

# TOASTMASTER®

November 2008

Special Language Issue

Using  
Storytelling  
to Win Votes

Say It  
with  
**Meaning**

A speaker should handle words with the same care a carpenter handles tools.

**Rx for a  
Good Speech  
Introduction**



## The Courage to Conquer the Commitment!

✦ While shopping the other day, I overheard a young girl in a store attempting to negotiate with her mother. She was listing all the things she would do if her mom would buy the item she desperately wanted. They all ended with the words "I promise!"

As I am writing this, the United States is in the throes of a heated presidential election, which means I can't turn on my television or radio without hearing the two candidates... making promises.

Often, when we hear the words "I promise," we have little faith in follow-through. What happens when promises are not kept? It can lead to losing a job, a marriage, a friend. It can lead to mistrust of an employer, a group, a government.

What about in Toastmasters? When we join Toastmasters, we make a promise. It's on the back of every application and it includes 10 standards we promise to uphold. Some of them are: attending meetings regularly; preparing speeches to the best of our ability based on the speaking manuals; providing helpful, constructive evaluations; maintaining a friendly environment; serving as a club officer. By honoring our commitment to uphold these standards, we add value to our Toastmasters experience and strengthen our club.

Recently, I served as an evaluator for a Toastmaster named Natalie. As I turned through her manual, I saw page after page of underlining, highlighting and notes in the margins. She was obviously preparing every project to the absolute best of her ability. It was easy to see that Natalie was keeping her commitment. By the way, Natalie is a member of a club that has been President's Distinguished every year except one since the program's inception.

Not long ago I visited Pantex Lunch Bunch Toastmasters in Amarillo, Texas. This club is celebrating nine straight years of being a President's Distinguished Club. When asked how they achieved such success, the members listed attributes pointing to one thing: This club was keeping its commitment.

I have never attended a meeting of Pioneer Toastmasters in Cincinnati, but I can tell just by reading the newsletter the club regularly sends me that this club is keeping its commitment! Sure enough, its reports show it has been a President's Distinguished Club many years running.

Individuals and clubs all around the world excel because they are keeping their commitment. What about you? If you or your club are finding it challenging to keep your promise, I encourage you to present the Successful Club Series Module "Keeping the Commitment." By keeping our promise in Toastmasters, we develop skills beyond what we expect or imagine. In doing so, we strengthen our careers, our relationships, our world. Let's all take our promise seriously and have The Courage to Conquer the Commitment!

*Jana Barnhill*

Jana Barnhill, DTM, Accredited Speaker  
International President

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*By Beth Black, CC*

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**The Toastmasters Vision:**  
Toastmasters International empowers people to achieve their full potential and realize their dreams. Through our member clubs, people throughout the world can improve their communication and leadership skills, and find the courage to change.

**The Toastmasters Mission:**  
Toastmasters International is the leading movement devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality.  
Through its member clubs, Toastmasters International helps men and women learn the arts of speaking, listening and thinking – vital skills that promote self-actualization, enhance leadership potential, foster human understanding, and contribute to the betterment of mankind.  
It is basic to this mission that Toastmasters International continually expand its worldwide network of clubs thereby offering ever-greater numbers of people the opportunity to benefit from its programs.

Do you have something to say? Write it in 200 words or less, sign it with your name, address and club affiliation and send it to [letters@toastmasters.org](mailto:letters@toastmasters.org).

### No Lip Service – Please!

Terri Morrison's article ("Protocol for Globe-Trotting Toastmasters," August) was engaging and included a number of useful tips for doing business internationally. However, I found her advice on kissing distasteful. She wrote, "...never back away from a kiss from your host. You do not want to undermine your new business relationship by being coy about your personal space." Excuse me?!

Oddly enough, this "tip" came shortly after her remark on handshaking, warning that "many cultures disapprove of publicly touching the opposite gender." It seems to me that everybody should be respectful of others' wishes when it comes to physical contact. I hope my business associates will keep their lips to themselves when dealing with me.

Susan Vogel-Misicka, CC • Zug Toastmasters Club • Zug, Switzerland

### Missing Hall of Fame

The Hall of Fame page in the magazine epitomizes the success of Toastmaster clubs I have known over the years in my long Toastmasters experience – from my Ice Breaker to my Distinguished Toastmaster award. I will miss that page in the regular *Toastmaster* magazine, and believe posting it online will not replace the power of publicity in the regular magazine.

Sharlan Rae Starr • Speak-ERS Toastmasters • Washington, D.C.

### Opting to Be Outstanding

Richard R. Bonner's article "Opt to be an Outstanding Orator" (September) could not have come at a better time for me. I received my Competent Communicator and Competent Leader awards in April 2008 after two years in Toastmasters. I signed up to pursue the Advanced Communicator Bronze award imme-

diately, but during my club's summer break I started to question this decision. Had I not already achieved my goal of writing and successfully delivering speeches – what more could I learn?

Bonner's article clarified for me why I should continue to challenge myself. I may not end up being "an outstanding orator" but I certainly will end up having done everything I can to ensure I am the best orator I can possibly be. This I can achieve by availing myself the opportunities open to me in my Toastmasters club. Thank you *Toastmaster* magazine, for re-motivating and inspiring me. There is opportunity and challenge after Competent Communicator!

Maeve Flanagan CC, CL • Portlaoise Toastmasters 9363 Co. Laois, Ireland

### She Sets Standards

What a wonderful introduction Jana Barnhill gave to us in the September issue with her first Viewpoint as International President – "The Courage to Conquer." She certainly set herself a particularly high standard to maintain throughout the coming year.

I also really enjoyed the article about Jana's hopes and ambitions for 2008-09. If her leadership skills are as high as her inspirational skills – and I have no doubt that they are – Jana will be one of the great International Presidents of Toastmasters International.

Steve Howard, ACG, CL • National Toastmasters Club Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

I would like to thank Jana Barnhill for her timely message, "The Courage to Conquer!" in the August issue.

I believe many of us, in one way or another, are "paralyzed by fear" as Jana described her own experi-

ence. Whether we are experienced or 'baby' Toastmasters, there is that tinge of fear, maybe in different degrees, when we are faced with the unexpected.

I implore fellow Toastmasters who are thinking of throwing in the towel to hang in there as we, your fellow members, can help you in your quest to acquire leadership and speaking skills. Do not let the storms of fear overwhelm you, but patiently cultivate that seed of courage until it grows and blossoms.

Soh Swee Kiat, DTMs • Toastmasters Club of Singapore • Singapore.

### PR Pays Off!

As VPPR, your features "The Power of Publicity" and "When You Promote It, They Will Come!" (September) inspired me to get the word out on our very active and enthusiastic club of 34 members – now rising rapidly to 40+ thanks to our publicity surge! We sent a press release to our local newspapers and to our delight found it was repeated verbatim in several.

We had some fun – and different! – photos taken of our group of officers, which again were published. In addition we got a slot on our local radio station, the very popular morning show, where club president John Kelly and I happily enthused for 20 minutes on Toastmasters and its history, how it encourages people to challenge their fears and how we personally had benefited from it. Our first meeting in September we reaped the benefit as 10 guests showed up; several of these are now members!

So we would like to thank you for your excellent articles – keep up the good work!

Jane Stephenson • Greystones Toastmasters Greystones County Wicklow, Ireland

## Notes from a Toastmasters leader in her land.

# Advice From Istanbul

I was first introduced to Toastmasters in 2000, when I was living in New York City. Even though I work as a corporate trainer and coach, which requires me to speak in front of groups for hours at a time, I found that the Toastmasters experience still benefitted me tremendously. It was a great challenge to have to deliver your message in seven minutes as opposed to three hours!

But when I moved back to my native Istanbul, Turkey, no Toastmasters clubs existed. So I started to search out other people who shared the goal of wanting to improve themselves through public speaking. Finally, in March 2007, a group of us chartered the first Toastmasters club in Istanbul – and it keeps growing stronger all the time.

It has been very exciting to be part of this historic club. I was the founding secretary, and now I am the club president – which is still the only Toastmasters club in Istanbul. In addition, in September I became the first member from our club to receive the Competent Communicator award.

Even with all of the training presentations I deliver, Toastmasters meetings continue to educate and benefit me in numerous ways. I'd like to share some of the many lessons I've learned:

- There are three main aspects to consider when planning a speech. The most important point is this: **What do you want to achieve with your speech?** What message do you want to convey, and how do you want it to be received by your audience?

- The second point to consider is **the amount of time available for you to speak**. There is a limit to what you can say in a 3-, 5-, 7- or 10-minute speech – and there is a significant difference between each. So your presentation needs to be planned accordingly. If you don't do the proper planning to deliver your content within the time limit you're given, your speech won't be effective.

- And the last point is this: **Be flexible**. Only you know what you will say, so you can change what you say and how you say it on the spot. Adjust and adapt. If you realize you're going to run out of time in your speech, you can cut some parts from the middle and still make an effective closing. Or if your speech is running short, you can add some more stories or examples. Always be prepared for the unexpected.

### The Three Key Phases

Let's look at the three key phases involved in giving a speech:

First you need to decide on your Subject. Choose a subject you know well or are interested in – because the more you internalize the subject, the more you can speak comfortably on it. If you have convictions about what you are saying, you can easily persuade your listeners.

The Preparation Phase consists of planning, gathering and organizing the content. This can take a long time or a short time, depending on how comfortable you are with the subject. Have someone help you while you practice, if

possible. In addition, you should practice your speech in front of a mirror, or videotape yourself. Also, be sure to time yourself.

The Actualization Phase is the most exciting phase. It's stage time...time to perform.

Be brief – you do not need to clutter your sentences to look good. The simpler you can be, the better you will be remembered. Keep audience members interested throughout your entire speech. Involve them in it and keep their attention. Remember, people only remember interesting speeches. And be sure to add humor whenever it's proper and possible.

### Connecting With Your Audience

If you make a mistake, correct it and continue. No need to apologize or to make excuses.

If at some point in your speech you ask questions to the audience, listen to the answers! If you don't have the time to wait for their comments, then don't ask at all.

When appropriate during the speech, pause and give your audience a little time to reflect and think. To maximize the impact of your speech, don't rush through it.

When you practice all of these tips, you will show great improvement!

Now the various stages are awaiting you...

---

**Deniz Senelt, CC**, is the president and founding secretary of the Istanbul Toastmasters. An award-winning corporate trainer, coach and consultant, she can be reached at [deniz@proakademi.com.tr](mailto:deniz@proakademi.com.tr).

## From Homer to Madam President: The journey of a Toastmasters trailblazer.

# Helen Blanchard: Breaking the Ice

Ask the first woman president of Toastmasters International how she reached the top leadership position of the organization, and Helen Blanchard, DTM will point to the lessons she learned in 1942 when she taught 24 children in a remote one-room schoolhouse.

"I shudder when I think of the liability today," says the self-professed "cornhusker," who grew up in a small northeastern Nebraska town. "I was just 16 years old and the nearest farmhouse was a mile away. My only mode of communication was a school bell. Fortunately, I never had any true emergencies."

What Blanchard did have was a variety of important life lessons. "I loved the teaching part of the job, but the politics in terms of which kids could play with each other because of issues such as land entitlement overwhelmed me," says Blanchard, who discusses that experience and her rise through the ranks at Toastmasters in her new book,

*Breaking the Ice*. "At one point, parents descended on me to complain, and I wanted to quit, but my mother told me that I had signed a contract. That important lesson of always finishing what I started affected my entire life."

Besides serving as Toastmasters' International President in 1985-1986 and holding almost every office in the organization, Blanchard also climbed the ladder of the U.S. government, eventually overseeing 130 federal employees providing Navy scientists and engineers support in professional writing, editing, graphic design, photographic and library services. Though these credentials would be impressive by today's standards, they are doubly so considering she accomplished this during the 1970s and early 1980s at a time when women were struggling

to earn their place in the work world.

Blanchard's experience in corporate America dates back to the late 1950s. "After my kids started going to school all day, and I had cleaned out every possible closet, I became really bored," says Blanchard, who has lived in San Diego

since 1956. She had previously received training as a bookkeeper, and she quickly found a job at the Naval Research and Development Center in San Diego.

"The neighbors were appalled at my decision to work," she

recalls. "Some said I was shaming my husband and others said I was taking a good job from a man."

Blanchard kept the bookkeeping position for a few months, but quit in the summer time to be with her children. When her kids went back to school, she took another position assisting a group of scientists studying the effects of the Cold War. "It was fascinating work, and I absolutely loved it," says Blanchard, who also learned about computers during that job. By the early 1970s she was working in a department of the Navy that tested sonar systems to see if new torpedoes were hitting their targets. "My job – something women didn't do at that time – was to teach engineers how to collect and process the data from the testing," she says. "I had to prove myself over and over."

During this time, Blanchard sought out the help of Toastmasters. "An announcement in our company newsletter said you could learn to present with confidence by joining Toastmasters," she says. "I thought, That's exactly what I need, so I visited a club. I was taken aback when I walked into the meeting, however, and they told me it was an all-male organization."

Fortunately, the club members decided to let Blanchard join anyway, turning in her paperwork with only "H. Blanchard" listed as the name.

"World Headquarters then requested my first name, and the club president asked me what kind of male name I'd like to use," says Blanchard. "I told him I'd never thought about it, so the



Helen Blanchard, DTM

members decided to name me during Table Topics, and they came up with 'Homer.'" By 1973, women were allowed to join Toastmasters clubs and she was able to use her real name.

As she took on leadership positions in her club, Blanchard experienced little resistance. She did run into opposition, though, when she started climbing the ladder at the district level. "I was asked not to come to a special district meeting that was held in San Diego every year," says Blanchard. "I received a call from [Toastmasters' then-Second Vice President] Durwood English, though, who told me to go to the function anyway, so I went."

J. Clark Chamberlain, Toastmasters' first International President, initially balked at Blanchard's involvement in the event. But he later sent her a letter, saying "that originally, he didn't want women in the program, but that he had changed his mind," Blanchard says. "He valued the work I did, and said that I did a good job of breaking the ice for women in the program. He encouraged me to continue on and break the ice in the leadership area. I take my hat off to him for coming off [his original] position so gracefully."

Despite her experience with the San Diego district meeting, Blanchard remained undeterred and pressed on, unsuccessfully campaigning for the office of international director. "At that point, I don't think the world was ready for a female in that position," she says. "I did well in the campaign, however, and called my brother to tell him. He replied: 'You didn't do too bad – for a woman.'"

After that Blanchard spent a year as new club chair for her district, starting nine new clubs, including the Excelsior Club in San Diego, of which she is still a member today. She then returned to the campaign circuit, successfully run-

ning at the regional and then at the international level, where she won by a landslide.

Those who know Blanchard remark on her exceptional leader-

**"She left a legacy for the organization and women in general that a lot of people a the time could never have envisioned."**

**- BOB BLAKELEY, DTM, PIP**

ship skills. "Everyone used to call Helen a women's libber, but the truth is, she's a 'people libber,'" says Chuck Borough, a member of Downtown Escondido Toastmasters who has known her for over 40 years. "Helen has chartered more than 40 clubs," he says.


"Toastmasters is twice as big as it would have been without Helen."

Bob Blakeley, who served as International President in 1976-1977, says, "Before Helen stepped in, we used to have a rough-and-tumble political field in Toastmasters that doesn't exist now. A particular control group dominated, but Helen helped to break that up and move the organization to where it is today as a well-respected educational institution."

Blakeley and others who know her comment on Blanchard's warm personality. "Helen was never impressed with the fact that she was President," he says. "She's always been soft-spoken, friendly. And a great listener. She left a legacy for the organization and women in general that a lot of people at the time could never have envisioned."

To Blanchard, the organization has given back much more than she could ever contribute. Membership has helped her both personally and professionally. In 1974 when she was serving as a Lt. Governor, her husband, John, died of a heart attack at age 53. "That was a very difficult time for me," says

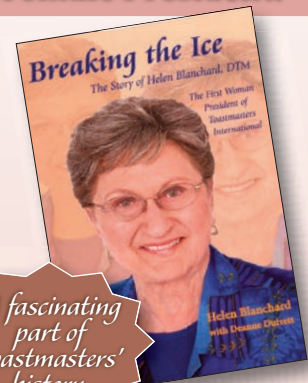
Blanchard, who credits her involvement with Toastmasters for helping to get her through the ordeal. "The camaraderie I found in the organization really saved my life," she says.

To read more about Helen Blanchard and her book *Breaking the Ice*, visit <http://helenblanchard.com/>. See ad below. 

**Julie Bawden Davis** is a freelance writer based in Southern California and a longtime contributor to the *Toastmaster*. You can reach her at [Julie@JulieBawdenDavis.com](mailto:Julie@JulieBawdenDavis.com).

## Breaking the Ice

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# Spinning on the Stump

By Caren S. Neile, Ph.D., CL

Politicians use storytelling  
to win over voters.

**O**ne of the late President Ronald Reagan's favorite stories concerned the meeting of two men, one from the USA, the other a Soviet citizen.

"In my country," said the American, "I can walk right into the Oval Office and say that I don't like the way Ronald Reagan is running the United States."

"I can do that with Gorbachev, too," replied the Soviet.

Having heard about Soviet repression, the American was incredulous. "You've got to be kidding!" he said.

"Not at all," replied the Soviet. "I can walk right into Gorbachev's office and say, 'I don't like the way Ronald Reagan is running the United States!'"

In our cynical age, you might readily agree that politicians make great storytellers. After all, a common definition of "storyteller" is *liar*. But even the most jaded observers of politicians know that storytelling has long been a powerful tool for persuasion.

The classical rhetoricians of ancient Greece used both the *introduction narrative* and the *parable* to pump up their speeches in the first democracy. You saw the introduction narrative – an anecdotal lead-in at the beginning of a speech to rouse interest – in the example above. In contrast, parables are anecdotal narratives that appear anywhere within a speech in order to teach a moral lesson.

In both cases, stories are used to connect with the audience, engage the emotions, and provide a concrete example of the abstract ideas the speaker wishes to put forth. What's more, studies show that people remember, and may therefore share, information more effectively when it is presented through story. Compare the impersonal use of numbers and statistics with the specificity of people and experiences, and you can see why stories are so effective.

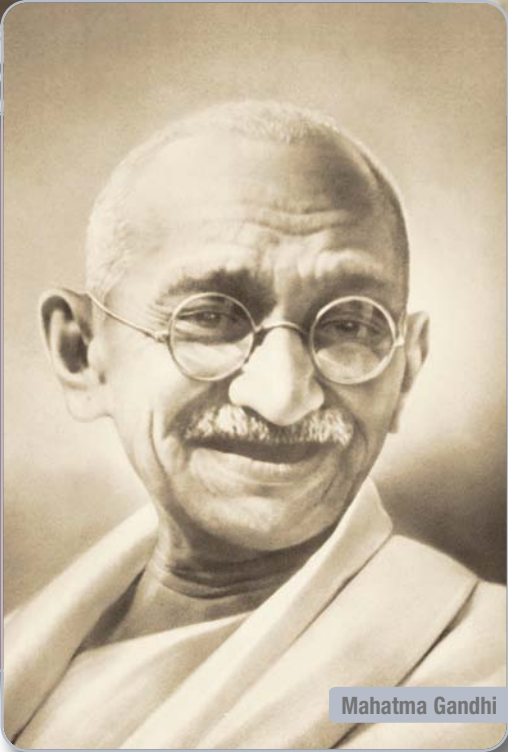




Ronald Reagan



Winston Churchill



Mahatma Gandhi

### The Great Communicator

Ronald Reagan was known as the Great Communicator, in large part because of his stories. Reagan's storytelling talent is legendary, writes former U.S. Secretary of State George P. Shultz in the foreword to *Stories in His Own Hand: The Everyday Wisdom of Ronald Reagan*.

"He peppered his conversations with stories," Shultz writes. "Stories lent a certain informality and ease to his speeches. He used stories to increase his rapport with the people in front of him or on the other end of the television camera.... The stories always made a point and gave drama and emphasis to the content of his speeches. He reached for stories that people could comprehend because they could imagine themselves being in the same position."

The book's editors go on to note that when Reagan would say, "Well, that reminds me of..." listeners were wise to pay close attention rather than to dismiss the story as a way of avoiding or changing the subject. Reagan referred to actual occurrences, folklore and jokes to make serious points. By causing us to laugh at

the very serious limitations on free speech in the former Soviet Union, for example, Reagan sought to underscore the differences between the U.S. system and theirs in a memorable way.

### Storylines

Along with sharing brief anecdotes, there is another, more indirect way in which politicians use stories. In *Tales of a New America*, former U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert B. Reich identified four main storylines reflected in political discourse. Unlike distinct stories, you

can't necessarily identify one of these intact in the middle of a speech. Rather, they are the underlying, implied stories by which politicians operate. Writing in the mid-1980s, Reich identified the basic American storylines as:

1. **The Benevolent Community:** We take care of our own.
2. **Mob at the Gates:** We must protect ourselves against outside enemies.
3. **Rot at the Top:** We can't trust the political and business elite.
4. **Triumph of the Individual:** Each of us can do anything we put our minds to.

We can still see the outlines of these stories in the rhetoric of American politicians as they discuss such issues as education, immigration, big government and affirmative action.

Why is it so important to recognize storytelling in politics? Once we understand how political storytelling works, we can be on the lookout for it – both in the words of others and in our own. We can ask ourselves, How does the story affect the message of the speech, as well as the credibility of the speaker? Does the listener feel manipulated or enlightened?

Following are a few classic examples of political storytelling, in speeches given by politicians the world over during the last century:

### Winston Churchill, Great Britain

On May 13, 1901, Winston Churchill, who went on to become Prime Minister, gave a speech to the British House of Commons in which he argued against increased government funding for the British Army. To reinforce his point, he told a story about the time when his father, Lord Randolph Churchill, then Secretary of the Treasury, was locked in political battle with the government – also over an issue of funding.

The language is a bit flowery, but the story stands out loud and clear:

*The Government of the day threw their weight on the side of the great spending Departments, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer [Churchill's father] resigned. The controversy was bitter, the struggle uncertain, but in the end the Government triumphed, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer went down for ever, and with him, as it now seems, there fell also the cause of retrenchment and economy, so that the very memory thereof seems to have perished, and the words themselves have a curiously old-fashioned ring about them.*

Churchill uses a historical anecdote about his father to contribute to his own credibility and to make a comparison between the situation then and what was happening at the time of his speech.

### Mahatma Gandhi, India

Gandhi, a lawyer, became a famous proponent of non-violence as he led the successful Indian protest against the British occupation, or Raj. In a 1916 speech he said:

*I was talking the other day to a member of the much-abused Civil Service. I have not very much in common with the members of that Service, but I could not help admiring the manner in which he was speaking to me. He said: "Mr. Gandhi, do you for one moment suppose that all we Civil Servants are a bad lot, that we want to oppress the people whom we have come to govern?" "No," I said. "Then if you get an opportunity, put in a word for the much-abused Civil Service."*

The recital of a conversation with an anonymous representative – whether real or imagined – of a group is a common technique of politicians. Interestingly, Gandhi followed up this story without fulfilling the request to put in a good word for the Civil Service!

### Anwar Sadat, Egypt

On May 16, 1971, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat gave a speech to a delegation of police officers, and he told a story about a time he and his predecessor, the late President Gamal Abdel Nasser, had met at Sadat's home. Nasser was still the president then:

*President Nasser intended to ask the people's permission to retire, and allow new leaders to take over in his [lifetime]... We all laughed and wondered who that successor would be and how the people would start comparing him to Nasser... I convey to the people the anxious words which Gamal Abdel Nasser said on that day: "I do not want my successor to humiliate the people." He said this with emotion: "No one will humiliate the people after me."*

Here President Sadat used the popular technique of having a statesman "speak from the grave" on his behalf in order to make the point that Sadat's first priority was to protect his people, even when he is no longer in power.

### Hillary Clinton, United States

On October 11, 2007, during Clinton's campaign for the presidential nomination, the New York senator told the

following story in a speech about the affordability of education:

*Back when I went to college, my late father said to me that he'd saved enough money – he was a small-business man – to pay for room, board and tuition, but if I wanted to buy a book or anything else, I had to earn the money. That was our deal. That was fine with me.*

*Then I graduated from college, and I decided I wanted to go to law school. So I told my father, and he said, "That's not part of the deal."*

*So I had to get a little scholarship, and I had to keep working. But then I borrowed money. And I borrowed money from the federal government. I borrowed it, as I recall, at something like two percent interest. It did not bankrupt me. It did not cause me to have to take a job on Wall Street. Instead, I got to do what I wanted to do.*

This is an example, used as well by former U.S. President Bill Clinton, of reaching back to a youthful experience to demonstrate personal knowledge of a given topic.

### Storytelling as Political Propaganda

While these techniques of persuasion may seem relatively benign, there are numerous ways in which political storytelling can seriously mislead and manipulate listeners, with often horrific results. Both Adolf Hitler's Third Reich and its predecessor, the Weimar Republic, reworked old German fairy tales such as "Sleeping Beauty" to reflect their anti-Semitic agenda. In many countries, women's rights are curtailed due to cultural beliefs and local folklore saying a woman's place is in the home. And because the prevailing storyline of the American South for 350 years was that Africans were less than human, slavery was considered perfectly moral.

So try to learn from history. Storytelling, like any other powerful tool, can be used both by the power elite and the opposition – for good or evil. It is our obligation, both as speakers and as voters, to recognize when it's being used, and to use it responsibly in our own speeches. ■

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## Dirty words are for the birds...

# Keep It Clean

It may have started with Janet Jackson's infamous "wardrobe malfunction" during halftime of the 2004 Super Bowl, but lately more crudities are appearing on television programs. Actress Diane Keaton let a colorful adjective slip out during a daytime interview. Jane Fonda used a vulgar noun when she was a guest on *The Today Show*. Several celebrities have spiced up their awards-show acceptance speeches with obscenities. The implication is that *street language* is now acceptable.

It shouldn't be from the podium.

There are good reasons why *working clean* should remain the preferred platform protocol. Following are several reasons why inoffensive presentations benefit both the speaker and the audience:

**Dignity:** Part of a speaker's mission is to present an impressive image. That's why we dress fashionably and appropriately. It's why we're concerned with our posture and our bearing while center stage. We want to project an image that not only deserves, but demands attention.

Our image is as much a part of our message as our text is. Once I sat in the audience while a well-known motivational speaker preached to his listeners that they could "have anything they wanted." Unfortunately, as he spoke these words he unbuttoned his suit jacket. A young lady seated behind me

whispered to her seatmate, "I guess he *wants* to have that pot belly hanging over his belt."

Everything we bring to the podium affects audience reaction – including our vocabulary. It's difficult to appear intelligent, dignified and respected if we use words that are coarse, undignified and distasteful.

**Respect:** As speakers, we expect our audience to respect us. We'd like them to be attentive and considerate to us. But that respect must flow in both directions – from the audience to the stage, and from the podium to the listeners.

Indecent language shows little respect for the audience.

If you were invited to dine with someone's family, you wouldn't be welcome if you laced your dinner conversation with unseemly language. As a speaker, you are an invited guest. You don't know everyone in the audience. Therefore, you shouldn't presume that they will welcome tasteless language just because you prefer to use it.

It's called "offensive language" because it offends – or at least, it has the potential to offend. Some speakers may argue, "Well, it doesn't offend me." That may be



true, but the speaker is not the only one who hears the words he or she speaks. The audience hears them, too. As invited guests, the listeners' sensitivities should take precedence over the speaker's.

**Creativity:** A speaker is judged not only by the message conveyed but also by *the conveyance* of that message. It's the orator's obligation to not only say something worthwhile but to say it in such a way that people can understand it, relate to it and seriously consider its value. This requires skill and creativity.

As a comedy instructor for both performers and writers, I would rigidly enforce my own "no blue material" edict. Many of the students kidded me about that, playfully labeling me "The Prude." Prudery, though, had nothing to do with it; concern for the craft was what I was emphasizing.

My contention was that once beginning comedy performers or writers resorted to blatantly off-color material, they would come to depend on it. Consequently, they would abandon the search for deeper comedy content. They'd surren-

der to the easy, shocking blue material and leave the truly innovative, more perceptive humor unmined.

To illustrate, let me tell you a story about Winston Churchill. There have been slightly different versions of the famous anecdote, but the basic tale is this: A woman who disliked the British Prime Minister once insulted him by saying, "Winston, if I were your wife, I would poison your tea." Churchill responded with, "Madam, if I were your husband, I would drink it." Isn't that a more forceful and inventive response than merely retaliating by calling her an obscene name?

The same applies to a speaker's salient points. Certainly throwing an unpleasant adjective in front of your points highlights them. Isn't it, though, more effective to find some sparkling, acceptable, more articulate way of capturing your audience's attention?

The profane is easier, surely; the romantic, lyrical, philosophical language is more effective – and more appreciated by the listeners.

**Responsibility:** You, the speaker, are representing whomever hired you – the corporation, the association, the school, whatever. Certainly you're offering your own views, insight and logic on whatever topic you speak on, but you're doing it with their imprimatur. Your speech reflects on them.

It's unwise and it's unfair to use language in *your* presentation that they might be held accountable for.

**Focus:** A speaker steps onto the podium because he or she has something to say, something that's worth listening to, something that will in some way benefit a goodly portion of those who hear it. That speaker has a message. However, even the most edifying theme is worthwhile only if it is heard and remembered. Those who hire a

speaker for educational purposes often advise, "Give our people something they can take home with them." In other words, give them something they can reflect on and use for some time to come.

But if you use spicy language in a lecture, it can be more distracting than productive. It can cause con-

**"The profane is easier, surely; the romantic, lyrical, philosophical language is more effective – and more appreciated by listeners."**

troversy. What good is it to deliver a beneficial lesson if people talk more about the way it was delivered – in a negative sense – than about the lesson itself? A good speaker wants people to remember what was said and not the ill-advised language used in saying it.

**Reputation:** There's a saying in show business – "You're only as good as your last show." You can have years and years of solid performing behind you, but give one bad performance, for whatever reason, and offers start dwindling.

A reputation is a valuable commodity for a speaker or an entertainer. It's also very delicate, as that show business adage illustrates.

Professional speakers live by recommendations and word of mouth. One offensive presentation can destroy both. Even if you sincerely feel that some of your indelicate language is *acceptable*, is it worth including it if it might endanger the years of good will and solid reviews that you've already built up?

**Good Business:** Speakers want to get bookings. There's hardly any sense in being a speaker if you have no place to speak. You want your reputation and your presentation to have broad appeal. Therefore, it's counter-productive to introduce


something into your act that limits your appeal. Indelicate language in your presentations can do just that...and that's just bad business.

**It's Great to Be Back:** Whenever I do repeat performances I begin with a story about a court-ordered hanging in an old Western town. A politician

happened to be in the town on that eventful day and asked the mayor if he could address the people gathered there. The mayor said it was all right with him, but he would have to ask for the condemned man's permission. The condemned man said, "I don't mind if he speaks, but could you hang me first? I've already heard his talk."

It's wonderful to be able to use that opening, because it means I've gotten repeat business. Professional speakers depend on that. Being hired back for an encore speaking performance means more money in the speaker's pocket.

So once you've got the first engagement, don't jeopardize the invitation to come back by using language that might offend.

Let the celebrities lace their acceptance speeches with profanity if they like. Let the movie stars *inadvertently* say something untoward in their interviews. Let comics defend their blue material. From the platform, though, let us continue to work clean. 

---

**Gene Perret** has won several Emmys for his work on *The Carol Burnett Show*. He was Bob Hope's head writer for 12 years and has written many books about humor. Contact him at [gper276@sbcglobal.net](mailto:gper276@sbcglobal.net).

Making the most of the contest experience.

# Club Contests Enrich Everyone

**H**ealth, wealth and unlimited success! That's what club contests can bring to Toastmasters.

Let's look at those claims one at a time. A club contest delivers a healthy club. How? Because members feel greater loyalty to a club that has a tradition of strong contests. And when guests visit during a contest, they're attracted to the energy of your club's vibrant, well-spoken membership.

How does a club contest promise wealth? When members deliver an important message in a well-crafted 5- to 7-minute speech,

the audience is treated to a wealth of inspiration and information.

But there's only one winner – so how can you claim “unlimited” success? Because success isn't measured by selecting a winner. Out of thousands of contestants in the Toastmasters International Speech Contest each year, only one walks away as the World Champion. But the true success of the contest system is shown as each speaker commits to write a speech, hones it, gets feedback to improve their content and delivery, practices the speech and finally delivers it.

Every person who delivers a message in a club contest speech has grown as a speaker and a person – and that's success!

## Pushing Through Your Fears

Susan Barrera was a classic terror-stricken speaker when she first joined Toastmasters. After she gave her first four speeches, her club encouraged her to enter an evaluation contest in order to get her more involved. She expected to suffer through the contest and then retreat back into her shell. Instead, she surprised herself by soaking up the experience. “They ‘forced’ me to enter that first contest,”

## Got Questions? WHQ has Answers!

**E**very year, World Headquarters' staff receives hundreds of questions on the topic of the Speech Contest Rulebook and the proper conduct of Toastmasters speech contests. If you have questions, feel free to call or send an e-mail. We're happy to help!

If, on the other hand, you'd like to try to answer your speech contest questions on your own, we encourage you to do so. Here are some resources and suggestions that may help:

- **Speech Contest Rulebook** (Item 1171). This is your best resource for answering speech contest questions. It is the only official document that controls all rules-related decisions regarding speech contests. A free copy of this manual is available (for viewing, but not for printing) on the Toastmasters Web site at [www.toastmasters.org/speechcontestrules](http://www.toastmasters.org/speechcontestrules).
- **Speech Contest Manual** (Item 1173). This document provides guidance for running a successful speech contest, but does not provide any rules that must be followed.
- **Frequently Asked Questions** (FAQ). Check the Toastmasters Web site for frequently asked questions about speech contests at [www.toastmasters.org/speechcontestfaq](http://www.toastmasters.org/speechcontestfaq).
- **The voice of experience.** Many Toastmasters veterans and club, area, division and district leaders have extensive experience conducting (and competing in) speech contests, which makes them excellent resources for speech contest rules, protocols, and best practices.

If you still have unanswered questions, call World Headquarters, or send an e-mail to [speechcontests@toastmasters.org](mailto:speechcontests@toastmasters.org). And remember: the rules apply to all Toastmasters speech contests – they may not be supplanted or modified, and no exceptions may be made.



she admits, “and I learned so much that now I tell anybody to ‘just do it,’ whether they feel ready or not.”

When the club winner wasn’t able to advance, Barrera found herself representing the club at the area contest, where she gained more confidence. She now frequently competes in advanced contests and has some district level trophies in her collection.

Mark Brown, the 1995 Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking, is another former club contestant. And he, too, remembers the importance of participating in that first event. “The club speech contest is a great way to stretch yourself,” says Brown. “Participation almost forces you to be better than you have ever been, and it’s a wonderful opportunity to put into practice the techniques you have learned in the Toastmasters program.

“In one 5-to-7-minute speech, you strive to evoke many emotions, give the audience something to think about, and leave them with a message that can affect their lives. That is the *true* value of the speech contest.”

To make your club contest a wealthy experience, here are some good investments:

- **Participate in every contest your district holds.** Besides the International Speech Contest, the contests for humorous speeches, Table Topics and evaluations are all skill builders and help prepare you for the International Speech Contest.
- **Ask every club member to participate** – if not as a contestant, then in another contest function.
- **Set the dates far in advance** – six months is not too early – and keep mentioning them on every newsletter and meeting agenda in the months leading up to the contest.
- **Appoint the contest chairman when the date is set** so he or she can work with club officers to build interest in the contest.
- **Don’t be casual** about the club contest. It’s a bigger event when taken

seriously. Follow all guidelines and formalities so that everybody sees what a contest is like at every level.

- **Make it a special event** – invite family members, colleagues, prospective members, past members – not just to build the audience, but to let everyone enjoy the excitement of communication in a supportive club environment.
- **Make it an educational opportunity.** Offer a presentation prior to the event on developing a contest speech. Invite a strong speaker from another club who won’t be competing in your contest.

*(continued on page 22)*

## SPEAKING OPPORTUNITIES

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**Speech contests teach you about yourself.**

# The Real Prize

Many readers of this magazine have experienced the emotional roller-coaster ride of the Toastmasters International Speech Contest. And for those of you who haven't participated in the event, I think the following lesson is still a powerful one.

Are you ready for the 100-percent-guaranteed way to get a speaking trophy? Here it comes: Buy one!

Because when you compete in the International Speech Contest, it should not be all about getting that first-place trophy. Can only one speaker each year really win? Well, it all depends on how you define "winning." If you grow as a speaker, you've won.

The purpose of the contest isn't to see who can beat each other, it's to teach you more about yourself and your ability to connect with your audience. Likewise, the purpose of a coach isn't to teach you how to win trophies, it's to teach you how to deliver your message in such a way that your listeners get it and think differently because they were in your audience. I personally coach many speakers in the corporate world and many professionals. I don't care if they win; I encourage them to join Toastmasters and compete to grow as presenters.

What is the one key ingredient of a winning speech? People ask me each year for the "hot topic" they should write about. The one key ingredient in every winning speech is a compelling personal story. That's it. You're only "hot" if you're speaking from personal experience.

My friend Bryant won huge in the International Speech Contest in 2007. He made it all the way to the finals and didn't take home a big

trophy. He took home something much bigger as a result of the competition: He became a much better, more compelling speaker. His improved talents and the lessons he learned during the competition will last him a lifetime.

A trophy just gathers dust. Which is truly more valuable?

## Trophies Don't Tell the Future

Don't you dare let a trophy or lack of one define you! Life is bigger than a speech contest. Many people who haven't won in the World Championship of Public Speaking have more successful speaking careers than many of the winners (including me).

How did I know I had a winning speech? It wasn't anything my coach said to me. It was a comment made by a woman in my audience a few weeks prior to the 2001 competition. I was speaking at an MIT Toastmasters club on a Saturday morning, and a foreign exchange student came up to me right after my speech. In broken English, she said, "My family says I should leave school, give up and go back home to my country. Because of your speech, I choose to stay. Thank you."

You have become a "speaker" when people approach you after your presentation and talk about themselves – not about you – and what they are going to do differently as a result of hearing you.

Wow! That was the moment the belief in myself and my speech, titled "Ouch!", became clear to me. I became more passionate about making sure my audience got my message. I then became more coachable and learned what I could to better

communicate my message. It wasn't about me, it was about how my story could help others.

I had a winning speech! I didn't know if I'd get a trophy, but I knew I had a speech I couldn't wait to give. My coach reminded me that I had been given the privilege of seven minutes in the lives of nearly 1,500 people in the audience, and he asked, "What are you going to do with it?"

## Change People's Perspectives

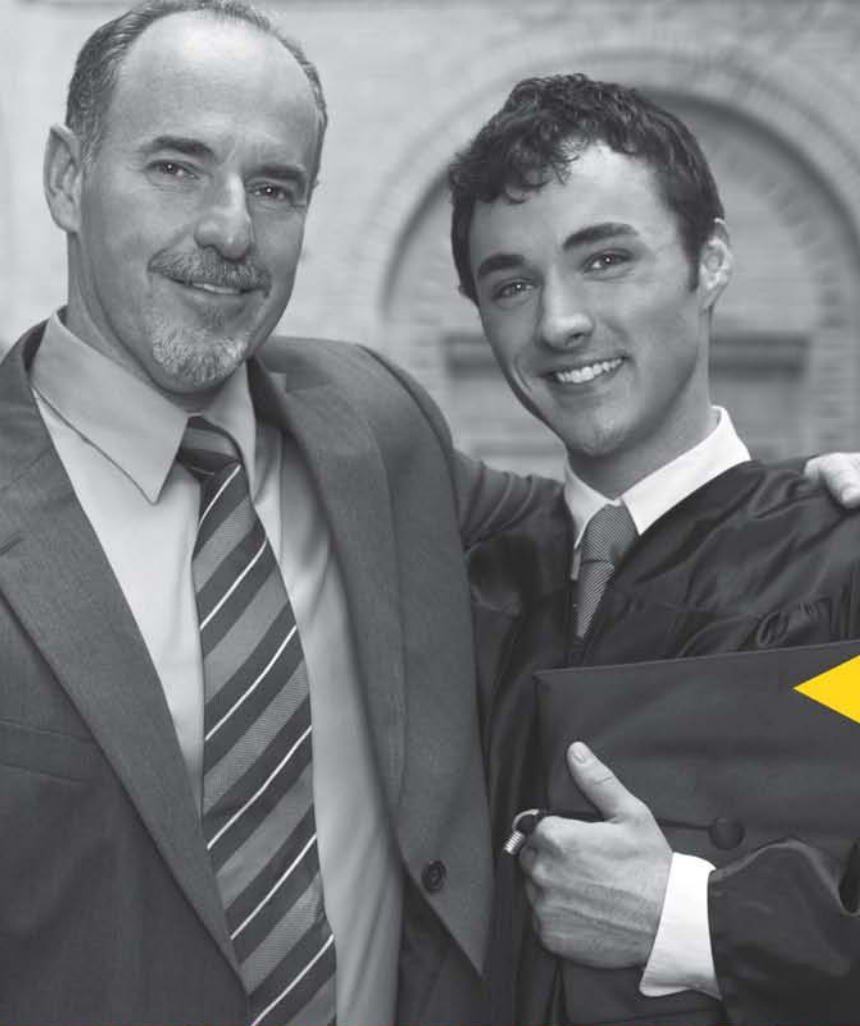
If you really want a trophy, just buy one. For \$35 you can save yourself a whole lot of anguish. But you can be a winner by competing for improvement, by being the best at changing the perspective of your audience with your compelling personal story. Clients pay for that. No one has ever hired me to do a keynote speech because I have a 35-pound piece of Lucite on my mantle.

What will you do with the privilege of your audience's time? Competition is not about you – it's about how your story helps individual audience members. It's not about the trophy, it's about your own growth. You can take my trophy from 2001, but you can't take away my growth as a speaker and a person. I'll always remember that young woman from MIT.

What will they say when they come up to you after you speak? **T**

**Darren LaCroix** won Toastmasters' World Championship of Public Speaking in 2001. He is a professional speaker, trainer and mentor living in Las Vegas, Nevada. He can be reached at [www.humor411.com](http://www.humor411.com).





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# Say It with Meaning

By Debra Johanyak

A speaker should handle words with the same care a carpenter handles tools.

*“Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for inviting me to share my topic with you. I look forward to our time together.”*

**I**f you read this sentence aloud, you can hear that it sounds like it is spoken in monotone. In fact, the words tend to flow into one another without particular meaning. But with a few tweaks, any speaker can offer a thoughtful, attention-grabbing presentation that the audience will remember long afterward.

Verbal nuances, pauses and accented syllables can make your utterances more sonorous and meaningful. Like an actor rehearsing lines, a speaker should rehearse words before speaking to a group. With practice, everyday language can be enhanced to invigorate listeners and ease their grasp and appreciation of the message you want to share.

The *way* we say it is as important, or more so, as *what* we say.

The most inspiring words in a message can lose their effect if the speaker fails to ignite the audience's passion. A speaker should handle words with the same care that a carpenter handles tools. Both professions construct meaning through capable application of tools to relevant material. Speakers should consider adding to their presenter's "tool kit" a variety of strategies for making the most of the words they will use to share a meaningful message.



Although many verbal tools can be employed in the public speaking profession, those outlined below show you how to vocalize a presentation to optimum advantage.

## Accented Words

Here is another way to recite the opening statement in the beginning of this article. Consider the words in all bold letters to be stated more emphatically:

“Good **evening**, ladies and gentlemen. **Thank** you for inviting **me** to share my **topic** with you. I look **forward** to our time together.”

Obviously, the emphasized words should not be yelled at the audience, but rather slightly accented to vary the monotone and offer interesting nuances that will catch your readers' attention.

The next time you prepare a speech, look it over and highlight any special words that should be accented more strongly than the rest. Accents can focus the listeners' attention on key ideas or elements of your presentation.

### Pitch

We often think of music when hearing the word "pitch," but it actually has to do with the sound of a voice that conveys emotion, as indicated in this early 20th Century explanation from [OldandSold.com](http://OldandSold.com):

- The police officer's expression showed that he believed me guilty of *speeding*.

In this example, the word "speeding" receives emphasis if that is what the speaker wants listeners to notice or question. Choosing to pronounce a strategic word in a clear, emphatic way will help the audience to grasp its intended meaning and the speaker's associated emotional response.



"Remember that voice control is dependent largely upon emotional control. When you are excited or frightened, unconsciously the muscles around your voice box or larynx are tightened."

While it is unnecessary (and unwise) to make a speech at a consistently high pitch, it can be helpful to moderate vocal pitch by pronouncing some words or phrases within an emotional context. Consider the following examples:

- "Be *silent!*" the tribal chief grunted to the missionary, trying to interject logic to the ritual.

Given the context of this statement, it appears the word "silent" could be spoken angrily or as an exclamation of authority.

### Intonation

Intonation is an extension of pitch. A person's voice can change pitch and thereby reveal inflection through contrasts in vocal tone. A voice moves up and down the scale of sounds to express various thoughts and emotions. Upward movement tends to reflect a question or incomplete thought, while downward inflection represents a whole or complete idea.

Thus, intonation provides the opportunity for shifting voice pitch to contrast emotions or thought patterns. Here are a couple of examples:

"Should we then surrender our voting rights as a gesture of support for the minority? No, we should not."

The first sentence can be read in rising intonation (a question), while the responsive statement can spiral downward to provide an answer and close the issue on

that point. Of course, words like *surrender*, *voting rights*, *minority*, *no* and *not* can be accented as focal ideas.

“She led me to believe I would be promoted within a week. But my expectation proved wrong.”

(Or: “She *led* me to believe I would be *promoted* within a *week*. But my expectation proved *wrong*.”)

Intonation would rise on the first sentence, and then fall with the second. If you practice this in front of a mirror or by recording it a few times, you will see how much more engaging your speech can be with emotional ups and downs as well as accented words.

### Silence

Now that we have discussed what can be said loudly or differently, let’s look at what *not* to say and possible effects of keeping quiet at certain points of your speech.

Some speakers view silence as uncomfortable gaps in their presentations. But brief silences can help to drive home an issue, allow audiences to ponder a point, or prepare listeners for what’s coming. Professional speakers should add deliberate silence, or pauses, to their repertoire of speaking strategies to enhance a message.

“Verbal nuances, pauses and accented syllables can make your utterances more sonorous and meaningful.”

A Web article titled “Body Language: The Language Everybody Speaks” at [lichaamstaal.com](http://lichaamstaal.com) suggests that silence plays a strategic role in interpersonal communication: “When we are silent we are also communicating! What we communicate depends on what kind of silence it is. ...Again, the time in between words provide feeling and thinking space for people. Generally, the more emotionally loaded the subject is, the more silences we need.”

Let’s say that you are delivering three main points during your talk to a local civic group. In addition to numbering or sequencing the points, pause briefly as you conclude one before beginning the next. This demonstrates to your audience that you are about to transition to the next part of your speech.

In addition, when you make a suspenseful or important statement, pause a moment or two to let the audience grasp its full significance. Moving on too quickly can diminish the forceful effect of a strong statement.

### Pronunciation

Be sure to correctly pronounce the words you will be using in your speech. Mispronunciation can leave the audience with a negative impression of your profession-

alism and be confusing when audience members fail to grasp the actual word you are trying to say. Here are a few examples:

- **Counselor** (wrongly pronounced “consaler”)
- **Misled** (wrongly pronounced “mizled” with a long ‘i’)
- **Wolves** (wrongly pronounced “wolfs”)

Look up the correct pronunciation and enunciation of any words with which you are unfamiliar and note them in your speech so you will remember how to say the words correctly.

### Repetition

You probably learned in English class not to repeat the same word in a sentence or paragraph, but rather to try and find a fresh word or phrase so you don’t sound repetitive. That is a good principle – to a point. Sometimes repetition can help to underscore a point when used strategically and appropriately.

Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech is a rousing example of the dynamic use of his key phrase, which is used nine times, as well as his repetitive use of “Let freedom ring,” also nine times, in the closing lines of his speech. Dr. King did not repeat these phrases because he could think of no others, but because they are important to the message and he wanted to give the audience a valuable concept,

beautiful in simplicity, remarkable in meaning.

When repeating key words or phrases, do so with a plan in mind. Don’t let repetitions randomly occur.

### Say It and Mean It

With these exciting verbal tools you can craft an even more impressive speech the next time you face an audience. While it is important to choose the best words for your topic and arrange them in a meaningful sequence, remember that how you say them can go a long way to underscore or derail their impact. If you feel awkward trying to incorporate all these changes at once in your presentation style, begin by changing just one thing. When you feel comfortable with that strategy and begin noticing positive results, add another one. Soon your speeches will be receiving enthusiastic responses as you engage your audience in a purposeful way.

Don’t let language do all the work of conveying a message to your listeners. Start practicing your new presentation skills to prepare your most dynamic speech yet! 📌

**Debra Johanyak** is a professor of English at the University of Akron Wayne College in Orrville, Ohio.

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## Club Contests

(continued from page 15)

- **Get a mentor.** Mentors aren't only for new members. Every contestant can benefit from having a mentor in the weeks before the event. The more thought put into a contest speech, the better the speaker becomes.

- When somebody gives a good speech during the year, point it out and **encourage that speaker to develop it for the next club contest.**

- **Provide visible rewards,** such as a certificate of participation for each contestant and ribbons or trophies for winners.

- **Celebrate every participant** – emphasize that the most important result of the club contest is not advancing to the area contest but advancing to the next skill level.

- **Make certain that every contestant gets feedback** – assign an evaluator for each speaker, who will provide helpful suggestions independent of the contest results.

- **Issue a press release about your contest.** Even if the bigger newspapers overlook it, there are likely some local publications – such as neighborhood “shoppers” – that will be pleased to have information about local activities. If you're in a corporate club, make sure the press release goes to the company newsletters of everybody who enters.

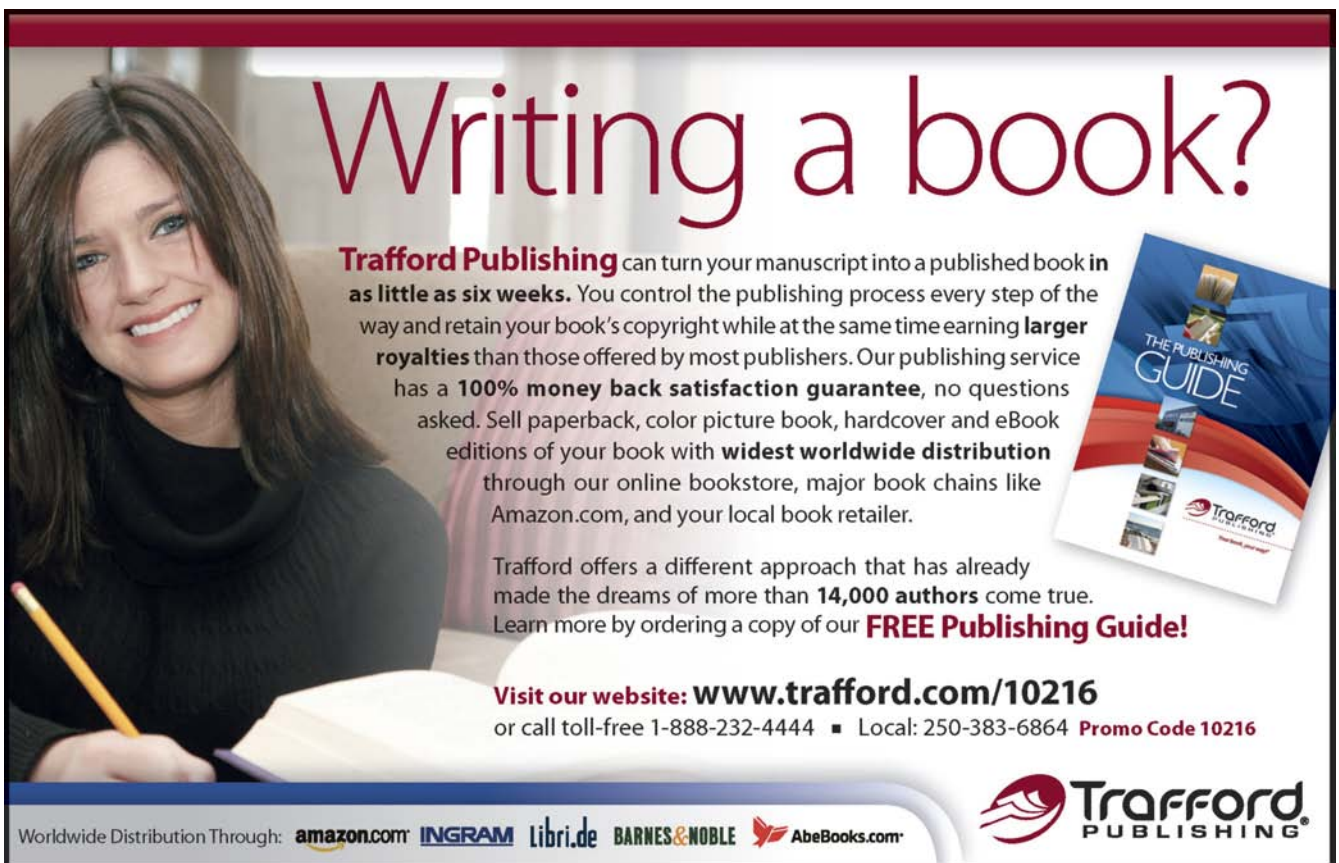
- **Encourage clubwide participation in the area, division and district contests.** Club members in attendance at those events will support their winners as they advance to the next level, and club members serving as

helpers at those contests become better informed and more competent participants in future events.

Club level contests are an important aspect of your Toastmasters membership. They provide valuable experience, build skills and raise the bar for other presentations. They showcase progress and get members involved in a shared activity. Finally, they help determine your club's representatives to area contests – and those members will perform better at that level if they've shared the experience of speaking in a strong club contest. ■

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**Gregory Lay, ATMS,** is a member of Challenge and Leadership 23 Toastmasters club in Albuquerque, New Mexico.



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**27 jewels and 210 hand-assembled parts drive this classic masterpiece.**

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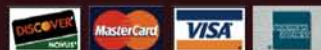
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# Talk About

By Beth Black

# Amazing!

Ta-da! Specialty magic club teaches tricks to Toastmasters.

**A**bracadabra! Hocus pocus! While the entire audience strains to watch his every move, Kif Anderson magically transforms a jar of pebbles into a handful of diamonds. How does he do it? More importantly, how does he get his audience to hang on his every word in the process?

Anderson has the uncanny ability to blend magic tricks with public speaking. It's that mixture of magic and mirth, spells and speaking, trickery and talk that – like alchemy – converts the presentations of this Advanced Toastmaster Gold into real gold.

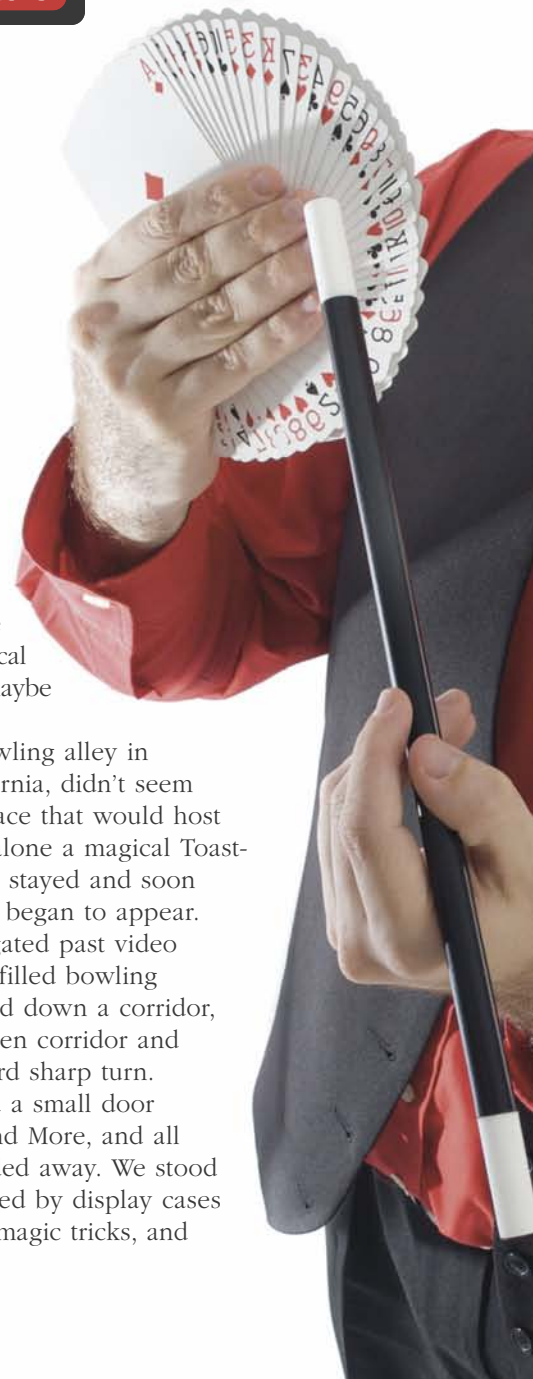
When I saw him perform last year, it turned out to be a stroke of luck. My first few speeches on the way to earning my CC had been a lot of fun, but I eventually found myself wishing I could add something special to my presentations – a little extra razzle-dazzle. Where to find speaking tricks that are flashy and fun? No answer seemed in sight.

So when Anderson performed at our district club officer training, I was wowed by his custom blend of down-home public speaking and astonishing magic tricks. Anderson, who has studied magic since childhood, began performing at Hollywood's famed Magic Castle in 1984 and is currently part of a comedy magic duo called Oz and Wilde (he plays Wilde). But the most exciting part of the club officer training was when he told us in the audience that we could learn to use magic techniques in our own speeches. He offered a contact sheet if we were interested in joining a new Toastmasters club specializing in the magical arts. We lined up to sign up. It was my something special.

A few months later, I found myself again not believing my eyes. Or ears. How could the club's location be a

bowling alley? The sound of bowling balls careening down lanes toward clamorous collisions with their mated pins does not strike the mind as a magical experience. Well, maybe that third strike...

But really, a bowling alley in Westminster, California, didn't seem like the kind of place that would host a magic shop, let alone a magical Toastmasters club. But I stayed and soon other Toastmasters began to appear. Together, we navigated past video games and league-filled bowling lanes. We wandered down a corridor, into a second hidden corridor and just around the third sharp turn. Finally, we opened a small door to Magic Galore and More, and all things ordinary faded away. We stood gawking, surrounded by display cases proffering serious magic tricks, and







behind them all the shop's proprietor, illusionist Ken Sands, dealing disappearing cards.

In this place, the magic really started.

Presto Chango! What was once merely a Toastmaster is fast becoming...a Toastmaster-magician! Or a magical Toastmaster, or – more accurately – a Toastmaster who has learned some nifty magic tricks to augment those special speeches. Anderson's "Magic Toastmasters" club, also known as Club 100, is the place to add magic to your musings. Our monthly specialty club serves two kinds of clientele: budding magicians who need to practice their patter and budding Toastmasters who want to learn a new gimmick for their speeches.

### **Tricks of the Trade**

So far, I've learned to perform several tricks that would have stumped me as an audience member. Each one has its own poetic name: Three Ropes, Afghan Bands (aka Elephant Zipper or Mobius Strip), Cut and Restored String, Flippin', and tricks with equipment such as change bags. We've learned card tricks that challenge the beginner's mind. I especially enjoy seeing how the magicians in the group react to each kind of trick – and everyone does have some sort of preference.

For Victor Broski, the preference is not so much in the type of magic trick as in the thought process that goes with it. He explains, "At the Magic Club, it's not just the magic – we learn how the audience thinks. That is, what catches their attention, what distracts them and how to best work with their attention span." Broski and the rest of us have been learning to think like illusionists – to capture our audiences' imagination.

He adds, "Speaking takes on a whole new perspective. It becomes more audience focused. What is the audience thinking about right this second? In magic, you almost know more about what the audience is thinking than the actual audience member. You have to in order to make the magic work."

So to make the magic work we're learning how to read the thoughts of our audiences. I've been picturing the real magic of speaking to an audience under those conditions, with or without the use of anything that pops, poofs or sparks. For all the fun of the magic, it appears that the true goal we're nearing is the ability to build a deeper bond with our listeners.

As if that weren't enough, Kif has taken it upon himself to teach us all a little of the history of magic. Top that off with magical Table Topics using a newly learned trick of the evening, and we've all been hooked.

### **Magical Patter**

The magician's code prevents me from giving away any magical secrets here, except perhaps the best secret of all: the patter. We've been able to watch as the same trick is performed by several different people, and each time it looks new and different. The secret is because each presenter is using the effect to augment a speech of his or her own choosing. So a rope trick can illustrate a talk about buying medical insurance, making friends or creating world peace.



▲ Members of Club 100 say, "Pick a card – any card!"

And as much fun as the magic stunts are, they really do rely on the speaking ability of the presenter. It's a delicate balance between the trick and the talk. "I've learned that the magic is not the trick itself, but what goes before it: the setup, the story, and finally the illusion. Many times the bare trick is rather uneventful," says Broski.

Brian Ballard, a magician member of the club who works for CareMore Medical, says the speaking and the magic go hand in hand. To illustrate, he holds three ropes of various lengths. Focusing on the short one, he says, "Some medical plans come up short," but when the ropes magically grow to equal lengths, he shows each off and quips, "At our company, you get full service, full benefits and full care." Without the entertainment of the rope trick, it would be just another insurance commercial. So while it's true that the topic makes the trick...it's also true that a good trick can make a topic.

### New Lessons

At one meeting, we learned first-hand how tricks can go awry. Kif was prepared to teach us one that involved morphing the carbonated beverage Mountain Dew into a glow stick. His scientist friend had recommended it as a club meeting project. But when he attempted to reproduce the results himself, Kif found the trick didn't work – what was supposed to glow, simply didn't.

So instead, we spent the meeting learning the ways a magician can personalize any magic trick by understanding how to create a story behind it and how to set the stage. Magicians pride themselves on reinventing old tricks to make them spellbinding again. The basic trick might remain unchanged, but the discussion leading up to it, the

setting, costumes, use of colors and materials all add up to a unique effect.

Kif, who stands 6 feet tall, told the group about a show he performs where he acts like a small child. How do you get an audience to believe that a 6-foot man is a small child? By use of specialized props and sets. He surrounds himself with oversized furniture, which makes him seem small by comparison. He reaches into an oversized toy box and retrieves magical toys that are extra-large by design.


The benefits of adding magic far outweigh the risks of a failed attempt. John Muse is grateful for what he's picking up in Club 100 and says, "Learning magic has added real impact to my speeches. I used it for the International Speech Contest at the club [level], which I won. I used it the area contest, which I won. I used it in the division contest, and although I did not win, everyone remarked how much the magic added to the speech." He adds, "Using magic

makes me a more confident speaker, and really adds punch to my speeches."

All of the club members are enthusiastic about learning how to blend magic and speaking. L. Joy Nishijima says, "It's so much fun...I even find myself doing illusions at social events for friends and family, all the while keeping them guessing!"

I've found that handling non-magical props has become easier now. Perhaps it's because of the practice we've put in with props that can literally snap, crackle and pop in our hands.

Magic has been so much fun; it's making me curious to discover more of these exotic Toastmasters experiences. Is there such a thing as an addiction to specialty clubs? A quick peek online reveals that there are many interesting specialty clubs scattered about my district. Which one should I try next? Should it be...the gourmet club or the storytelling club? What a choice!

For information on how to visit Club 100, click the "Find" button on [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org). 



▲ Kif Anderson demonstrates sleight of hand with the classic Multiplying Billiard Balls.

**Beth Black, CC**, is an associate editor at the *Toastmaster* magazine and a member of two Toastmasters clubs: Club 100 in Westminster, California, and Rancho Speech Masters in Rancho Santa Margarita, California.

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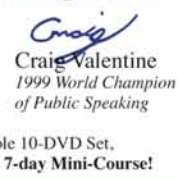
~ Michael Plaks, Houston, TX

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## The 3 Cs of a quality introduction: Content, context and credibility.

# Rx for a Good Speech Introduction

“This guy who’s coming to the podium – you gotta keep your eye on him. He’ll make your wallet disappear. Please welcome Michael Varma.”

Yes, this is a true Hall of Shame introduction I received years ago. It was horrendous on so many levels. It made me sound like a pick-pocket – but it gets worse. I was speaking before local businessmen asking for *donations*, to fund *Friends of the Garden* – a nonprofit project to teach elementary school children how to grow a vegetable garden.

My introducer had neglected to explain that I was a professional magician. Before my presentation, he had told me a story backstage of how another magician, about 10 years ago, magically stole his wallet as part of a comedy routine. His incomplete reminiscence at the lectern effectively killed my credibility. I had to take valuable time away from my original purpose to clarify his comments, then suitably re-introduce myself.

A fitting introduction, tailored to the topic of this article, would be, “*Ladies and gentlemen, our next guest is a professional entertainer and keynote speaker who over the last 25 years has performed and witnessed introductions ranging from spectacular to shocking. He will tell us how to avoid the Hall of Shame and provide an exclusive look into the secrets of giving an inspiring*

*and dynamic introduction. Please welcome to the stage...*”

Interested to know the speaker’s name? Curious about what secrets will be revealed? Then my 30-second intro did a good job. It was successful because it contained the three Cs of a quality introduction: content, context and credibility.

**Content:** A brief, succinct sentence describing what you plan to talk about establishes a connection with the audience. Have your introducer include an interesting and attention-grabbing fact to pique your audience’s interest for the next C: context.

**Context:** Explaining *why* the topic is timely or important to the listeners will help solidify the bond between the speaker and the audience. This persuasive sentence grants the presenter full access to engage each participant, putting you – the speaker – exactly where you want to be.

**Credibility:** People want to learn from experts. A medical student wants to learn from an experienced, successful doctor, not the appliance repairman. A concise sentence stating your credentials is sufficient.

Occasionally I’m asked, “But what if the speaker has several degrees and awards?” Best recommendation: Pick only two or three to be mentioned. Select the pertinent accolades for the subject mat-

ter and match it to the audience, because in most cases less is more.

Limiting each component (content, context and credibility) to one sentence provides the perfect intro length of 30 to 60 seconds.

### Format

For basic introductions, keeping the Cs in order (1-2-3) creates a crescendo before announcing the performer’s name, which is the natural cue to step up to the microphone. Ultimately, the type of event and the emcee’s level of experience will dictate the order of the three Cs.

I like the 3-2-1 format for wedding and anniversary parties. You may ask, “If it’s obvious you’re at a wedding reception, is it still necessary to cover the content, context and credibility?”

Yes, for several reasons. It notifies the audience and speaker what’s next on the agenda, provides a natural segue, and best of all, takes less than 10 seconds to say. For example: “The best man, Stephen Varma, the groom’s brother, will say a few words and lead the guests in a toast to the newlyweds.” Non-family members and their guests will know the who, what, where, when and why.

### Reality check

Books on party protocol preach that the master of ceremonies will contact the performer and find out the following information: the speaker’s



◀ Learning from the experts: 2007-2008 International President Chris Ford introduces Golden Gavel recipient Pamela Wallin at the International Convention in Calgary in August.

existent phone call from the person who might introduce me, I actively do the following:

- Create a well-crafted introduction printed in a large 24-point font (so it can be easily read).
- E-mail or fax copies in advance to the contact person for the event.
- Arrive early and locate the person making the introductions.
- Provide another copy of the intro and have it read out loud until we're both satisfied.

If you follow the three Cs of a quality introduction – content, context and credibility – and learn from my experience, you'll avoid the Hall of Shame and guarantee yourself a warm welcome from your audience. ■

**Michael Varma, ACG, ALB**, is a member of BergenMeisters Toastmasters club in Orange, California. He can be reached at [www.michaelvarma.com](http://www.michaelvarma.com).

name and correct pronunciation (spelled phonetically if necessary), the speaker's title (CEO, CFO, President, etc.), the speaker's bona fides (Dr., Ph.D., etc.) and the title of the speech. In truth, I've rarely received any such call. Waiting for the phone to ring can lead to disaster. I submit into evidence another one of my Hall of Shame introductions:

"H-e-e-r-e's Michael!"

While I appreciate being raised to the legendary ranks of Letterman, Leno, Carson and other one-name icons, it was an inappropriate intro-

duction to a group of elementary school children waiting to learn about earthquake safety. If kids know these late-night talk show hosts, then we have an explanation for the country's dismal test scores.

### Essentials

Most professional presenters, myself included, know the power of a proper introduction. A careless, haphazard, off-the-cuff intro can destroy the immediate connection needed to engage your audience. So instead of waiting for a non-

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## FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT!

By John Cadley

# Casualties of War

Now that the political wars are over, let us stand by the roadside and pay homage to the walking wounded – not the beaten candidates, but the beaten words, the ones so battered by misuse, abuse and loose use they may never regain their former meaning.

Here they come now, a slow, grim column of hollow-eyed, exhausted verbiage. At the front is the word **change**... being carried on a stretcher. Oh, the horror! With its “c” hanging down, its “e” twisted sideways, and its “g” all bruised and broken, this once proud English word of French derivation now looks like a Chinese typographical error.

*Change!* In Barack Obama’s mouth it meant one thing, in John McCain’s another. It was something to believe in, something we need, something that was coming, something that was here. McCain represented no change at all. Obama represented the wrong kind of change. Obama said he would change Washington. McCain said Washington would change Obama. And Sarah Palin said she had to change her baby.

Now **change** stares vacantly into the middle distance, confused, disoriented, wondering if what it really means is... no change at all.

Straggling close behind is the word **experience** – on crutches. It was drafted at the very beginning of the Hillary-Obama skirmishes, saw heavy fighting in the McCain-Romney campaigns, and was seriously wounded in the brutal blitzkriegs of the McCain-Obama wars.

*Experience* was a good thing, meaning mature, seasoned, prepared. *Experience* was a bad thing, meaning inbred, hidebound, co-opted. Experience enables informed decisions.

Experience kills fresh thinking. Experience means you’ve got the right background. Experience means you’ve got the wrong baggage.

And now we see the shattered result. The “x” has been blown away completely, and the “n” has somehow fallen into its place. The “p” is now turned head over heels into a “d” and the “c” has been knocked sideways into a “u” – so that the first five letters spell “endur,” suggesting **endurance** – i.e., the candidate who pushes the electorate beyond all endurance with his or her gaseous bloviation will win just so the voters can shut him or her up.

Coming up next – oh, the wretched sight! – is the word **care** bandaged like a mummy. Caught in a hellacious crossfire between McCain and Obama, it now limps gingerly back to the dictionary, a shell of its former self. For in the political wars, the rules of engagement are such that to say “I care” about an issue is to automatically and incontrovertibly preclude your opponent from caring about the same issue. When McCain said he cared about Social Security, Obama by definition did not – could not – care about it. When Obama said he cared about education, he implied that McCain favored a nation of high school dropouts. And so it went. When the big issues like taxes and foreign policy were taken, they went after the smaller ones. Every morning the campaign staffs held Caring Target Meetings to identify what the candidate would express deep concern about that day.

It all came to a head in Sandusky, Ohio, when Barack Obama – informed that the local YMCA needed a coat of paint –

eloquently proclaimed that seeing a newly-painted YMCA was the main reason he got into politics. When John McCain rolled into town and said he cared about the same thing, embarrassed town officials had to explain why that would be a technical impossibility. Instead, they offered him an underfunded 4H project and a spot on the local news to express his deep and abiding commitment to livestock.

And while this poor linguistic foot soldier was crisscrossing the battlefield trying to fulfill these conflicting commands, it was assaulted from yet a third quarter by the candidates’ statements on their complete and total lack of care – for what the other candidate said, for what the media said, for what the polls said, and for what David Letterman said.

It was at this point that **care** fell to its knees with a white flag.

But wait! What is this bringing up the rear? A word that appears to have escaped the carnage altogether.

“Wait! Stop! What word are you?”  
“**Truth.**”

“How have you escaped without a scratch?”

“I was never called to fight. They told me the war was about John McCain’s temper and Barack Obama’s middle name and Joe Biden’s hair plugs and Sarah Palin’s lipstick. It happens in every political war. I volunteer and they classify me as unfit for duty. I’ve had enough. I’m applying for a new status.”

“What’s that?”

“Conscientious objector.”

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366

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6639

364

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6689

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7048B-E



7046A-E

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