriage, sea-
sickness, old maids, whiskers, cute
kiddy sayings, brides, fat men and other
topics. Actually, these "basic" jokes
are not jokes at all but only classifica-
tions of subject matter. It is not correct,
therefore, to say that an absent-minded-
professor joke is one of the basic jokes,
for the reason that it is possible to make
a hundred individual jokes about an
absent-minded professor.

Let's look at four witticisms:

1. "His dog sleeps in the same bed
with him. It isn't healthy, of course, but
the dog has gotten used to it."

2. "The poor pup is an Einstein pup—
no one can explain his relativity."

3. Mrs. Newly Rich: "Does this dog
have a good pedigree?"

Kennel owner: "Pedigree? Why,
madam, if this dog could talk, he
wouldn't speak to either one of us."

4. Teacher: "Your theme on 'Our Dog'
is identical to that of your brother's."

Kid: "Yes'm, I know—it's the same
dog."

These jokes are about dogs, but it is
apparent that they are four separate
jokes. So you see that the number of
jokes is limited only by the number of
things there are in the world for man to
discuss.

And you ask, "If there isn't any such

thing as a list of 'basic jokes,' are certain situations always surefire to get laughs?" Not really. A joke, let's remind ourselves, is more than words—it is an intricate structure. It may contain all kinds of attitudes, perceptions, thoughts and feelings, and these may differ vastly in the different individuals who laugh at it.

The unexpected can be humorous. There is a sudden twist, mishap or shock that startles us in a funny way, as when Jack Paar came out in favor of shorter taxicabs. "When they knock you down," he explained, "they don't stay on you so long."

Other examples: A nervous passenger on an elevator asked the operator, "What would happen if the cable broke? Would we go up or down?" and the exasperated operator replied, "That, madam, depends on the life you've led."

A golfer told his partner, "I'm anxious to make this shot." He explained, "That's my mother-in-law up on the clubhouse porch," and his friend implored, "Don't be a fool. It's 200 yards. You can't hit her from here."

When a man asks a saleswoman in a department store, "Do you keep stationery?" we are already on our way toward an object—an answer, namely, "Yes, indeed," "All the newest varieties" or "Oh, yes, what kind did you have in mind?" And if the saleswoman replies, "Well, up to a certain point and then I just go all to pieces," we are "pulled back" from that object abruptly and hopelessly. We will never get there, never in this world. And that is funny. But we have got somewhere else, and somewhere that we find it fun to be.

Beating the Priorities

Another thing that strikes people funny, Leonard Hole points out in *How to Write Television Comedy*, is when the proprieties take a beating. Folks say to themselves, "I'd like to do that, but I wouldn't dare." You remember the fellow who was asked what his secret ambition was and he replied, "I've always wanted to throw an egg into an electric fan."

Hole points out that "you see this release of inhibitions on a physical level in the wild cavortings of Jerry Lewis.

And you see it in the slap-happy clowning of Red Skelton as he bobs for an apple and comes up with a fish in his teeth."

Then on the verbal level, Hole continues, "many of us enjoy bursting through the bonds of propriety in the genial impudence of Groucho Marx or the deadly insults of Charlie McCarthy."

Have you ever become amused at an insignificant happening in church (it probably wouldn't amuse you in another situation) and you started to giggle? "How dreadful that I'm laughing in church," you say to yourself. And just because you aren't supposed to giggle, you may continue to do so under such circumstances. Why do you laugh? It is the element of repression.

Some of the greatest comedians, Hole maintains, "have made us laugh by acting out playfully our own baser impulses, which we somehow manage to keep concealed, or at least controlled. How did Amos and Andy keep the nation in stitches for years? Probably we found Andy more amusing than Amos because Andy had a large streak of larceny in his heart. He always yearned for the easy dollar—just like we do!"

The Taboo Subject

Say what you will, but I don't believe in using a joke that oversteps the bounds of good taste. "But they laugh louder at off-color jokes," you insist; and some audiences do laugh louder at this sort of thing. Why the big laughter? The story may really be witty. But so often it's because the subject is taboo—again it involves a repression. You really have finesse as a humorist if you can take a story which might offend and made it palatable.

Most of us, oddly enough, laugh at trouble. And as Mr. Eastman reminded us, these situations must be "in fun." Look, for example, at the type of scary comedy used successfully by Abbott and Costello. (They were caught in predicaments and we laughed at them because we were safe and they weren't.)

Here are some joke situations of people in trouble:

Hunter: "Are you sure we're not lost? I was told you were the best guide in the state of Maine."

Guide: "I am, only I think we're Canada now."

Man on telephone: "Doctor, my wife has just dislocated her jaw. If you're not here this way next week or the week after, my wife might drop in."

Warden: "What would you like your last dinner?"

Condemned: "Steak and mushrooms. Before this, I've always been afraid to eat mushrooms."

What will amuse your listeners often hinges on this fact: they differ so much in what they will and will not take playfully. In your remarks you often arouse feelings toward a person, idea or institution, but you must not arouse feelings that are too strong or deep.

Watch for Playfulness

Night after night a joke which pertains to a heart attack always got a tremendous laugh for Ezio Pinza in *Fanny*. But several days after President Dwight Eisenhower's heart attack in 1955 it was met with complete silence, Steve Allen relates in *The Funny Men*. So as humorists we must not crack jokes on subjects about which people feel too intensely to be playful.

Your listeners must experience a playfulness as they laugh. Pity the humorist whose soul (you'll never get him to admit) who hears or sees something which amuses others, and says, "I don't see anything funny about that." He cannot get away from his centeredness, his concentration that "life is real and life is earnest." He does not know how to break into play. He cannot let himself go in sheer fun, in joyous expansiveness.

Laughter, then, is the outward manifestation of a sudden inner state of playfulness. Your listeners won't laugh at the funniest amusing joke in the world if they're not "in the mood." So you see that in our analysis of humor we must always remember this: A joke is a process, not a thing.

Strangely enough, there also seems to be a close relationship between humor and pathos. "Every comedian I know is a pathologist," Leonard Hole revealed in studying the psychology of humor for an article in the *American Magazine*, "mentally aware of this surprising fact." One of your

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humorists, Abraham Lincoln, criticized for telling so many jokes in the darkest days of the Civil War. Explanation: "I laugh because I must..."

Herold recognized this close kinship of fun and sadness when he said, "The humorist is a man who feels bad but feels good about it. The nearer he gets to pain, the longer it is apt to last. And somewhat in the same vein, Mark Twain observed that people 'laugh with tears in their eyes.'" Mark Twain, who skyrocketed to fame from the staff of a radio station, said that certain kinds of pain make us laugh. He believes the way a man gets hurt is what makes the situation because they see them as dilemmas which themselves might be in. But remember if they think you're really hurt, they'll stop laughing immediately.

A Fun-House Mirror

Some of the choicest humor exaggerates our everyday experiences. Sid Waddler used to hold up a fun-house mirror to our behavior and show how funny things really were. He'd find humor, for instance, in the way we squabble in planning our family vacations. As Sid would say, "The truer it is, the funnier it is." Almost any joke which pokes fun at human pretensions is sure to get laughs. Pretensions of grandeur, false family life, snobbishness or conceit annoy us, so we enjoy destroying them with a sharp weapon of irreverence.

When you face an audience, maybe you'll wonder if Mrs. J. Pluvius Didgit and her husband Jeffrey will laugh at the same jokes. Do women have a different sense of humor than men? "Women listen to men more attentively than men," comedian Henny Youngman declares. "I don't like to have women in the audience because they are better laughers. Women laugh at themselves more than men. Most women have 90 problems a day, and it's wonderful that they still have their sense of humor. My jokes are plain picture jokes. I try to make everything count. There isn't much thinking to be done." On the other hand, comedienne Nancy Walker points out that "it's very hard to make a woman laugh—especially if you're a woman, too. Women have a

fantastically good sense of humor," she explains. "But they don't like to see another woman make a clown of herself. Women want to be comfortable with their comedy. They want to identify themselves with the jokes and they want the comedienne to be human."

Women have a better sense of humor than men but they hate to show it. That's the belief of Billy Glason, a former vaudeville star who has made the comic sense his business. "Hands down, women win," he declares. "Tell them a joke and they catch on quicker and laugh longer. What's more, they remember the joke and they're eager to pass it along."

"I have seen women laughing hysterically," he continues, "while men just grunt and light their cigars; and the men are so busy trying to think up their own jokes to top the one they heard that they usually miss the point anyway."

What's Their Condition?

After crisscrossing the nation and addressing countless audiences I am convinced that what people will laugh at is almost entirely determined by their conditioning—how "they got that way." You can't assume that what wowed a convention of brain surgeons will bring explosive laughter from a luncheon meeting of book publishers. Golfers always enjoy this wisecrack: "By the time you can afford to lose a golf ball, you can't hit it that far." Nongolfers rarely get the point, and it's understandable, because they have not been conditioned to do so.

How can you know what will amuse

an audience? Will they chuckle at the preposterous? The surprise? The insult? The ludicrous? The absurd? The more you search for the secrets of laughter, the more puzzled you may become. For every rule explaining the psychology of laughter there are countless exceptions. But remember that you have company because no two humorists have the same ideas on the ingredients of a comic situation. As you see, humor is elusive, delicate, difficult to pin down. Keep studying and experimenting with humor. Be alert to funny things in life. Then you can develop a sense of humor—the ability to see the funny side of things and to use them in convulsing audiences.

For a summary, let's listen to Bob Hope, the all-round champion in all fields: "You have to get over to the audience that there's a game of wits going on and if they don't stay awake they'll miss something—like missing the baseball someone has lobbed at them. What I'm really doing is asking, 'Let's see if you can hit this one.' That's my whole comedy technique." Strengthen yourself in this technique and you'll not only know what's funny and why—but the response from your audience will prove it. □

Before his death, Stewart Harral was director of Public Relations Studies and Professor of Journalism at the University of Oklahoma. A former president of the American College Public Relations Association, he was characterized as "a wizard in the art of combining fun and philosophy."

How to Make You

Johnny Carson's method for keeping his humor relevant is really no secret. The same techniques—or tricks—can easily, simply, be used by every public speaker.

JOHNNY CARSON, in his opening monologue on show after show, year after year, stands up before camera and mike—plus several hundred people in the studio audience and many millions watching at home—and strings together some seven minutes of related, coordinated, sequenced jokes, gags and repartee.

On the other hand, amateur public speaker after amateur public speaker talks on the same basic subjects—weather, politics, crime, ecology, energy—and rarely can make his one opening joke *relevant* to the subject of his speech.

Why the difference? Why do so many speakers start their speeches with such statements as, “Before I begin to talk on my subject, let me tell you a really funny joke I heard just the other day” and follow with a joke? Rarely is it related in any way to the speaker’s subject. Some even proceed to point up the gap after they have told the opening joke by saying, “Well, that really doesn’t have much to do with what I want to talk to you about.” Why this difference between the professional and the amateur in making humor relevant?

There are many quick, flip, but incomplete answers. “Carson’s got a staff of

writers. Pay me a million dollars a year (or whatever fabled salary Carson’s reportedly now getting) and I’ll be funny, too!” “Carson’s studio has a flashing light that tells his audience when to laugh.” “Carson’s got it easy because. . . .” Excuses, all of them!

Two Simple Tricks

Carson, and most comedians from Bob Hope to Mort Sahl, Mark Twain to Will Rogers, make their gags relevant largely through the use of just two simple techniques. These techniques, or tricks, can easily, simply, be used by every public speaker.

To point up the first technique to making a joke relevant to the subject of your speech, consider this story—perhaps overtold in your circle, but memorable and funny to me.

A truly dedicated golfer, a strongly religious man, is getting up in years. He worries about how much longer he has available to play his beloved golf. He visits his minister and asks, “When I die, wherever I go, might there be a golf course for me to play there?” “Well!” says the minister, “I’ve not been asked that one before. But let me check—give me a few days for prayer, and for searching through the Bible, and I’ll get back to



Humor As Good (Almost) As Johnny's

by Leon Fletcher



you." *A couple of days later the minister phones the golfer. "About your playing golf after dying—I've got some good news for you, and some bad." "Tell me, tell me!" urged the anxious golfer. "Well, the good news is that where you're going there are the most beautiful, challenging, interesting golf courses you've every played. The bad news is that your starting time is seven tomorrow morning!"*

Ask most public speakers "What's the theme of that joke?" and they'll immediately answer, "Golf." But they're wrong. Furthermore, the error of their reply reveals that most speakers fail to note one of the basic techniques of making humor relevant.

Golf is but the *peg* for that joke—the topic on which to hang the theme. The essential point, the theme is good vs. bad. Comedians as diverse as Steven Allen and Jackie Gleason have written books and articles claiming there are but seven basic themes for humor, although with more permutations than we can go into here and still maintain relevance.

Changing the Peg

Now while the theme of a joke is usually difficult, often impossible, to change while still maintaining the basic gag, the peg for a joke can usually be changed almost endlessly. And that is the first technique for making a joke relevant. Comedian Henny Youngman, the so-called "King of the One-Liners," devotes four pages of his autobiography, *Take My Wife . . . Please!* to examples of changing the peg of a joke.

The peg of that humorous story about the golfer could easily, effectively, be switched to a sailor—"The good news: where you're going there are beautiful boats, magnificent harbors; the bad news: your boat sails at seven!" Or it could be changed to basketball—"Great courts; you tip off at seven." Or dining—"Great restaurants; there's a table reserved for you at seven this evening!" Innumerable other pegs could be developed, too.

Comedians and comedy writers often call that changing the peg of a joke "pulling a switch." To pull a switch you usually—but not always—have three variables to juggle. You might change

the subject of the joke, or the character or the setting. Consider how you might apply switches in those variables to this story:

A plane takes off with a full load of passengers on a cross-country flight. As soon as it is airborne a voice comes over the public address system: "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome aboard and congratulations! You are the first passengers to fly on this new, completely automated airplane. There are no pilots aboard, no stewardesses, no crew whatsoever. The plane took off automatically, your drinks and food are about to be served automatically—and the plane will land automatically—all run by a computer. But please, do not worry. Be assured, the entire system has been tested thoroughly and checked as absolutely errorless, so nothing can go wrong . . . nothing can go wrong . . . nothing can go wrong . . ."

That story can be switched in setting by making it happen on a train, a bus, a taxi, elevator or such. The characters can be changed to a group touring an atomic energy plant, a new employee at a museum of modern science or a patient at a research laboratory, to suggest but a few options. The subject could become an automated grocery store, a dentist's office or a bank (which, on second thought, might be especially funny since some banks are just about fully automated).

The Short Switch

But a joke need not be a long one to be capable of being switched. Take another look at that Henny Youngman gag and book title we pointed to a few paragraphs back—"Take my wife . . . please!" Only four words, but all of them could be switched to produce new gags. Are you giving a speech on safety?—"Take my car . . . please!" Speaking on education?—"Take my school . . . please!" Or, switch that first word—"Mail my wife . . . please!" for a speech on the postal service losing packages. Switch that second word—"Take your wife . . . please?" for a speech on modern living trends. Finally, switch the tag word—that is, the last word in a gag. Giving a speech on inflation?—"Take my stocks . . . quick!" On condominiums? "Take my apartment . . . now!" Get the idea?

All jokes, however, cannot be switched

to fit any subject. When this happens you use the second comedy technique to make a gag relevant—a transition. With just a phrase, a sentence, occasionally a couple of sentences, you link the theme of your joke with the theme of your speech. Again it is valuable to turn to Johnny Carson for examples because he is especially active in using transitions. Typical and frequent transitions he uses include:

"Well, what else is in the news?"

"Oh, did you see in the paper today that . . ."

"Say, remember the other day when someone said . . ."

Other transitions that public speakers might use to relate their jokes to their speeches include:

"So that guy had his problem, and here's another problem I'd like to talk about with you this evening."

"That's how he (she) handled that situation, but how are we going to deal with . . ."

"That may or may not sound funny to you, but consider this much more serious problem. . . ."

Those two simple techniques—switch and a transition—can easily and effectively make your jokes, stories or gags relevant to the subjects of your speeches.

But here's a warning: Don't understand me to say that these are the only two comedy techniques you need. The point here is not to prepare you to handle all comedy in all situations, but to simply present you with two of the easiest, most frequently-used techniques of making your jokes relate to the subjects of your speeches.

When you learn to use switches and transitions for your humor, you'll be a lot closer to becoming the speaker you really want to be. And who knows . . . you may even be the next Johnny Carson.

Leon Fletcher is Exchange Instructor Speech at Leeward Community College, Hawaii, on leave this year from his position as speech instructor at Monterey Peninsula College in California. He is the author of 190 publications, including the college speech instructional text, *How to Design and Deliver a Speech*.

Gordon Sinclair to Receive Golden Gavel



GORDON SINCLAIR, the noted Canadian newsman, broadcaster and author, has accepted the invitation of Toastmasters International to receive its coveted Golden Gavel Award for 1977 at the 44th Annual Convention in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Mr. Sinclair will be honored during the Golden Gavel Luncheon, scheduled for Wednesday, August 17 at the Sheraton Centre Hotel. He becomes the 18th recipient of the award, the organization's highest, and joins such notable personalities as Earl Nightingale, Lowell Thomas, Walter Cronkite and Dr. S.I. Hayakawa.

Recognized for his outstanding contributions to excellence in the broadcast and publishing media, Sinclair's career has spanned five decades and has provided him with some memorable experiences. He once worked for John Philip Sousa, the composer and bandmaster, as well as Florenz Ziegfeld, the masterful theatrical producer. He was, for a brief period of time, part of Canadian Intelligence operations. And he has interviewed such historic figures as Adolph Hitler and Mahatma Gandhi. But success did not come easy to Gordon Sinclair.

Sinclair, 76, joined the *Toronto Star* as a reporter at the age of 22 and, after several uneventful years, began a series of travels around the world that would make him famous.

As a wandering reporter with no particular duties or assignments, he went where and how he pleased from 1928 to 1940, traveling more than 360,000 miles through all continents, all oceans (except the Antarctic) and most of the world's countries.

In 1932, he made his first trip around the world, specializing on India, and wrote *Footloose in India*; *Cannibal Quest*, a book about the South Pacific, Borneo and New Guinea soon followed.

He spent some time in West Africa (from which he wrote a series of revealing articles on voodoo and black magic) and later visited the French penal colony of Devil's Island, which provided him with material for his third book, *Loose Among Devils*.

But something happened on August 19, 1942 that would change all of that. The day after Canadian troops launched a seaborne assault on the beaches of Dieppe, France, Sinclair was asked to do hurried biographical sketches of five leaders

in that raid for a CFRB network radio broadcast. He did, and the result was a mid-day personality series, *Let's Be Personal*, that continues today.

Sinclair joined CFRB's News Department on June 6, 1944 (D-Day), was granted leave for a fifth trip around the world in 1948 (where he witnessed the Communist take-over of China and the lifting of the Berlin road blockade by the Russians) and returned to CFRB in 1949.

In 1957, he became a charter member of a new panel show on TV, *Front Page Challenge*, and has been there ever since.

Sinclair received considerable notoriety in the United States in 1973 when his now-famous *Let's Be Personal* tribute to the people of the United States was first aired and later widely distributed on the world's airwaves. The program congratulated Americans on their accomplishments when everyone else was demeaning them.

A member of Canada's News Hall of Fame, he was presented with the Distinguished Service Award by the Radio-Television News Directors' Association for "challenging and courageous commentary" in September 1974. □

OF all the different variables involved in humor, surprise has to be its greatest single element. It carries the secret of mystery and suspense, serendipity, the unexpected, excitement.

"I'd like to buy that little rhinestone brooch that you have in your window," the man said to the jeweler. "The one you have on sale for \$62.95."

As the jeweler was gift-wrapping the brooch, he said, "Is this going to be a surprise for your wife?"

"It sure is going to be a surprise," the man said. "She's expecting a \$2,500 diamond wristwatch!"

Where's the Surprise?

If you deliver a gift without surprise, you rob the occasion of fun and excitement. Imagine how this woman felt: As her husband left for work, he said, "Today is your birthday and on the way home I'm going to stop at the drug store and buy you a bottle of your favorite perfume." And he did. When he arrived home from work, he put a paper bag on the kitchen table and said, "I stopped at the drug store on the way home and bought some razor blades and shaving cream and a box of aspirin and that bottle of perfume I promised you. Here they are. What's for supper?" Believe me, that was a speech that didn't get a standing ovation.

Similarly, humor is like perfume. Deliver it improperly and you get nothing but a "stench." Deliver it with a flair and the "fragrance lingers on."

Take the surprise out of humor and you flop, you lay an egg, you're dead. But add the right amount of drama and suspense to your performance and your reputation will spread to the four corners.

How do you do it? What is the secret for getting laughs? The answer lies in understanding—and applying—several simple rules.

The surprise-ending of a funny story is called "the punch line." Whoever thought up that description showed genius, and he was right. That final sentence carries the climax, the twist, the denouement—the punch—of the entire story. That's where the first part of the story was leading. That's what everybody has been waiting for. And here it is. BAM!

The success of any funny story depends on two factors: first, how well you know your punch line and, second, how you deliver it.

Let's talk for a moment about the punch line itself, because even before you study how to deliver it, you must make sure you have one.

Be Sure It Fits

Assume that you have found a story in a book that you think is funny. Before you tell it, be sure it fits. Be sure it fits the time, the place, the audience—and you. Suppose you are speaking to a group in Springfield, Arkansas. And suppose the story you have selected goes like this: "The phone in Tory headquarters rang and an anxious sounding voice came over the line, 'Can you please tell me the name of the Labour candidate for Commons from Northumberland?'"

Stop! Hold it right there! Not another word!

Where did you find that story? You must have been reading an old British joke book or *The Manchester Guardian*. One thing for sure, it doesn't fit. The people in Smithfield aren't the least bit interested in the name of any candidate

running for the House of Commons. They don't even know where Northumberland is. And what is "Tory headquarters?"

To make that story fit, tell it this way: The phone rang in the headquarters of the Republican National Committee in Washington. An anxious sounding voice asked, "Can you give me the name of the Democratic Candidate for Congress from the 10th District of West Virginia?" The person at Republican headquarters thought for a moment and then said, "I'm sorry, I don't know. Why don't you call the Democratic National Committee? I'm sure they can tell you." And a second voice said, "This is the Democratic National Committee."

Above all else, you must—absolute must—know your punch line. You can mess up the leading part of the story a little bit. You can change it around from time to time. You can string it out as long as you can make it short. As long as you have a halfway believable story, you are on solid ground. But, that punch line: treat it like the precious gem that it is. Find it, write it in your own words so it will be yours. Then memorize it.

Say It in Your Sleep

Learn it so well that if someone rouses you from a deep sleep at 2:30 in the morning, you can roll over and give your punch line without missing a syllable. When you get it fixed in your repertoire that well, you are ready to try it out on an audience.

There are three main rules for delivering a punch line and one little "help" that you can use from time to time. Here they are:

- *Timing*—It is the art of setting your punch line apart from the rest of the story. It is the pause that allows your listener

The Proof Is in the

ow ones and the fast ones—to the brink together, eager to hear —ready to see the curtain fall. ale is simple and easy to learn. a count of three (1 - 2 - 3) before the punch line. Separate it from er part of the story. Give it a ountdown just like the boys do ets at Cape Canaveral. go back to the story you were n Springfield, Arkansas, to see works.

are tripping along merrily, telling y with your usual verve. Then ne to, "And a sad voice said (1 - "This is the Democratic National ttee." "

A Deep Breath

course, after you have practiced for time, you will not need to stand ounting silently (1 - 2 - 3). The real ers, the true professionals, use ew seconds to draw a deep breath. or perfection, practice this way: a sad voice said (deep breath), is the Democratic National Com- ."

low Down—In baseball, the pitch- ll it a "change of pace." You have et this final sentence off from the f the story with a deep breath. Now, it emphasis. Speak deliberately. eak more slowly.

ry this technique with that same old y we've been playing with. While are at it, put some realism into your tice. Actually pick up the phone and ak into it exactly as you would under se circumstances. Put yourself in the ce of that frustrated Democrat and y, "This IS the Democratic National mmittee."

That gives everybody—even the little old lady in the back of the room—an opportunity to "get it." Nobody will have to lean over to his friend and ask, "What did he say?"

• *Speak louder*—Give the punch line an extra bit of force and drama by raising your voice. This is not to say you are going to shout. Not at all! Don't speak too much louder; just enough to stress what you are saying—like telling your five-year old to "shut the door."

• *Repetition*—(This is the little "helper" we spoke of.) In order for everyone to understand the punch line when you throw it at them, repeat the essential words somewhere in your story. If your key word is given only once, it might be missed in the back of the room by someone sneezing or because of a spoon dropping to the floor.

To illustrate the point, let's go back to that first story. The jeweler says, "Is this going to be a *surprise* for your wife?" The man could have said, "Yes." But instead, he repeated the important word. He said, "It sure is going to be a *surprise* . . ."

Similarly, in the second story the words "Democratic National Committee" are spoken twice.

Repetition helps. But it is not an absolute must. There are some stories where it doesn't fit at all. For example, "Windermere is such a quiet and sleepy little town that our 7/11 Store closes at six o'clock."

Try these rules on your favorite story. See what happens. When you separate the punch line from the rest of the story, deliver it more slowly and raise your voice slightly; you will be speaking in

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Winston K. Pendleton is one of America's best known humorous after-dinner speakers. A former recipient of Toastmasters International's Communication and Leadership Award, he is a frequent contributor to THE TOASTMASTER.

PUNCH!

by Winston K. Pendleton

The Lighter Side of Humor

by

Interlandi



"A word to the wise . . . lay off the Indian jokes if you have any."



"Don't you think you've been overdoing the funny stuff lately?"



"I loved your imitation of Henny Youngman. And I'm dying to hear the rest of your speech."



"I don't think a speaker should crack-up over his own jokes."



"Here's a marvelous chance to try a couple of those one-liners from your speech tonight . . ."



"Or, as Carol Burnett would put it, and I do hope she forgives me . . ."



"Oh, oh. Looks like we get the Johnny Carson monologue bit before the financial report."

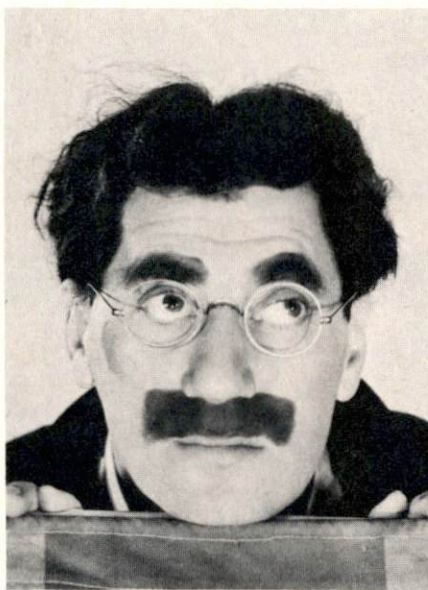
The One-Liner: Can It Work for You?

by
James C. Humes

In this golden age of television, the art of drafting and delivering one-liners has turned into a million dollar business. The problem, though, is that most speakers don't have a \$75,000 writer working for them. And even when they get the chance to appropriate such material, they come off looking like a second-rate nightclub comic.

As he lay dying in 1679, the Earl of Rochester expressed the hope that his only son might never be a wit. As the greatest wit of his time, he knew the pressures of supplying daily fresh humor. The Restoration court of King Charles is a far cry from the Washington of Jerry Ford, yet increasingly the humor writers of television are being pressed into moonlighting for presidents and senators. Nixon drafted one of the *Laugh-In* writers for humor help. And more recently, Jerry Ford used Bob Orben, who has made the art of drafting one-liners into a million dollar business.

A Washington lobbyist once told me, "Humes, I can produce the winning margin in any Senate vote if I have access to two things—a live-in maid for the senator's wife and a guy who can do opening one-liners for his speeches back home." Television has made show busi-



ness out of politics, and now every congressman wants to look like a Dick Cavett. To do that he needs a constant supply of funny lines.

I heard one Democratic congressman wow a partisan audience with these opening gibes at former President Ford:

"When I was a boy I was told anybody could become President. Now I'm beginning to believe it.

"Yes, Jerry Ford is a man whose greatness thrust upon him—and duck-

"I understand that just after the election he had a secret popularity poll taken—and it always will be."

Or listen to how a Democratic senator put down President Nixon some months earlier:

"Some people laugh when Nixon compares his trials of office to those of President Lincoln. But I must confess when I think of Nixon, I think of Lincoln—especially his statement, 'I can't fool all of the people all of the time.'

"Really, though, I am not too negative about the President. There are only two things about him I can't stand on his face.

"Well, he may be two-faced, but he's not blind. Dick Nixon is the type of man who cannot see a belt without unerringly hitting below it."

From the book *Podium Power*. Copyright © 1975 by James C. Humes. Reprinted by permission of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

you see why politicians like this staccato humor approach. You can build this into the beginning of any speech. If a politician finds three or four lines comfortable with, he can tell them in a series of different audiences, polish his delivery and timing in the process. (Usually they are not included in the prepared text for media release.)

Old time politicians like Lyndon B. Johnson and Everett Dirksen preferred the anecdote to the one-liner. In the television age the raconteur is giving way to the guest personality. One senator told me, "I like the one-liner better than the story because I want to look more like a wit than a windbag." We have the spectacle today of performers talking like politicians and politicians talking like performers.

The problem, though, is that most writers (and that includes politicians) don't have a \$75,000 writer working for them. And even when they get the chance to appropriate such material, they come off looking like second-rate nightclub comedians who fill in between songs at the end of a dive. The first thing is to recognize the difference between the one-liner and the bare-bones joke. A joke by my definition is a conversational exchange: the wife says, "What would it take for you to go on a second honeymoon?" and the husband replies, "A second wife."

The flavor of the one-liner is more like this: "Let's face it, men, you really need a wife. Think of all the things that you can't blame on the government."

Upbeats and Snappers

Most successful one-liners have "upbeat" and "snapper" parts. The "upbeat" is the abbreviated "buildup," and the "snapper" is the witty punch line.

To give another example on the same topic: "I don't really mind my mother-in-law living with us—but she could have at least waited until we got married."

Of course "marriage," "mothers-in-law," "drunks" and "women drivers" are topics the amateur speaker should avoid in one-liners. The best one-liner subject for the speaker to make fun of is himself. This way if he is awkward, the audience will miss it in their sympathy for the good-natured guest who does not take himself too seriously. And this

image is far more appealing than the smooth one-line artist who looks a bit smart-alecky ridiculing others. And there is yet another reason for making your one-line subject yourself. One-liners are basically opening warm-ups that follow the introduction (remember how Johnny Carson's opening pattern in the *Tonight* show always follows the introduction by Ed McMahon—"Here's Johnny!").

In a speech, your opening one-liners will follow your own introduction. So try to break the ice with a bit of modest self-deprecation:

"Thank you very much for the warm reception—which I so richly deserve and so seldom get.

"Seriously, Mr. Chairman, I want to say that I truly appreciate your introduction. I especially admire your way with words—the way you don't let yourself be inhibited by the facts.

"Actually, Mr. Chairman, I'll have to say that was the second-best introduction I ever received. The best was a few weeks ago when the program chairman arrived late and I had to introduce myself."

Humorize Your Job

Another way to make fun of yourself is to make light of your position. I heard a corporate vice-president describe himself this way: "I thank the chairman for his introduction, but I don't think he quite spelled out what a vice-president means. That's the title given to a corporate officer instead of a raise.

"Really, though, there is some satisfaction in being a vice-president. One thing is you can take a two-hour lunch without hindering production.

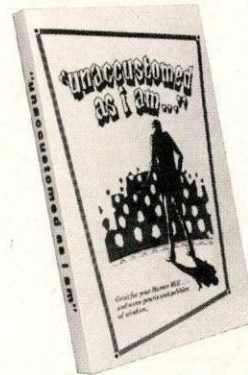
"Actually, though, being a vice-president is a real challenge. Not everyone who finds a molehill at nine can make a mountain out of it by five."

Another speaker I heard used as his takeoff place for humor his recent position in Washington, which was mentioned in the introduction.

"Thank you for your generous introduction. It's always nice to be described as a former high public official. That sounds better than what I really was—just another bureaucrat but without tenure.

"The chairman was also kind enough

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not to dwell on some of the details of my sudden departure. But I'll tell you one thing: my brief stint in government was actually like being in a mushroom. They kept me in the dark, they piled on a lot of crap and then they had me canned.

"I did, however, learn in Washington what the initials 'D.C.' stand for: Darkness and Confusion."

Whether it's being fired from a job, losing an election or getting panned in a review, the best one-liners make fun of the deliverer. John Tower, the diminutive senator from Texas, talks about his size, while Joe Garagiola, the former baseball catcher, kids about his hair, his hitting and the lack in either department. Sometimes a speaker, particularly when he is the guest of honor at a testimonial dinner or a retirement ceremony, will refer to his age.

"Really, though, I am very happy to be here tonight. In fact, at my age I'm happy to be anywhere.

"Actually, being 65 isn't so bad. As a matter of fact I rather like being called a

sexagenarian. At this time of life it sounds like flattery.

“Seriously, though, being of retirement age has its advantages. I understand from recent statistics that for every 65-year-old man there are three available women. The problem is by that time it’s too late.”

As you read these one-liners you must be aware of their rhythm—the straight sentence or two that is the upbeat, followed by the snapper sentence that pulls it down. The one-liner is like riding on a roller-coaster: you rise on the upbeat and fall on the snapper.

You might think I have an adverb problem. Did you notice how many times I start with “really,” “actually” or “seriously”? Bob Hope, the old master of the one-liner, does the same thing—“but seriously, folks. . . .” By saying “seriously,” Hope is trying to get his upbeat sentence accepted as straight. The more the audience believes his opening sentence is sincere, the more they are likely to laugh at the snapper line.

“Seriously, there are some great advantages in being 65. One is that you are no longer bothered by insurance agents.”

By beginning with the word “seriously” you have the audience half convinced you are about to wax philosophical on the benefits of old age. Then you deliver the funny snapper.

Stick to Your Subject

Whether you decide to make fun of your age, your weight or your golf score, stick to one topic. Don’t jump from one to another. Even the professional comics, with the exception of Henny Youngman, don’t try the scatter-hit approach. Stick to the subject and let one joke segue into another until you have a package of two, three or four.

A few months ago I was in Las Vegas for a convention, and I heard one of the top comics deliver this set of one-liners on the hotel accommodations:

“I can tell you I was in one of those very, very exclusive hotels. Even room service seems to have an unlisted number.

“No, really, I can’t complain. The management went to great trouble to get me an air-conditioned room. I know—

I was there when the bell-boy pried open the windows.

“But seriously, did you ever stop to think how people want home atmosphere in a hotel and hotel service in a home?

“Yes, they even go and put Bibles in the hotel rooms. Of course, by that stage it usually is too late.

“Well, at least some of us will go out and get gifts for our wives when we return home from the convention. Others, of course, will have no reason to feel guilty.”

When I was a speech writer in the White House I once had to submit a few sets of one-liners for President Nixon for delivery at a Gridiron dinner. I found it far more difficult than writing a eulogy for a former President.

Still, I developed my own system which you may find helpful. I don’t say it will make you a polished comedy writer, but it will tell you where to mine the ore before it is refined.

The TOPICALISM System

The system is TOPICALISM. Topicalism is what a one-liner is—a subject for one-linessmanship that is current and topical. I use it to trigger free thinking.

- T—television
- O—organization (host)
- P—politics
- I—international
- C—crazes
- A—advertisements
- L—literature
- I—introducer (program chairman)
- S—songs
- M—movies

Let’s say I am to write one-liners for former President Ford. He is to appear at Pinehurst, North Carolina, for one of those big golf classics. All-right golf or, rather, Mr. Ford’s golf game has to be the topicalism. So I first write on one side of the page all the words associated with golf. And on the other side I set down T-O-P-I-C-A-L-I-S-M.

GOLF	TOPICALISM
par	Television— <i>Marcus Welby, All in Family</i>
bogey	Organization
ace	Politics—Watergate, pardon, bargaining
eagle	International—oil, energy, Arabs
duffer	Crazes—streaking
stroke	
hole-in-one	

- irons
 - woods
 - sand trap
 - putter
 - handicap
 - bunker
 - slice
 - green
 - hook
- Advertisements—“I can’t believe I ate the whole thing”
 Literature—*Watership Down, Centennial*
 Introducer
 Songs—“Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree”
 Movies—*The Sting, The Godfather*

Beside each category of T-O-P-I-C-A-L-I-S-M I wrote the first thing I thought of. If you can think of the title, program issue or fad quickly, that means it is likely to trigger some public awareness or identification.

Let’s skip for a minute the organization that is host. I don’t know whether it’s Pinehurst or the PGA. Sometimes the host organization, be it Elks or firemen, is good material. Let’s also not make the name of the event chairman will have to introduce Mr. Ford, although names can be fun to work with too.

Now let’s see what we can dig up when we look for associations with golf in the current headlines of the day.

Under “Television” *All in the Family* rings a bell. Archie Bunker—“bunker” is a golf word. In fact, maybe I could use “Archless” (skidding drive?) bunker some way.

“Politics”—Watergate? It sounds like a word you might be able to associate with golf.

“International”—oil, energy, Arabs, desert. I think of sand trap—America trapped by the Middle East situation. There must be some way to tie them together.

“Crazes”—streaking. Nothing comes immediately to mind.

“Advertisements.” The only one I can think of with universal acceptance is “I can’t believe I ate the whole thing.” Is there some way to change that to “I can’t believe I ‘aced’ the whole thing?”

“Literature.” What best sellers come to mind? *Centennial, Watership Down*. It could be a buried golfball, but is it high-brow for the audience?

“Songs”—“Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree.” That’s a natural. There must be some way to use a song to make fun of a Ford hook to woods.

Movies"—*The Sting*, *The Godfather*. How about *Sodfather* to describe his divoting habit? (Playing around with letters is part of the game in crafting liners. Many times I go right through the alphabet: *Bodfather*, *Codfather*, etc.) Then when you start putting down one of the ideas, you look through the words again.


ons in the fire?
 ld eagle
 ffer (buffer) zone
 an't see the woods for the trees
 and trap—we already have something to work in about the Middle East
 handicap—"hire the handicapped"
 bunker—we have that idea
 slice—what about "slice guys finish last?"
 hook—"you can't judge a hook by a duffer"—no, too corny.

Now you go back and gather your promising leads. Work them into your upbeat and snapper parts. Then re-write them until they sound crisp and sharp. Here's what I would have Mr. Palmer say:

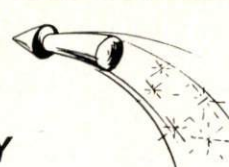
"After all the controversy about the election, it is a pleasure to come down here and relax in North Carolina. You know, golf with all its subtleties—the necessary strategies, the need for finesse—is much like politics. The difference is that while the golfer strives for a hole-in-one, I'm just trying to get out of the hole.

"Seriously, it is good to be back here in Pinehurst. It's been four years since I was last here. I remember it well, because on the sixth hole I had a drive there lost in the woods. Even though it has been four years the staff seems to remember my visit very well. But I didn't know how well until I got to the sixth hole and the gallery crowd began welcoming me with a song—"Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree."

"You have to admit that wasn't the type of message that would restore confidence in my driving game. So at the end of the day, with the score I had, I was looking for a bit of encouragement, and I'll never forget what Arnie Palmer



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told me. He put his arm around me and said, 'Mr. President, one thing you always got to remember—"Slice guys finish last."'"

You will note that some of the possibilities—"Archless Bunker," "Codman"—I scratched in my final draft. Remember, all you have to do is have three or four of the best.

Star Appeal

Perhaps as you read the lines in cold print you may not find it all that hilarious. But it would work. When the President or a former President of the United States makes fun of himself he has to get a good response. Just consider that as the main speaker or central attraction at a dinner you will have some of the same star appeal going for you too. Secondly, when you stick to a single topic like golf you have the advantage of each successive one-liner drawing from the success of the previous. In the first sally you start to build the impression in the audience's mind of the former President as a duffer

golfer. If you were then to jump to another subject you would waste the momentum you have built up. But with a series of one-liners you have the audience better conditioned to react and laugh.

Remember that after one dip in the roller-coaster track you don't stop, get out and buy another ticket for a different car ride. So keep to a single track. If you do this, you won't crash and you'll provide lots of fun.

Or to change the metaphor, I don't say that the TOPICALISM technique in developing one-liners will always get you a hole-in-one. But it *will* help you get out of a hole. □

James C. Humes is a lawyer, public speaker and former state legislator who has served in the White House and the State Department. He has written presidential speeches as well as speeches for corporation executives, governors and senators. In addition to his law work and writing, Mr. Humes is a popular lecturer.

profile of a toastmaster

Howard E. Hill—Author/Lecturer

“For the most part, persons who belong to Toastmasters are reaching out for improvement. Consequently, the challenge to equal or surpass was almost overwhelming. Within this area alone, the ‘pitchfork’ in my backside has been of inestimable value.”

Of the countless thousands of people who have gone through the Toastmasters program, you would be hard put to find anyone more enthusiastic about it than Howard E. Hill, the noted writer and lecturer. And deservedly so.

The author of 27 books and study manuals, including the best-selling *How to Think Like a Millionaire and Get Rich*, *How to Create the Big Idea* and *Energizing the Twelve Powers of Your Mind*, Hill was an active member of the Beverly Hills Club (later changed to Sepulveda Terrace 43-50, Culver City, California) for 17 years, and club president in 1957. “And,” adds Hill, “I would still be active, but breakfast meetings are out for me. My early mornings are devoted to turning out two books each year, mostly under contract to Prentice Hall.”

Hill’s involvement with Toastmasters dates back to the program’s beginning. Now in his late 70’s, he knew Dr. Ralph Smedley and was invited to the first Toastmasters meeting in 1924, an invitation which he declined.

It wasn’t until 20 years later that the need for a better platform image was important to his career. But even then, Hill joined the Beverly Hills club under the false assumption that it was merely a club of “after-dinner” speakers, brought on by poorly conceived publicity that appeared in a local paper inviting interested persons to join. Once a member, however, he quickly changed his mind.

“For the most part, persons who belong to Toastmasters are reaching out for



improvement,” said Hill. “Consequently, the challenge to equal or surpass was almost overwhelming. Within this area alone, the ‘pitchfork’ in my backside has been of inestimable value.”

That “pitchfork” became evident when Hill launched his first serious research project in the field of better nutrition in the thirties when the great controversy over the value of vitamins and minerals as an aid to health burst upon the American scene. Since then, he has written over a hundred articles and seven books on health benefits to be gained from taking miracle products provided us by nature. He has lectured on the subject of good eating habits at the Institute of Lifetime Learning in Long Beach, Cali-

fornia, since 1967 and was recently named spokesman for Ralston Purina’s new line of Natural Health Products. In this capacity, he appears regularly on radio and TV talk shows extolling the virtues of natural foods processed without additives or preservatives.

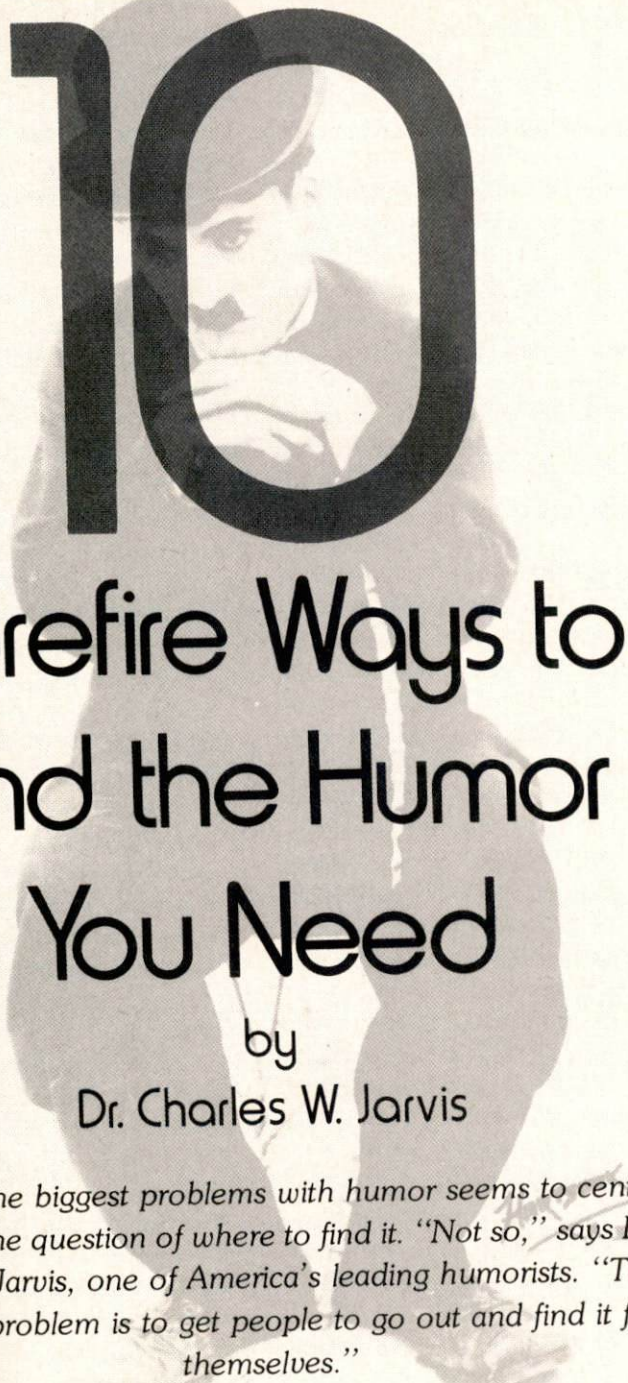
“Without any question, my contact with fellow Toastmasters from all walks of life has enabled me to greatly improve my public speaking stance, my appearance on radio and TV talk shows and, above all else, my skills as a president, officer and as a board member in business and corporate ventures.

“The original program devised by Ralph Smedley is still tops with me,” said Hill. “Its greatest weakness, however, lies in the fact that each new member should accept the obligation to bring in another member, and many don’t.”

Today, Hill is one of the most vocal advocates of the Toastmasters program, recommending it in all of his published books and to all of the people who attend his Success Seminars.

“In all of my lectures at [Long Beach] City College, I always recommend membership in Toastmasters as a way of continued growth. One of the greatest drawbacks is the all too prevalent frame of mind that says, ‘I can’t do it,’ which in itself is the beginning of failure. I always stress the concept, ‘I can do it,’ and then urge my listeners to work like a man to reach the goal. Unrealistic? Not at all. I am pushing 80, and I am still pushing on to new levels of accomplishment.”

10



Surefire Ways to Find the Humor You Need

by
Dr. Charles W. Jarvis

One of the biggest problems with humor seems to center around the question of where to find it. "Not so," says Dr. Charles Jarvis, one of America's leading humorists. "The biggest problem is to get people to go out and find it for themselves."

At the National Speakers Association's Convention in June 1976, a survey was taken among the many speakers present regarding the topics in which they were most interested. Anyone with any knowledge of speaking could have foretold the results. The first was: "How can I get more bookings?" The second: "How can I get some humorous material?"

When writing an article such as this, and realizing that everyone reading it is not interested in becoming a professional speaker, the author must get fast to the point of interest. However, I do want to mention just a word or two about the first question.

The person who finds himself lacking in bookings does not seem to realize that he might be the problem. Bill Alexan-

der's great speech, "Are You Part of the Problem or Part of the Answer?" suggests that perhaps the solution to such problems lies pretty close to home.

In my communication and motivation classes at the University of Texas School of Dentistry and the University of Texas Dental Branch at Houston, I always ask my students what the second step in problem solving is. "The first," I tell them, "is to, of course, identify the problem. The second is to find out how much of the problem is your fault!"

The person who finds himself lacking an adequate number of bookings will often say to me, "Charles, I don't know what it is. I used to turn down more invitations than I now accept. What's wrong?"

Most of the time I feel I should tell them, but often don't. Maybe they've exhausted their first-time appearances and are not being invited back. Or maybe word has gotten around that they are not any good, or at least not good enough. Whatever the case, they should already know the answer to their question.

The real trouble with this type of person is that he will not face the truth. He is a victim of what I call the "Abominable Snow Job." He is only deluding himself.

The Formula for Success

Success at anything is dependent upon this formula: Whatever you do, do it so well every time you do it that when someone needs that particular service, they will automatically think of you. Cause and effect. Supply and demand. There is a difference in your wanting them and them wanting you. It's great to be in demand; it's nice to be wanted.

Why have I written this? And how does it apply to obtaining humorous material? Well, if you have a tinge of resentment right now from having read that, you are evidence of exactly what I have stated. You must realize that you are probably your own worst enemy—that you are part of your problem—and that the only way for you to be in demand in any field is to do a job well . . . and then do it better.

The same attitude—the same philosophy—applies to gathering any kind of material. Over the years, I have had

many aspirant speakers come up to me and ask, "Dr. Jarvis, where can I get some humorous material?" When a person says that I really cannot believe that he has even tried to get some on his own. Being a humorist, I hand the questioner (always in fun) a list of books. The list contains over 400 books, listed by author and subject.

"Lucky you came to me," I say to them, "because I have just made up this list from the catalog department of a large library. Here are 412 books on just what you're looking for. You will find in those books everything your heart desires in the way of humor. Not only will you find compilations of humorous stories, but you will find the theories and psychology of humor which will allow you to make up your own humorous stories."

The face falls, the countenance becomes drab. "This is not what I meant," he says.

"Oh, well, maybe this is it." I hand him another sheet. "Here is another list—this is the list of the books I have bought and have on my library shelves at home. I have perused these, examined all the stories, marked the ones applicable for my purposes, switched them to illustrate moral points, typed them into 5" x 8½" notebooks according to categories. . . ."

"That is not what I meant either," he says.

Then, I say, "You want me to give you some humorous material, right?"

Smiling, he shouts, "Right!"

Usually this type of person wants only a story or two to thrill his local Kiwanis

club or to spice up the content of a term paper he is working on. Whatever the case, I am usually delighted to help these people. However, many times I find that the questioner is a person already making a living using humor. And still he asks! Doesn't he know? Chances are very good that the person already making a living using humor will not work hard enough at gathering material and, like the novice, expects someone to give him all the humorous stories, jokes, quips, epigrams, tall tales or wisecracks he can ever use. (Chances are also very good that this person doesn't even know what a joke is!)

At times such as these, I get a bit cynical. In my own profession of speaking where people should know better—where they undoubtedly know all the old maxims of success and self-motivation (they might even be teaching them!)—there are people who talk one way and live another. When I hand them the list, their face falls the same as the novice. The second list gets the same countenance: the face falls into the lap. Some of these people exist only on someone else's material. One man, a good friend of mine and a very successful speaker, writes down all the lines I drop during the conversation at our speakers' meetings. And he really goes to extremes. I said "Hello" the other other day and he said, "That's good—I can use that," and wrote it down.

Recognizing the Problem

Now don't get me wrong. I still like to help them, but first I must help them help themselves. I keep telling them that they could fare much better if they would recognize that second step in problem-solving. But sometimes it is so disheartening. Why, I can't even get my patients to brush and floss their own teeth. They want to know when dentistry is going to come up with a pill, a "cure-all." "All you have to do is remove the germs from the gums and teeth once a day with floss and brush," I tell them.

"Do I have to floss all of them?" they ask.

Dejectedly, I sigh, "No, just floss those you want to save."

Should I help these people who come to me for humorous material? "Of

course," you say. And I agree. But Ben Hogan, the great golfer, doesn't believe too much in it. He was once practicing hitting ball after ball right to his caddy. Known for his accuracy, Mr. Hogan was placing every ball he hit right by the caddy's feet when one of his fellow players came over and asked him, "Ben, could you help me with my swing?" There is no doubt that he *could* have (the man did not say "would you . . .") but he didn't. The "Wee Ice Mon" as the Scots call him (appropriate for more than just cold nerves), shot back, "You dig it out of the ground like I did!"

The Big 10

If you really want some humorous material, and have the energy and desire to "dig it out of the ground," I am going to give you 10 sure ways to find some. They should work for you, as they have worked for me.

1. Go to the library, to the catalog section, check on the books they have "Wit and Humor." And don't be alarmed by the number of the books; they do not have all of them.

Check out the compilations of humorous stories, such as *Bennett's Bumper Crop—Volumes I and II*. Go through these books and mark down the stories you can use. Then switch them to your purpose.

2. Write for my list of books. I will be glad to send you the list of the books I have. The address: Dr. Charles W. Jarvis, P.O. Box 1094, San Marcos, Texas 78666.

Then go buy these books. Go through them one at a time, read all the stories, mark down the ones you think are good enough, record them by subject in a 5" x 8½" notebook for further improvement and reference.

3. Look at the humor cassettes. General Cassette Corp. (1324 North 22nd Avenue, Box 6940, Phoenix, Arizona 85005) has in its catalog. Never before has it been easier to get humorous material! (I wish I had it this easy.)

4. Go to Las Vegas and sit in on the comics. Shecky Greene, for example, is wonderful! Study his style. Write down all his good stories you can use (some of them you will not be able to use—such as the dialect, ethnic and risqué stories).



will probably notice that others are doing the same thing—writing his material. (These are probably clowns who can't make up their own material.)

Go to your local record shop and all the humorous albums you can. Cosby's material, for example, is great. See if they have any others that would be suitable. You won't be able to find some of the corny, hayseed ones you'll find. I love the television show *Howie Mandel*, for example, but that type of humor goes over only on *Hee Haw*.

Become an avid reader of magazines and periodicals. All of them, plus most newspapers, contain cartoons, jokes, anecdotes, political columns and editorials that are chuck full of humor. Cut out what appeals to you and file the magazine first if you are one of the "free readers" we see at the newsstands and put the articles in an "A-Z" file according to subject. (If you don't already have one, get one!) Later, you can go through that file, study each article to decide how you can make it better for your purposes and then type it into the 5" x 8½" notebook, again according to subject.

Avoid Others' Stories

If you are willing to work at this, it will not be long before you will have plenty of good, clean, illustrative humorous stories you can use. One word of advice, though: Avoid using the stories that other speakers are using. These stories get around fast—so fast that five speakers at the recent Success Leaders Speakers Showcase in Atlanta told the same story to the same audience as if it had truly happened to them!

7. Go to hear other speakers—not just to get material, but to study their styles. A good place to do this is at Dr. DuPree Jordan's Success Leaders Speakers Showcase in Atlanta [see back cover]. At this Showcase meeting, you'll find eighty or more speakers "doing their thing" over a four to five-day span. This will furnish you with ample opportunity to benefit from both positive and negative examples of each speaker, not to mention the marvelous benefits of simply associating with people of like interests.

But remember, avoid using stories that are original with that speaker and fit only him. Speakers have made fools of themselves trying to do this. For example, my "nightgown" story and dental stories are original with me and can be told adequately only by me. One man came up to me and said, "Dr. Jarvis, I have been telling that nightgown story of yours and. . . ." His wife, standing by his side, abruptly cut him off. "Yes," she said, "and he's been telling it pitifully!" Needless to say, he gave her a look that would melt iron!

8. Become material conscious; write down humorous stories told to you by your friends. Some of my best stories have come from people who wanted to tell me a joke right after the program. You will, if you've been in the field for any length of time and have done much studying at all, recognize 95 percent of them, but that next one might be just the one that'll bring down the house next week. Write down the humorous events that really happen to you and your close friends. If you hear me talk, you will be surprised at how much of my humor is the truth—events that have happened to me and to friends of mine like Razor Baldrige, B. A. Harper and to Dempsey Surer. This everyday humor, to which the audience—be they one or a thousand—can relate is the very best type of humor you can possibly use. Develop a mental awareness, become what we say in communications as "mentally aware" of material and you will recognize it in the everyday, commonplace experiences of you with your fellow man.

9. Attend the next National Speakers Association Convention (if you're a member) and sit in on the "how to" sessions. Gather around the speakers at the poolside of Scottsdale's glorious Camelback Inn or the dinner sessions and grab those pearls of wisdom which fall from those ruby lips. Mingle with other aspirant speakers, swap stories and bits of advice with them. You will love the intimate relationship which is evident among speakers. And you will come away more enthusiastic about life than you have been in years!

10. Finally, subscribe to speakers

Start'em Laughing

A joke, an anecdote, a laugh-loaded one-liner! Effective speakers have been using the technique of humor for centuries. And you can use the same technique, with predictably good results.

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services such as Orben's *Current Comedy* [see the above advertisement] and the *Comedy and Comment* of Mack McGinnis (448 N. Mitchner Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana 46219).

If you sit in on one of my presentations in the future, I do hope you enjoy it. If you do, tell me; if you don't, keep it to yourself. If you would like to banter around a few words, by all means come up and introduce yourself and let's enjoy a cup of coffee and visit about this wonderful world of words in which we live. Let me know if you plan to become a pro at this speaking and I'll pass along all the help I can.

The rest, however, is up to you. Good luck! □

Dr. Charles W. Jarvis is a member of the faculty at the University of Texas Dental School at San Antonio. Described as "the finest pain-killer on the American platform," Dr. Jarvis is in great demand throughout the United States as a humorous speaker. He also conducts the Jarvis Humor Seminar, a two- to three-day session entitled, "Humor and Its Effective Use in Speaking," which offers practical tips on how to gather humor, how to file it, how to write it and how to use it.

Are Some Jokes Really Safer Than Others ?

by
Stewart Marsh

Today's speaker must know more than when and where to tell a joke. He must also know which joke to tell.

"MEN will confess to treason, murder, arson, false teeth or a wig," said humorist Frank Colby. "How many will own up to a lack of humor?"

In a similar vein, the famous essayist and humorist Stephen Leacock commented, "There is no quality of the human mind about which its possessor is more sensitive than a sense of humor. A man will freely confess to no ear for music, or no taste for fiction, or even no interest in religion. But I have yet to see a man who announces he has no sense of humor."

Studies confirm the off-the-cuff observations of Colby and Leacock. Humor experiments involving men and women have shown that the subjects will seldom agree when asked to rate a number of jokes in order of funniness. But when asked to rate themselves on a sense of humor, almost everyone believes himself to be quite a humorous person, and to have an exceptional gift in this direction.

This points up the importance which we put on the ability to see the amusing

side of things. We place high value on humor. Wherever people get together in a relaxed mood, there are smiles, chuckles and laughter. "You have to have a sense of humor in order to get along in life," we often hear.

The Essential Joke

A speaker often starts his presentation off with a joke or anecdote, hoping to arouse attention and to break the ice. Throughout the program, he may use his wit to stimulate merriment, relieve monotony or to drive home a point. The right joke at the right time can be very effective.

But inept humor can also hurt you. It's embarrassing when your jokes are met with stony silence, or even just a polite titter. It's chilling when your attempted wit arouses frowns, murmurs of disapproval or even genuine boos, rather than laughter. Instead of breaking the ice, the frost becomes thicker. Pretty soon your self-confidence begins to ebb—you feel you are a failure as a humorous speaker.

Remember, though, that even comedians cannot always tell how audiences will react to their jokes. At times this kind of response is simply unpredictable. Here, then, are some guidelines that you may find helpful in their quest toward safe and effective humor.

To begin with, you should recognize the fact that individuals in a group often find the joke funnier when a group, rather than their own, is the target. Although people may pride themselves on being able to take a joke, humor studies have shown that most persons feel the joke to be better when it is on someone else.

Libbers vs Chauvinists

For example, Canadian psychologist Lawrence LaFave studied the humor responses of "pro-male" males and women "libbers." The men found jokes about "women's lib" much funnier than about "chauvinistic" males. On the other hand, "libbers" didn't find much to laugh about when the joke was about themselves, but received enjoyment

“chauvinistic” males were the target. Other investigators have discovered the same pattern in studying the humor responses of diverse groups. Although a revolutionary finding, the speaker who wishes to use humor effectively can put it to good use.

If you are presiding at a Democratic banquet, the audience will probably enjoy jokes at the expense of Republicans, vice versa. Members of a civic club usually go for stories where a rival club is the subject of the joke. And sales employees of one organization are likely to get a bigger laugh from humor that makes a rival sales organization the target. This is ordinarily true if the jokes are not of a nasty nature. Most of us believe in fair play, and are not amused by cruel or vicious humor.

Insult Your Audience?

But what about jokes on members of your audience? Depending how it is done, you may humorously insult one or more members of your audience, arouse laughter and even make the insulted person like it. Such derogatory humor, however, can easily backfire.

At a banquet for men and women which I recently attended, the Toastmaster started off with a joke about women drivers. Some of the men laughed, but none of the women I could see even cracked a smile; several grimaced in irritation. Half of the audience appeared alienated right from the start.

In a group where everyone knows each other and is fairly thick-skinned, needling and kidding one another can be a lot of fun. But when the audience is an unfamiliar one, extreme caution needs to be exercised in singling out members of the audience to be the butt of the joke.

Obviously, there are some highly-skilled people who can do this and manage to get away with it. I'm not advising that one always avoid wit at the expense of the audience, but I am suggesting that jokes on a rival group are usually much safer.

Again, a story on oneself or one's family may arouse laughter, while also helping to establish audience rapport and goodwill. In addition, these stories about

yourself are generally regarded as the safest. And some renowned speakers have made effective use of such jokes.

One can look to history for examples of famous people who successfully kidded themselves. Abe Lincoln went along with stories about his own ugliness. Woodrow Wilson made up a limerick lamenting that as a beauty he was no star. Although almost garrulous at times, Calvin Coolidge encouraged a sphinx-like image of himself. When Jack Kennedy appointed his young brother to be Attorney General, he joked that Bobby needed a little experience before beginning the practice of law. Gerald Ford began his presidency by noting that he still had to get his own breakfast even though he held high office. And Jimmy Carter jests about being a peanut farmer.

Humor studies suggest that the “clowning wit” is better liked by members of a group than is the “sarcastic wit,” and the former is also more influential. In this context, the clowning wit is the one who tries to get people to laugh *at* or *with* him—his antics, his self-inflicted jokes. The sarcastic wit, on the other hand, is the person who turns sarcasm on other members of the group.

It is true, of course, that sarcasm has been used effectively by writers and public speakers in attacking social evils and it has also been used effectively in intergroup rivalry. But within one's own group, the clowning wit is far more popular as a rule.

A Good Signal

If a speaker can get his audience laughing together—*at* or *with* him—it is usually a giant step toward insuring success of the program; the listeners are relaxed and in a receptive mood. Shared laughter is a signal that all's well—that there is no need to keep up a guard.

A friend of mine in Southern California once went to a Rose Bowl luncheon where the controversial football coach of Ohio State University, Woody Hayes, was one of the featured speakers. “I went prepared to hate him,” my friend said, “but he started off by telling some jokes on himself and his football team and got us laughing. Pretty soon I found myself liking Woody.”

Anyone who attempts to use humor ef-

fectively in a speech—especially older speakers—should be aware that some joke themes have lost vogue over the years, fail to arouse humor in the manner they once did and are actually offensive to a number of people.

The Immigrant Joke

Jokes about nationalities, for example, have waned in popularity over a period of time. In the early part of the present century, waves of immigrants arrived in this country from Europe. Jokebooks during the first half of the century almost always contained many jokes about the Irish, Swedes, Italians and other immigrants.

Nationalities were stereotyped. There were jokes about ignorant Irishmen, stingy Scots, stuffy Englishmen, dumb Swedes, ill-tempered Frenchmen, excitable Italians, droll Russians and so on down the line. As the twentieth century grew older, however, immigrants from Europe were increasingly absorbed into American society, the “melting pot” was at work and the descendants of the immigrants no longer seemed so strange or different.

By the time Jack Kennedy, son of an Irish immigrant, became President, “Pat and Mike” stories had largely disappeared. Jokes about Scots, Swedes, Italians and other nationalities have also waned in popularity. Periodically, there is still a rash of stories about the Polish people but, generally, jokes about European immigrants seem to have lost currency.

In jokebooks—particularly the older ones—there are often sections entitled Negro jokes, Jewish jokes and Mexican jokes. In past times, members of minority groups sometimes went along with jokes about themselves, or even encouraged such jokes as a means of getting on with those who had more power or superior status. Here again, these stories have waned in popularity over the years. Minority groups are engaged in a struggle to improve their own status, and many now resent being the subject of an outsider's joke.

Women, too, have been striving to improve their lot. In the old jokebooks, there were countless stories about mothers-in-law, but one does not hear

so many of these stories today. Generally, there are fewer jokes based upon the female stereotypes of the past.

So you may find yourself in trouble when you crack jokes with such groups as targets, even though you intended the stories in a good-natured way. There are, however, jokes that have increased in popularity over the years, but still seem very doubtful material for any Toastmaster.

A Sick Society

"Sick" jokes are not new. In fact, they appear to go back to the dawn of history. These jokes treat horror, mishap and cruelty very lightly. The physically and mentally handicapped are often the subject of the joke, and many people often parrot these stories without thinking about their real implications. Many social commentators even believe that these "sick" jokes "smack of a sick society."

Comedian Jackie Gleason is reported to have said that he likes "earthy humor, but these so-called jokes are six feet under." Arthur Godfrey once said that sick jokes make him violently ill. Most of today's professional humorists feel that these jokes are not in good taste and, hence, avoid them.

On the positive side, many viable joke themes have remained popular over the years, such as stories about conniving politicians, onerous taxes, mean bosses, sponging in-laws, rival organizations and enemies. Other viable joke themes concern the topics of the day as reflected in the mass media. These change, of course, with time.

Every speaker should realize that there are moments when the safest joke is no joke at all, that is, when humor is out of place. Just as giggles are uncalled for at holy communion, a funny story is not appropriate during a solemn moment.

Suppose, for example, you are the Toastmaster at the banquet of a civic club. One of the members of the club has recently died and a speaker rises to offer tribute to the deceased. It seems definitely out of place to tell a joke right after such a tribute, but I have heard many Toastmasters do just that.

Or suppose that after the festivities of the evening, you, as the Toastmaster,

make a rousing appeal for funds to a charitable organization. You have the audience goal-oriented; they are ready to open their wallets and make a generous contribution. This is not the time for a joke. The members of your audience are likely to find humor annoying at such moments, and they may slide their wallets back into their pockets.

To use still another illustration, the chief speaker at the banquet for a group of sales people has made a hard-hitting and forceful speech where he winds up with a call for action. He has the sales people believing that their product is the finest in the world. They are stirred-up, motivated to go out and get busy selling their product. It is your difficult job to make the closing remarks that will conclude the banquet. Your audience may resent a joke at this moment. They are ready for action rather than humor.

Canceling the Sale

There is an old maxim that says, "Laughter cancels the sale." Ill-timed or inept humor can be worse than no humor at all.

To sum up, the delivery of a joke has much to do with the kind of audience response you're going to get. But perhaps even more important are the kinds of jokes that you use. Stories about rival groups—other than minorities—often arouse laughter. Jokes on oneself or one's family may easily win over an audience. Timely joke themes which do not offend are usually very effective. And some jokes are safer than others.

Humor aims directly at pleasure, but it may have many other benefits. At best it relieves monotony, provides an antidote to the dull, draws people closer together, and may even help to ease divergencies of opinion and to overcome hostility. Yes, humor can do all of that, and more . . . if you know how to handle it! □

Stewart Marsh is Dean Emeritus at Los Angeles Valley College in California. A longtime educator, he has served as a psychology professor, college counselor, dean of a college evening division, dean of instructions and has also done a considerable amount of public speaking.

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bulletin board

What's Your Image?

ed Wood, ATM. From District 18's "The
," Maryland, Delaware, Northeastern
na.

What is your club's image? When you arrive at meetings, do you like what you see? Does the meeting room shout at you, saying, "This is a meeting of Toastmasters and something exciting is happening here!" Does it say that you are not welcome at the meeting? If not, your club may be suffering from a bad case of "poor image."

In recent years, Toastmasters International has emphasized the importance of the individual and personal image we project as Toastmasters. The image your club projects affects all of the members and is equally as important as your own personal image. I strongly believe that member success can be attributed at least in part to your personal image and I think you will agree that this image can directly affect the gaining or losing of a new member. What a guest sees and what he hears will often influence whether or not he will become a member of your club. Remember the old but appropriate saying: "First impressions count." "First impressions count."

How can you improve your club's image? First, start with yourself. Oh sure, you've heard that, but the responsibility for a good club image rests with the entire club membership. You can't say "wannah!" You can insist that your club members provide the management necessary to create a good image. While this article is not to specifically promote the use of the Distinguished Club Program, it is worth noting that those clubs using the program generally enjoy a high image level.

Next, try preparing a checklist of "things to do before the meeting. This useful technique will help you check on such items as room arrangement, banner and flag, lectern and gavel, timing of the program and audio equipment, club reference file and promotional material displayed, bulletins and newsletters distributed, and name tags for members and guests. You will probably list other things that your club might do to improve its image.

Finally, do all of this in a well organized Standard of Excellence Program and, without hesitation, you will be able to say to a friend, "Come to my

Toastmasters club meeting. I would like for you to see and hear our Communication and Leadership Program." □

Chow Time!

By District 46 Governor Frank H. Tully, ATM.
From District 46's "Lectern II," Southeastern
New York, Northeastern New Jersey.

Some years ago, comedian Red Skelton cracked up his audiences with a skit in which he peeled a banana, threw away the fruit and ate the peel. The thought that anyone in his right mind would get rid of the best part and content himself with the inferior component was so ridiculous that people from coast to coast were convulsed with laughter.

Yet, this happens at some Toastmasters clubs all the time. Clubs tend to content themselves with a lot less than the best when they hold meeting after meeting with the same stereotyped program and neglect the goodies that are in such abundant supply.

Every six months, each of us pays nine dollars to Santa Ana to renew our membership, plus whatever extra costs are added for operation of our club. For this cash outlay, we are entitled to partake of a variety of club-nourishing activities that can't help but improve the performance of the group. All too many clubs, however, are content to nibble at the fringes.

It's like ordering a seven-course meal, then eating only part of the salad. You're cheating yourselves when you do this.

The real "meat" of Toastmasters is in Speechcraft programs . . . the speakers bureaus . . . and all the other educational opportunities to which your dues money entitles you.

The "dessert" is your participation in club, area, division and district activities. Chair a committee! Run an office! Lend your talents to the betterment of the whole district! The greatest single beneficiary of this extra activity will be you!

Don't waste your money. You work too hard to earn it, so make sure you get full value for your dollar.

Let's make this "year of challenge" a veritable Toastmasters "Banquet of Achievement."

Cocktails, anyone? □

How to Get That Winner

By Val Croskey. From District 47's "The Sunshiner," Florida.

Here's how to win a district humorous speech contest. Take one past president, mix him up thoroughly in pre-club discussions on how great his competition is. Convince him he can only be humorous on something he knows nothing about. Allow him to outmaneuver his fellow contestants by not even inviting his friends and neighbors to make him nervous.

When he wins the club contest, tell him how bad he was, how lucky to have won over those other hilarious performances. Ask the runner-up to stand by for the area contest.

Don't finalize the area contest date or place until the last possible minute. Insist he sit in the place where he will be most distracted and among strangers. Make certain all judges are completely uninformed of his subject. Invite the division lieutenant governor. Feed him a meal that's guaranteed to stuff him until he's uncomfortable, and seat his club members in a separate group. They've heard the speech before and won't find it so funny a second time.

The minute he indicates he has a schedule conflict with his work that may prevent him from participating in the division contest, immediately schedule the runner-up in his presence. At the division contest, don't insure he's coming; when you find he's arrived, the first thing you ask him is how he's changed his speech. Agree with him if he thinks parts of it were bad and needed revision; disagree with him if he thinks parts of it were good and shouldn't be considered for change.

Keep a serious face while he's speaking, applaud with great vigor or not at all. When he wins, tell him immediately how close it was. Help him relive every excruciating minute of it. Don't let him walk away thinking it was a walkaway.

Then the district! And it's out of your hands. He doesn't want to talk to you. He doesn't want to see you. He hides the day of the contest. He sits as far away as possible at the banquet. And when his turn comes, he's there with every gesture, enunciation, emphasis, pause and idea that you have bugged him about and he has sifted, reviewed and concentrated on for two months.

Then, you've got a winner! □

hall of fame

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