

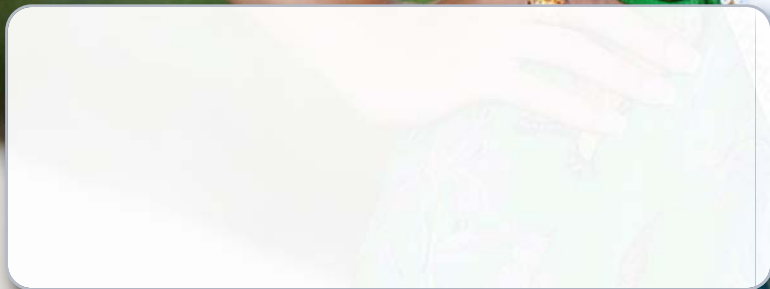
TOASTMASTER[®]

May 2010

**Beauty,
Poise and
Speaking
Skills**

**History's
Most
Important
Speeches**

**Announcing
the 2010
Golden Gavel
Recipient**





What Every Toastmaster Must Do

† Susan. Nancy. Dorothy. Gavin. Those are the names of four Toastmasters who were invaluable to my personal development. What did they do? They simply encouraged me to take leadership roles in Toastmasters. They planted seeds of encouragement. What subsequently blossomed has made all the difference in my life.

This is the time of year when we elect officers to serve in every level of leadership in our organization. Are you stepping up to the plate to serve as an officer in your club or district? You should. I believe that your Toastmasters career is incomplete until you have served as both club president and area governor. Those are two of the most life-changing roles in Toastmasters.

As a club president, you will learn to motivate volunteers, operate within a budget, organize people and projects, and help improve your club members' lives. As an area governor, you will do all that and more by educating and inspiring members of multiple clubs to succeed and overcome challenges. The best part of both these roles is that you will see the immediate impact of your contributions. It's a phenomenal experience to watch a new member deliver an Ice Breaker, encourage a member to hang on just a bit longer to earn a Competent Communicator award, or celebrate the achievements of your team when you earn Distinguished Club or Distinguished Area status.

You also become a better communicator. As a club president or area governor, you have more opportunities to speak on diverse occasions, such as leading a business meeting, chairing an area council meeting or training other officers. I love to tell those prospective area governors who initially decline the role because they want to compete in speech contests, that they will have more opportunities to speak as an area governor. That practice will help them when they compete in speech contests the following year.

Every leadership role I undertook in Toastmasters has made me a better communicator, a stronger leader and a more well-rounded person. I owe my career and increased responsibilities at work to the leadership lessons I learned in Toastmasters. Isn't it time for you to start your leadership journey, or to progress to the next level of your leadership development?

As for those four Toastmasters: Thank you, Susan Lannis, Nancy McCarthy, Dorothy Cottingham and Gavin Blakey. Your belief in me has transformed me into the person I am today.

Your journey of leadership begins now!

Gary Schmidt, DTM
International President

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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.

Surgical Speaking Strategies

The January issue arrived at a perfect time in my life. Your special issue of Communicating with Medical Providers was most helpful as I was in the process of dealing with doctors and specialists prior to surgery in early February. I found "A Visit to the Doctor" by Florence Ferreira particularly informative.

I have also used this ongoing medical experience as the inspiration for Project #1 in the *Special Occasion Speeches* manual – Mastering the Toast. The assignment was a great opportunity for me to thank Toastmasters International as well as the members in my home club. Thank you, Toastmasters!

Diann Redden, ACS • Dryden Toastmasters • Dryden, Ontario, Canada

"The Traveling Toastmaster" Wanders Too Far

I enjoyed the interesting, helpful features in the March issue, with one exception. The Postcards page featuring "The Traveling Toastmaster" doesn't do much to enhance my speaking, listening and leadership abilities. They're nice-looking folks with pleasant smiles, but the

page reminds me of my middle school newsletter.

Bring back John Cadley's page on humor!

Ted Fuller, CTM • Walnut Creek Sunrise Club • Walnut Creek, California

Help for the Table Topics Challenge

Craig Harrison's article "Turning the Table on Table Topics" (February) is a gem of reference material and hope for those of us who struggle with the impromptu side of a Toastmasters meeting. I plan to pick one strategy at a time in future meetings, so I can eventually practice all of them. This is a copy of the *Toastmaster* magazine I will not give away!

Celia Berrell, ACB • Mount Sheridan Toastmasters Club Cairns, Queensland, Australia

A Hidden Passion

Last June, after many years of despising public speaking, I joined Toastmasters. In less than a year, I have completed much of the *Competent Communication* manual and found it to be quite exciting.

I now get the same thrill out of public speaking as I do out of any high-speed sport. Toastmasters has uncovered a hidden passion. Thank

you Toastmasters, for taking a huge stress in my life and turning it into a very enjoyable hobby.

Mike Haine • Cowichan Toastmasters • Duncan, B.C., Canada

Storytellers Need Feedback Too

Regarding "The Glory of the Story" (March) by Craig Harrison, I wish to commend Craig for his comparison of Toastmasters to storytellers and the best features of each organization. Having been a member of both a storytelling guild and Toastmasters, I have often contemplated what one organization can offer the other.

To clarify one point: Our guild meetings are also a safe place for members to practice stories and receive feedback. When a storyteller is working on a new piece, perhaps a story he or she has written, we offer *appreciation* and *feedback* according to the storyteller's requests on that particular day. Storytellers might ask listeners to look for specific points, just as we do at Toastmasters. We share how the story affected us as listeners, ways to make it more effective and best audiences for the story.

Carolyn Wilker, ACS, CL • Energetics Toastmasters Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Important Notice to All Members

Preparing for Single Sign-On at www.toastmasters.org

The way members log in at www.toastmasters.org will change when the Toastmasters Web site is upgraded in July 2010.

- Each member will need their own individual e-mail address updated in their profile at www.toastmasters.org. This e-mail address cannot be shared with another member.
- Club and district officers will no longer be required to have a separate login to conduct club and district business. Your single member login will give you access to everything you need.

Members with a complete profile at www.toastmasters.org will be able to conduct business, purchase products at member-only prices and enjoy other online membership benefits. Those who share e-mail accounts with another member will not be able to log in to the Toastmasters Web site after June 30, 2010.

Simply log in at www.toastmasters.org/login, access "My Profile" and make sure your e-mail address and other information is complete and accurate.

How to Apologize Like a Celebrity

Professional athletes, late-night talk show hosts, financial gurus, corporate and theme park executives, celebrities and – surprise, surprise – politicians are once again in the news for acting badly. And they're offering apologies.

Even with the best of intentions we all, at times, do or say things that fall short of our own standards and that hurt other people's feelings. So learning how to apologize is an essential life skill. Your club might want to devote an entire meeting or, at least a Table Topics session, to exploring the right way to say "I'm sorry."

As a starting point for your discussions, consider the many ways it can be done badly, and you'll soon understand the basics – what *not* to say. Here is a list – based on a few recent public examples – of the five most common ways celebrities apologize:

Blame the Other Person

Start by saying how sorry you are. Then shift the focus from your actions to the other person's reactions: "I'm sorry that you were offended by what I did or said." Make it sound as if the other person's thin-skinned sensibilities, outdated notions of fairness and decency, or failure to understand what you really meant – *not your misdeeds* – are the real culprits.

This common ploy lets you sound like you're apologizing without requiring you to express culpability or regret. If you're clever enough, you may even get people to apologize to *you*. "I'm sorry," they might say. "Maybe I was being overly sensitive."

Offer an Excuse

If you can't blame someone else, you can always blame extenuating circumstances.

In Southern California, where I live, it's common to blame an array of problems – arriving late, standing someone up, being generally rude – on traffic. But no matter where you live, you can point the finger at any number of situations beyond your control: the weather, the economy, the fickleness of computers, the sorry state of the world we live in or the stress of having too much to do.

If, for example, someone criticizes you for missing a deadline, say with a put-upon sigh, "My computer crashed – must have been a virus – and it took the guys in IT forever to fix it." Not only have you shifted people's attention away from your failure to something you can't possibly be held accountable for, you've also made yourself the victim.

Use the Passive Voice

Toastmasters' *Competent Communication* manual advocates using clear and powerful English. To accomplish this, you should avoid the passive voice. But the passive voice is key to apologizing like a celebrity. Say, "Mistakes were made," not "I made a mistake." Say, "There was an error of judgment," not "I was wrong." Say, "Regrettably, things turned out not at all as were anticipated," not "I regret having done things that caused so much trouble and hard feelings."

Delay as Long as Possible

You may feel inclined – decent people often do – to offer an apology the moment you realize you've done something wrong. Avoid the urge. Avoid saying anything at all. Wait and see how things play out. Maybe people will forget about what you did, or maybe someone else will do something even worse. Then you're off the hook.

If people keep bringing up your misconduct, you can sigh as if to suggest it's rude of them to harp on something that happened so long ago. Offer a quasi-apology – "I'm sure we're all sorry that things turned out the way they did" – and suggest that there are more important issues at hand and shouldn't we be getting on with things.

Hide Your Feelings

If you feel remorse, regret or even guilt because of what you've done – people with a conscience often do – make sure no one knows it.

Make an apology the way sincere people do. Tell people you're sorry. Accept responsibility. Offer to make amends. Ask for understanding and forgiveness. But, like some celebrities, make it sound as if you don't believe a word you're saying. If possible, read from a script. Speak in a monotone. Avoid eye contact. And never reveal a heartfelt emotion.

If you follow these five simple guidelines, people may complain that you haven't apologized at all. They may even feel more offended than before. But hey, what's more important? Maintaining your influence, fame and financial standing – as celebrities do – or making things right?

Now that you've seen how celebrities do it, your club will surely discover some more appropriate words and actions. Try it in Table Topics. You may not win an Oscar for your performance, but you'll receive something far more important: *Forgiveness*. ■

Chris Witt, author of *Real Leaders Don't Do PowerPoint*, is an executive speech coach based in San Diego. You can reach him at chris@wittcom.com or read his blog at www.lifeafterpowerpoint.com.

Northrop Grumman corporate club consistently produces leaders and results.

Engineering a First-Rate Club

By nature, engineers tend to be highly disciplined and task-oriented individuals, and those who work for Northrop Grumman Corporation – the second-largest defense contractor in the United States – are among the most accomplished in their industry. It should come as no surprise, then, that the Northrop Grumman Toastmasters has been extremely successful in achieving its goals and producing leaders.

The club is located at Northrop's aerospace-systems facility in El Segundo, California. The defense contractor sponsors 20 corporate clubs in the United States, but the El Segundo club stands out in many ways. It is 57 years old and has produced numerous district leaders over the years, including six district governors. One, Marsha James Davis, also served on Toastmasters' International Board of Directors from 1999 to 2001.

In addition, the 45-member club has earned President's Distinguished status four of the past six years and Select Distinguished the other two.

"Its part of the aerospace culture to plan things out and set goals," says Michael Jue, DTM, a past district governor and member of the El Segundo club. "The thing about our club being made up largely of aerospace engineers is that there's a certain amount of stability."

Jue is a prime example: He's been a member for 32 years. Davis also points to the club's culture: "The majority of members are very structured individuals, so that lends itself

to a tremendous amount of consistency – people you can count on."

Davis worked at Northrop from 1985 to 2000, primarily as a budget analyst. When she started, she was admittedly shy and hesitant in group settings. A senior member in her department once told Davis: "You know what you're doing – why don't you speak up more?" After joining the corporate club, her confidence improved markedly.

"When I started taking on leadership roles, like club officer positions, area, division and district governor, that's when [my confidence] really kicked in," she says. "I found myself speaking up more in business meetings. Then I got a promotion and started making more presentations to management and customers."

Davis is a Distinguished Toastmaster and now works for Tecolote Research, Inc., as a principal analyst and earned-value management specialist, but she still attends occasional Northrop Grumman club meetings to stay connected. She says her time in the group changed her life – not only professionally, but personally as well: It was a fellow Northrop club member who introduced Davis to her husband, Glen Davis, DTM.

Why Club Membership Pays Off

Northrop Grumman was founded in 1939, and now employs about 120,000 people worldwide. Headquartered in Los Angeles, it has government and commercial clients, and develops military tools, including unmanned

aircraft, satellites and nuclear submarines. Its aerospace division alone is a \$10 billion business.

Corporate club members pay their own dues, but Northrop offers financial assistance for Toastmasters-related items. "Toastmasters clubs offer employees a way to develop communication and organizational skills, which we see as useful in the workplace," says Jim Hart, manager of external affairs for Northrop's aerospace division.

Club members agree that such participation pays dividends in their careers. Many kinds of engineers work at the aerospace plant, and they grapple with complex technical issues: aging aircraft, flight software, spacecraft designs and hydraulic systems, for example. When talking to managers, colleagues or clients, they need to express themselves effectively. Yet club president Mayur Patel notes that engineers are often so deeply immersed in their technical training and research that they overlook developing clear-communication skills.

"Toastmasters helps bridge that gap by providing opportunities to speak and to experience leadership," says Patel, who started as an engineer at Northrop but is now a project manager. "If you have a great solution to a technical problem but you don't have the communication skills to get it across, you're going to be at a loss."

"The reason many people join is because they need to make technical presentations at work and have



◀ Northrop Grumman Toastmasters enjoy a holiday party at Deluca Trattoria Restaurant in El Segundo, Calif. Michael Jue (far left) is a 32-year club member.

difficulties,” adds Jue, who retired from Northrop last year after a 35-year career.

Patel says Toastmasters training gave him the confidence to deliver speeches outside of work, as well. Earlier this year, he gave a presentation on risk-management processes to a local branch of the National Sojourners (a Masonic Veterans group).

“It felt great – that feeling of satisfaction from being able to provide value and benefit to others,” says Patel.

Speaking at the Shipyard

Wade Miner, DTM, is a Computational Fluid Dynamics engineer for Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding, which employs 20,000 people, in Newport News, Virginia. He says the skills that shipyard engineers hone in Toastmasters are vital in their work designing ships for the U.S. Navy, the unit’s main client.

“When there’s a meeting between our people and one of the Navy organizations, our engineers need to be able to communicate competently and clearly,” says Miner, president of the corporate club At The Helm. “They need to be able to communicate with confidence. Some future decisions can easily depend on how well they communicate.”

Miner’s own Toastmasters story is particularly powerful. As a young

man, he had a severe stuttering problem. In 1977, when Miner started working for the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, D.C., he joined an in-house Toastmasters club: the now-defunct Thomas Edison Toastmasters.

“Over 20 years’ experience in Toastmasters, I gradually gained a fluency that, back in high school, I could only dream about,” he said in a recent telephone interview. “Before I joined Toastmasters, I could not have held a conversation like the one we are having now.”

Miner eventually moved to Virginia and started working at Northrop Shipbuilding. In 2004 he helped start its first Toastmasters club, called Spear and Gear. The following year, he was instrumental in chartering the At the Helm club.

More Job Benefits

Engineers aren’t the only employees who benefit from the Northrop Toastmasters groups. Hoa Hoang, who handles applications support and training in the business development department, joined the Northrop Grumman club in El Segundo club two years ago, after attending its annual Speechcraft program.

“The club has helped me be more comfortable when I do the training and give presentations,” she notes.

This corporate club is open to the public, with almost half its members coming from outside the company. Northrop employees say it’s great to have such diverse perspectives brought in by members such as Darrell Winfrey, the host of a jazz radio show, and Nate Chittick, a former National Football League player who now works as a financial advisor for Morgan Stanley Smith Barney.

“In the business world, communication is such a big part of everything,” says Chittick, who played for the Super Bowl-winning St. Louis Rams in 1999. When he was a pro athlete, he adds, he sometimes gave speeches to community organizations. Now the Northrop club helps keep the former football champ in speaking shape: “public speaking is like a muscle – you have to keep using it.”

As for Patel, he says serving as a club officer taught him a great deal about leadership, which helps him as a project manager. “It’s taught me a lot about how to relate to people of different age groups and backgrounds,” he says. “In a volunteer organization, you also learn about what gets people motivated.”

Paul Sterman is a Toastmaster in Orange, California, and an associate editor of the *Toastmaster* magazine.

HISTORY'S MOST IMPOSSIBLE SPEECHES

By William H. Stevenson, III

From Pericles to Mandela, orators' words echo through the ages.

Author Terry Golway faced a daunting task: He needed to identify the 50 best speeches of all time for a new book. He pored over dramatic orations, given by all sorts of public figures, such as Mahatma Gandhi.

Gandhi, of course, was the Indian leader who famously preached non-violent resistance to British rule in his quest for India's independence. The people acted on his call for mass civil disobedience, but despite his emphasis on nonviolence, fighting did break out in several cities, and Gandhi was put on trial.

In a speech on March 18, 1922, Gandhi accepted responsibility for the bloodshed. Though he anguished over the possibility of such crimes, he had to preach disobedience, he told the judges. His heartfelt words, delivered extemporaneously, elevated his cause to an almost-religious level:

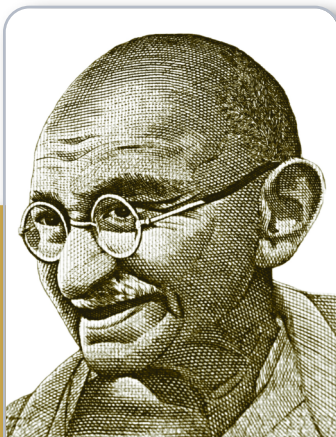
Thinking over these things deeply and sleeping over them night after night, it is impossible for me to dissociate myself from the diabolical

crimes of Chauri Chaura or the mad outrages of Bombay. ...I knew that I was playing with fire. I ran the risk and if I was set free I would still do the same. ...I wanted to avoid violence. Nonviolence is the first article of my faith. It is also the last article of my creed. But I had to make my choice. I had either to submit to a system which I considered had done an irreparable harm to my country, or incur the risk of the mad fury of my people bursting forth when they understood the truth from my lips.

Gandhi's words were stirring – their impact, epic. His willingness to become a martyr to the cause of Indian independence, and to his principles, influenced many other nonviolent “freedom fighters” throughout the years, such as Martin Luther King Jr.

History is full of memorable speeches. Golway makes a case for the greatest of these in *Words that Ring through Time: The Fifty Most Important Speeches in History and How They Changed Our World*. He looks at which speeches made a huge impact on their audience and still affect us today.

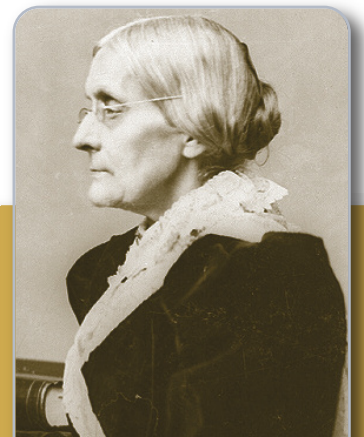
Gandhi, for example, demonstrated how a man's words and spirit unified a country, says Golway: “Gandhi had



MAHATMA GANDHI



PERICLES



SUSAN B. ANTHONY

RTANT

no armies at his command, and yet he mobilized tens of millions, and his words still do so today.”

Great Speeches Share Traits

The book’s collected speeches span a time from the days of Moses to Barack Obama’s recent U.S. presidential campaign. As different as these selections are, they all share two characteristics.

First, the speaker connects his listeners to something greater than themselves – often an idea or an ideal such as democracy, justice or freedom. One theme that occurs again and again is self-determination. Sometimes that’s expressed as a person’s desire to be an equal member of society (Susan B. Anthony advocating for women’s right to vote), sometimes as the desire of a people to be an independent nation.

A second characteristic is eloquent simplicity, words that everyone can relate to. King Albert of Belgium, for example, gave a radio address to his countrymen in 1914, just as World War I was beginning. “Everywhere in Flanders and Wallonia, in the towns and in the countryside, one single feeling binds all hearts together: the sense of patriotism,” he said, simply and eloquently.

Golway’s selections show how speakers throughout the ages have crafted their addresses for maximum impact.

A Greek Orator Inspires

In the year 430 B.C., the Athenian leader Pericles gave a funeral oration honoring soldiers who died in the ongoing



KING ALBERT



JOHN F. KENNEDY

“Gandhi had no armies at his command, and yet he mobilized tens of millions, and his words still do so today.”

war with Sparta. Rather than give a showy speech laced with melodrama and heated descriptions of battle, he began by saying the deeds of the fallen spoke more powerfully than any words. Pericles didn't thrill his audience with battle scenes. He didn't give them the *Iliad*, updated. Instead of speaking of the men who fought, he spoke of the ideals they fought for. They died for Athens, the greatest state in Greece. And why was it great? Because Athens was a democracy and had a spirit of freedom and openness:

The administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few... when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege, but as a reward of merit. Neither is poverty an obstacle, but a man may benefit his country whatever the obscurity of his condition.

Pericles urged his listeners to rededicate themselves to the struggle at hand – as citizens of a police state ruled by an oligarchy – and reminded them that the fallen soldiers would have the greatest memorial of all, one “graven not on stone, but in the hearts of men.” In this quiet but moving oration, Pericles elevated the living as well as the dead by reminding them of cherished ideals.

Speaking Out for Women's Suffrage

In 1872, Susan B. Anthony was arrested by a United States Deputy Marshal. Her offense? Voting in an election. Two weeks earlier, she had cast a ballot in the presidential election, in defiance of a law that allowed only men to do so. Before her trial she embarked on a speaking tour to justify her actions. She made her case a symbol for something greater, “the disfranchisement of one entire half of the people.” Anthony referenced a sacred document in the eyes of 19th-century Americans – *the United States Constitution*:

It was we, the people, not we the white male citizens; nor yet we, the male citizens; but we, the whole people, who formed the Union... And it is downright mockery to talk to women of their enjoyment of the blessings of liberty while they are denied the use of the only means of securing them – the ballot.

Anthony then cited the dictionary definition of the word *citizen*: “Webster, Worcester and Bouvier all define a ‘citizen’ to be a person in the United States, entitled to vote and hold office. The only question left to be settled now is: *Are women persons?*”

While her parsing of Webster might be questioned, Anthony's point was clear and simple: Women are people, and, thus, should have the same rights as men. Her words greatly inspired her followers and gave hope to the mod-

ern women's suffrage movement. It would take almost another 50 years, but when the 19th amendment was passed in June 1919, American women finally had the right to vote. Anthony's words helped keep the dream alive throughout the time it took to reach that goal.

A King's Powerful Appeal

The coming of the 20th century brought technological advances that enabled a speaker to reach an audience beyond the power of his voice. In August 1914, King Albert of Belgium went on the radio to speak to millions. World War I had just started and the German army was preparing to pour across the Belgian border in its rush toward France. “Albert sought to rally his countrymen against an overpowering aggressor, knowing full well that the odds were against Belgium,” says author Golway.

He had no easy task, since Belgium was a mosaic of ethnic groups, some speaking Dutch, some French, and others speaking additional languages. How could he draw them together? In his address the king subtly appealed to all Belgians to put aside their differences and focus on something greater than themselves – their country:

Everywhere in Flanders and Wallonia, in the towns and in the countryside, one single feeling binds all hearts together: the sense of patriotism. One single vision fills all minds: that of our independence endangered. One single duty imposes itself on our wills: the duty of stubborn resistance... I have faith in our destinies; a country which is defending itself conquers the respect of all; such a country does not perish!

Note the repeated use of simple but powerful words conveying unity and inclusiveness: *one single feeling, one single vision, one single duty, all hearts, our wills*. The Belgian people responded to their sovereign's appeal with such spirit that “Little Belgium's” resistance has been a byword for courage ever since.

Kennedy and the Berlin Wall

Just as King Albert and Mahatma Gandhi sought to unify their countries with their speeches, John F. Kennedy wanted to reunify East and West Germany under a free government when he gave his famous Berlin Wall speech in 1963. “John Kennedy's speech in Berlin is one of my favorites,” says Golway, “because we hear the voice of pure outrage. The Berlin Wall, Kennedy said, was a perfect symbol of the difference between West and East, between freedom and totalitarianism.” With the infamous wall as a backdrop, Kennedy discarded his prepared speech and spoke from the heart:

There are many people in the world who really don't understand, or say they don't, what is the

great issue between the free world and the Communist world. Let them come to Berlin!... All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and, therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words, "Ich bin ein Berliner."

Kennedy's German may not have been perfect, but everyone understood his meaning: "I am a Berliner. Your struggle is mine."

Mandela's Milestone Address

Nelson Mandela's 1994 inaugural speech as president of South Africa was an extraordinary event. Although he had been imprisoned for 27 years in the cause of equality in South Africa, Mandela spoke without bitterness, sounding the same theme that Pericles spoke of so many years before – the desire of all people to have a fair chance in life:

We shall build the society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world... Never, never, and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience

the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world.

Mandela's ideas are elevated but his words are commonplace, even earthy. Will there ever come a time when they are not understood, or when they fail to inspire?

"Nelson Mandela's inaugural address was one of those rare ceremonial occasions that are the stuff of history," says Golway. "The world will remember his inauguration as a milestone toward the creation of a new and hopefully more just global society. His speech was a testimonial to the power of determination, patience and forgiveness."

No doubt there will be as many great speeches in the next 2,500 years as there were in the last. And the speakers who deliver them will likely follow the same formula of expressing a lofty ideal in down-to-earth language. No matter how their speeches are phrased, one thing is clear: Their words will be heard, hearts will find resolve and history will change course as a result. ■

William H. Stevenson, III, is a freelance writer in Huntsville, Alabama. He has been a member of three Toastmasters clubs in the Huntsville area. Contact him at whsteve3@aol.com.

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By Eugene Finerman

Late speechwriter
and columnist leaves
a towering legacy

William Safire:

Language Legend

Obituaries described William Safire as an author, lexicographer, speechwriter, pundit and maven. He would have relished those words, not simply as a tribute to him but as a display of the rich diversity of the English language. Safire could have told you the derivation of each word.

Author is from Latin, *lexicographer* is Greek, *speechwriter* is Anglo-Saxon – a dialect of German, *pundit* is Hindi and *maven* is Yiddish. Safire loved English for its vitality, earthiness, expansiveness and humor. People loved him for the very same qualities.

Toastmasters, in particular, admired his eloquence. Anyone who has struggled to write a speech that articulates exactly what it should – with wit, precision, style and poetry – understands the value of this man's accomplishments

The erudite New York native, who died last September at age 79, wielded enormous influence in the communications arena. "On Language," the witty and widely

read column he wrote for the *New York Times Magazine* for 30 years, made him one of the world's best-known arbiters of English vocabulary and language usage.

Safire was also a Pulitzer Prize-winning political columnist for the *New York Times*, a noted speechwriter for United States president Richard M. Nixon and a high-profile public relations man before that.

Peggy Noonan, a *Wall Street Journal* columnist who achieved fame as a speechwriter for Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, praises Safire's abundant contributions, calling him a "giant" in the world of media and politics. He was also a generous mentor and friend, she says.

"Bill gave me some of the best professional advice that I ever received: 'Write what you experience and see,'" Noonan recalls in an interview with the *Toastmaster* magazine. "He felt that those who are living history (and everyone who works at the White House is living history) have a responsibility to record it as accurately, as truly, as possible – to not let it go, and disappear into anecdotes told late at night."

Safire's prodding paid off, says Noonan, grateful for the encouragement and support.

"He urged me to write, each day, a thought or two. I told him it was a great idea but I didn't have time; I got home from the office at 10 p.m., and I was tired. He said, 'Just a sentence, anyone can do that!' I agreed anyone could, and tried. What he knew is that no writer writes just a sentence. By getting me to agree to write one, he was getting me to agree to a page or two or three. Because of this I didn't 'lose' my White House,

I kept it; I recorded it to the best of my ability.”

In his language column, Safire wrote with wisdom and humor about linguistic trends, grammar issues, political rhetoric and the endless permutations of words and phrases. He delved into subjects ranging from “blargon” (blog jargon) to the grammatical nuances of the phrase “enough already!”

Other columns were etymological excavations, with Safire digging into the origins of slang and the history of words as basic as “soap.” He once tracked the evolution of the word *galumph*, tracing it back to its birth as “galumpher” in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*. Ever wonder about the word *canoodle*? Safire’s sleuthing found it may be related to the German dumpling called “Knoedel.”

“I am a language maven, a word with a range of senses, from ‘aficionado’ to ‘enthusiast’ to ‘scholar’ to ‘connoisseur,’” Safire once wrote.

Even football was fair game. When the Rolling Stones performed at the halftime show of the 2006 Super Bowl, Safire took the famous frontman Mick Jagger to task for using bad grammar. Introducing their hit “Satisfaction,” Jagger said to the crowd, “Everything comes to he who waits.” Here was another half-time malfunction, noted Safire – this time verbal. The columnist’s professorial explanation of Jagger’s error: “Because *he* is the subjective case of the third-person male pronoun, *it* cannot be the object of the preposition *to*. The pronoun must be the objective case *him*.”

Got that?

Imagine having William Safire as your club’s grammarian. It no doubt would have been an educational experience.

Safire first came to American national prominence in the late 1950s, when he was an executive at a New York public relations agency.

In 1959, the United States and the Soviet Union enjoyed a thaw in the Cold War, and the powers sponsored cultural exchanges. That year the “American National Exhibit” came to Moscow and Safire was there, overseeing the model-home exhibit produced by his client – a home-construction company. Then-U.S. Vice

administration as a speechwriter. Ironically, in the five years he served as a White House speechwriter, Safire is best remembered for a punch line. Assigned the role of the administration’s partisan defender, Vice President Spiro Agnew denounced critics as “nattering nabobs of negativism.”

“His 13,000 columns and many books established him as one of the world’s leading commentators on the English language.”

President Richard Nixon hosted the event’s opening ceremonies, and the guest of honor was the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev; the two leaders might have browsed past the model home but Safire thought of a way to make them the inadvertent promoters of his client.

The exhibit had planned for a smooth, one-way flow of traffic. Safire made a slight alteration, rearranging the cordons so that tourists were coming from both directions and blocking the access of Nixon and Khrushchev. Along with their interpreters and other dignitaries, they were trapped inside the model’s kitchen. One thing led to another, and somehow Nixon and Khrushchev ended up pointedly discussing nuclear weapons. This episode famously became known as the “kitchen debate.” It included a memorable photograph – which Safire had slyly set up – of Nixon poking his finger into Khrushchev’s chest. That image solidified Nixon’s credentials as a man who could stand up to the Soviets. The vice president had to admire the savvy publicist who manipulated the encounter. William Safire had won a new client.

When Nixon became U.S. president in 1968, Safire joined the

That unique phrase, so distinct from the usual political rhetoric, made a sensation. It reflects Safire’s flair for language as well as his love of

(Continued on page 27)

A Sample of Safire

One of Safire’s most famous columns was his “Rules for Writers,” in which he listed 18 rules by cannily demonstrating what not to do. Here are a few examples:

- “A writer must not shift your point of view.”
- “And don’t start a sentence with a conjunction. (Remember, too, a preposition is a terrible word to end a sentence with.)”
- “Don’t overuse exclamation marks!!”
- “Writing carefully, dangling participles must be avoided.”
- “Take the bull by the hand and avoid mixing metaphors.”

William Safire

(Continued from page 13)

alliteration, which he displayed throughout his career.

After working as a speechwriter, Safire became a tenacious and acerbic commentator for the *New York Times*, winning the coveted Pulitzer Prize in 1978. But despite the fear he could inspire in targets of his political columns, he was known as a warm and accessible man, particularly generous to other writers. Noonan says he was a great help when she started as a speechwriter in the White House.

“Bill was a generation older than I,” she notes. “He encouraged me in the way that is always most needed and most appreciated by the young, and that is he listened to me when we spoke and paid the compliment

of taking me seriously. The young are used to being patronized. Bill didn’t patronize. He had a wholly egalitarian sense that he could learn from everyone, whatever their age or stage, and they could learn from him, too.”

Safire’s love of language began early. Growing up in New York, he wandered through the various neighborhoods and overheard a world of languages: Italian, German, Ukrainian, Chinese and Yiddish. Even in the neighborhoods where English was prevalent, the dialect often had a distinct Irish brogue.

He wrote his “On Language” column from 1979 until a few weeks before he died. His 13,000 columns and many books established him as one of the world’s leading commentators on the English language. Safire might rue common mistakes – such as

confusing “fortuitous” with “fortunate” – but he was not a hide-bound traditionalist. On the contrary, Safire once wrote, “I welcome new words, or old words used in new ways, provided the result is more precision, added color or greater expressiveness.”

The gifted wordsmith, who was a popular pundit on the Sunday morning talk shows, also wrote a number of books, including novels and a memoir. One of his books was *Lend Me Your Ears: Great Speeches in History*. Several others books were compilations of his “On Language” columns.

When Bill Safire died last fall, he left us his love of language as his legacy and his talent as a standard. 📖

Eugene Finerman is a freelance writer living in Chicago, Illinois. Reach him at www.finermanworks.com.

Eschew hackneyed phrases in favor of inventive expression.

Avoid Clichés Like the Plague

The judicious use of clichés, those stereotypical expressions we hear so often, can be effective, both in speech and in print. When used appropriately, clichés are a form of shorthand that can get listeners to nod knowingly while furthering the intended course of action. Yet excessive reliance on clichés can be fatal to speeches and stories, and should be avoided whenever possible.

A cliché, by definition, is a trite, commonplace expression – a sentence or phrase usually conveying a popular or common thought or idea. But the very fact that it has become a cliché, through popular use – and overuse – suggests that the phrase has lost originality and ingenuity and, thus, impact.

Using a cliché is like taking a familiar shortcut. At times, it can reassure listeners or allow you to express yourself without thinking too much. Yet it shows a lack of imagination and robs the language of interesting word combinations and fresh descriptions. The danger is that this path will lead you to stale thinking. My advice: Avoid clichés... *like the plague!*

Day-To-Day Clichés

Every culture and language has its clichés. Many embody universal truths. Some come from farming, sports, business or the political arena. Others come from the influences of foreign cultures. Consider the following:

- No use crying over spilled milk
- Old as dirt
- I wasn't born yesterday
- What goes around comes around
- Yada, yada, yada
- Moving forward
- At the end of the day
- It's déjà vu all over again
- It's like putting lipstick on a pig
- When all is said and done
- Laughing all the way to the bank
- It's now or never
- Tried and true
- It's a slam dunk
- No man left behind
- That goes without saying
- Talk is cheap
- Where there's smoke, there's fire

If I Had a Nickel ...

By attending Toastmasters meetings regularly, you're likely exposed to a separate set of clichés. Examples:

- Without further ado
- Put your hands together for
- This speaker needs no introduction
- And so on and so forth
- Think outside the box
- In the final analysis
- In conclusion

To which I respond:

Get Thee to a Thesaurus

Don't be lazy. Replace these over-used phrases. A good first step is consulting a thesaurus for appropriate alternatives. Seek precision in your speeches and stories. Focus on specificity in your

descriptions. Your readers and listeners will appreciate it.

Opening Salvos

Perhaps the most common cliché heard in Toastmasters is the speech opener "Mr./Madam Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters and most welcome guests." Yet have you ever noticed that none of the contestants in the World Championship of Public Speaking starts his or her speech this way? It's not that they don't use this line, and they clearly mean no disrespect to the audience and judges, but they avoid muddling up their speech opening with a sentence so common and bland. Why would they?


While some would argue the merits of beginning each speech with the customary "Mr./Madam Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters and most welcome guests," I believe strongly that each speech should begin not with a cliché (especially one that only applies to Toastmasters audiences) but with a unique statement, exclamation or question specific to that speech. You can easily follow up, after your speech's first sentence, or its first paragraph, with some sort of greeting. Don't miss the opportunity to open your speech powerfully with a tailor-made statement.

Can You Do the Twist?

Let's face it: Clichés are common. In place of clichés, be creative in your writing and speaking. Be inventive. Eschew the mundane.

Among the great joys of the English language are the creative ways in which sentences can be fashioned. Take pride in mixing and matching words to create new, evocative combinations that enrich your stories, speeches and essays. If nothing else, modify the cliché.

For example, at a recent meeting of the LaughLovers club in Oakland, California, I began my speech with the salutation "Good evening, ladies and Laughlovers!" Because it was a twist on a standard cliché (ladies and gentlemen), it garnered a laugh. You, too, can surprise and delight your audiences by employing twists to common clichés and create fresh word sequences that are simultaneously familiar and different.

many of these clichés you hear during the meeting – but don't yell "Bingo!" aloud. For advanced credit, expand this table to 4" x 4" or 5" x 5." 

▼ Download a blank Cliché Bingo chart at: <http://tinyurl.com/yjxdr8j>

Mr./Madam Toastmaster, fellow Toastmasters & most welcome guests	Put your hands together for	This speaker needs no introduction
Without further ado	TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL®	Think outside the box
And so on and so forth	In the final analysis	And in conclusion

Cliché Bingo

Bring this Cliché Bingo sheet to your next club meeting. See how

Craig Harrison, DTM, of Berkeley, California, is a member of several Toastmasters clubs. He is a professional speaker and founder of Expressions of Excellence. Contact him via www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com.

Wish You Were FUNNIER?

Dear Fellow Toastmaster:

Do you wish you were **funnier**? Do you believe that "funny people" **think differently**?

The truth is... funny people *do* think differently. Truer still; **you will never be funnier unless you change the way you think**. That is exactly what *Get More Laughs By Next Week™* will do for you. I Darrentee it.

Would a **step-by-step process** for getting laughs be helpful?

I never got laughs. I was quiet and shy and had severe stage fright. It was quite an epiphany for me when I discovered the simple exercises comedians use to develop material. A whole new world opened up for me when I was shown that humor was a *learned skill*, as opposed to a trait one must be born with.

Naturally, I did things the hard way, so it took me years of struggle and tens of thousands of dollars to uncover the steps that would take me from bumbling amateur to sought-after professional. This is a *proven* system. I've been teaching this process for more than ten years.

Stage time,

Darren

Darren LaCroix
2001 World Champion of Public Speaking

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The Best-Kept Ne

From holding office to visiting the International Convention – Toastmasters offers opportunities for networking and fun.

By Heather O'Neill

Shhh. Come closer. Don't tell, but I'm about to expose the biggest secret in Toastmasters. For a lot of Toastmasters, membership is about getting over the fear of public speaking. For some, it's about reducing abs and ums. For others, it's about improving their ability to

manage a team or lead a meeting. While it's important, of course, to learn all of those things, almost all Toastmasters will tell you that opportunities for networking are also important. The relationships you build

◀ Dianne Boulay of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada (right) talks to Past International Director Suezy Proctor, DTM, during the 2008 International Convention in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

with mentors, contest opponents turned friends, and new people you meet at conventions are indispensable reasons why Toastmasters everywhere are successful and fulfilled enough to remain members for years.

I attended the 2009 Toastmasters International Convention in Mashantucket, Connecticut, with the intention of doing research on networking within Toastmasters. Beyond all expectations, I made contacts with interesting, accomplished speakers from around the world. Not only did I find experienced people to interview, I made a new business contact in Canada and reconnected with old friends. Opportunities abound when you open your eyes to them. You can create a strategic alliance, make a new friend or find a new job. It's true that networking might take you out of your comfort zone. So what? Didn't you prepare to leap over the boundaries of your comfort zone the moment you joined Toastmasters?

Give of Yourself and It Comes Back Tenfold

Past District 59 Governor Odile Petillot has found networking opportunities within her home club and beyond. Her bilingual club in Paris, The Europeans, gains an average of 16 new members each year from all over the world, in places such as Spain, Russia, Ireland, Japan, Germany, Argentina and North America.

unique opportunity to grow and get to know so many different people.”

Writer Anais Nin said, “Each contact with a human being is so rare, so precious, one should preserve it.” Remember each smile, extended hand or words of wisdom from a mentor. And remember that life is cyclical. Sometimes you receive the words of encouragement and sometimes you give them. Most Toastmasters will tell you that they found the biggest gift when giving back to a person, their club or the organization as a whole. Networking is mentoring, giving back, learning, growing and building relationships in all capacities. It's extremely beneficial in all aspects of our lives – and yet somewhat daunting to execute. Here are some easy steps you can take to improve your networking skills.

Some Fine Tips

I learned a great deal from Debra Fine, professional speaker and bestselling author of *The Fine Art of Small Talk: How to Start a Conversation, Keep it Going, Build Rapport and Leave a Positive Impression*. Fine offers many helpful tips, but one jewel that stood out for me was, “Assume the burden of other people's comfort.”

It can be uncomfortable to start a conversation or join a group of people. As I looked around at my fellow

Networking Secrets

She enjoys learning about the new members' countries and cultures, but she and fellow club members also benefit from business relationships sometimes formed with these new members.

Petillot maintains that the first step to better networking is to become a club officer. She elaborates: “The higher you go up the [leadership] ladder [in Toastmasters], the more you extend your horizon and the circle of potential relationships. When I was the governor of District 59, I had a team of 40 people working with me in 17 European countries – the number of countries in our district at the time. I learned how to work with people whose methods and characteristics were very different from mine. It was a lifetime experience; I can't thank our organization enough for giving me this

attendees during the last International Convention, many were talking on cell phones or reading the Convention program. I realized many of those people were probably just trying to look busy so they could avoid the discomfort of speaking to someone new. I'm one of the more gregarious people (some may say obnoxious or forward) and I still felt uncomfortable walking up to people I didn't know. I could only imagine how uneasy more reserved or introverted individuals might feel.

So I decided to “assume the burden of other people's comfort.” I began a conversation with a very nice but somewhat nervous woman in line. She seemed startled at first but then opened up. She was a new member and had the advantage of living within driving distance of the conference. How brave she was to jump feet-first

Networking Tips from Conversation Expert Debra Fine:

- **Don't wait to start until you need something ... start today.** Increase your visibility now.
- **Assume the burden of other people's comfort.** Come prepared with topics you can discuss and questions to ask. If you are going to a convention, you can ask attendees about exhibits they recommend, what they liked about a breakout session or the best practices of their home club.
- **Learn each person's name.** If you don't think you understood it properly, repeat it – several times if necessary – until you do. Taking the time to learn and repeat a person's name in conversation demonstrates respect.
- **Don't get too personal.** Asking a tactful question like, "What keeps you busy outside of work?" doesn't make an assumption about the person but gives them the chance to divulge what they wish about themselves.
- **Respect differences.** Follow the actions of others to build comfort, particularly when talking with people from different countries. Let them lead. Model your behavior after theirs (eye contact, handshake, etc.) to respect any cultural differences.
- **Give a full response.** If someone asks you a question, try not to respond with a bland "good." Elaborate to give them something they can connect with.

into a convention with thousands of people from around the world!

Fine also offers tips on meeting new people and writes: "Don't sit with someone you know." She says we often use people we know as a crutch, but we have to remember that networking is about meeting new people, finding future resources and making connections. A few months ago, several members of my home club attended a Toastmasters Leadership Institute. As we looked for seats in the auditorium, we naturally chose a row where we could sit together. I thought about Ms. Fine's words and realized that we were missing out on a golden opportunity to meet new people. You certainly wouldn't want to hurt anyone's feelings by abandoning your group. However, you could arrange an agreement ahead of time by saying something like, "How about we each sit at a different

table, then afterward introduce each other to the interesting new people we met?" Who could resist that opportunity?

Think Globally

At this same training, I learned about an international networking experience involving Toastmasters in a talk given by Dr. Ward Thrasher, assistant dean and MBA director for the University of Bridgeport, Connecticut (the sponsor for the event). Dr. Thrasher mentioned a strategic relationship that may lead to a new Toastmasters club in China. While teaching as an adjunct professor in China, he was approached for advice on enhancing a new program aimed at improving the doctors' English communication at a local hospital. Of course, Dr. Thrasher included Toastmasters in his recommendations, and the hospital has considering starting a new club.

When I asked Dr. Thrasher about his advice on networking, he said, "Networking is not an event-driven process. Anyone you interact with is an opportunity. You don't know what bridge is going to lead to what destination." So take those business cards with you everywhere. You might run into someone at the grocery store who would benefit from Toastmasters. Or you might end up affecting someone's life halfway around the world.

Poet Alfred Lord Tennyson said, "I am a part of all that I have met." Every person you meet leaves a piece of himself with you ... and you with him. Now that you know the secret gem of Toastmasters – be open to networking within your club, at contests, conferences and the International Convention. Step outside your comfort zone and take on an officer position – or simply start a conversation.

Don't let your networking end when you leave your meeting or a conference. Join a Toastmasters group on Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn. When you join an online group, you are instantly connected to a wealth of expertise. You can post a question and receive responses and suggestions from Toastmasters all over the globe. Pranay Juyal, past president of Infosys Toastmasters in Bangalore, India, uses many of these applications, though LinkedIn is his favorite. Whether online or in person, Juyal is certain of the power of meeting others and says, "Networking is the single most important tool I use in Toastmasters."

So the next time you are talking to a prospective new member, don't just say, "You'll grow and challenge yourself as a speaker." Also say, "When you join Toastmasters, you'll meet the most amazing group of people ever!"

Heather O'Neill is a writer, speaker and the VPPR for the Barnum Square Toastmasters in Bethel, Connecticut. She is a small-business owner who has grown her business primarily through the power of networking. Reach her at info@exctrainer.com.



Announcing Toastmasters'
2010 Golden Gavel Recipient:



Carolyn Kepcher

† This summer, at the 2010 International Convention in Palm Desert, California, Toastmasters International will honor Carolyn Kepcher with the prestigious Golden Gavel award for her achievements as a business leader, writer and television personality.

Kepcher is widely known for her role as an Executive Vice President with the Trump Organization, specifically for her five seasons on NBC's hit series, *The Apprentice*, presided over by Donald Trump. When Trump had to choose people to fire as part of *The Apprentice*, Kepcher's input helped him make the selections.

"I worked for Donald Trump for 11 years, and in that time I learned that it is possible for a woman to survive and do well in a male-dominated culture," says Kepcher, a resident of Ridgefield, Connecticut.

With her high-level insights into corporate and career survival, Kepcher is a regular guest on national television programs such as *Good Morning America*, the *Today Show* and the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. She also writes the weekly "Your Career" column for the *New York Daily News*.

Her book, *Carolyn 101*, rose to No. 2 on the *New York Times* best-seller list and focuses on helping readers learn "skills such as sizing up a situation, spotting opportunities for advancement, and anticipating your next move." In it, Kepcher writes, "I'm often surprised to find very bright and well-educated people who don't

have the faintest idea of how to get ahead or move to the next level of their careers."

Through the company she founded, **WorkHerWay.com**, Kepcher leads a team of more than 150 contributing authors and subject-matter experts, offering advice to women in the workplace. When faced with tough times, Kepcher recommends to "avoid going into survival mode and focusing entirely inward." On the contrary, Kepcher says this is the time to give of yourself, "to offer yourself up to those who could benefit, whether it's through volunteering, mentorship, becoming the 'field expert' in the local newspaper for your profession, starting a blog, or reading and commenting in Web communities relevant to your work."

Kepcher developed her business skills by creating budgets, implementing operational systems, negotiating management contracts and designing marketing programs for the Beck Summit Hotel Management Group, a company that owns and operates hotels throughout the United States.

As a manager of four golf clubs for the Trump Organization, Kepcher played a crucial role in acquiring, developing and marketing new

properties. Known for her aggressive sales and operating budgets, she found success relying on her ability to determine new trends in the golf industry. Kepcher's business savvy and hands-on leadership in these and other real estate projects led to her position as Executive Vice President of the Trump Organization and COO for Trump Golf Properties.

A major part of her role on *The Apprentice* was to explain why people were fired, but now Kepcher has taken steps in her current positions to help people avoid this fate. When a change is unavoidable, she advises: "Sometimes you have to know when to call in the troops. You have a support system out there, in the form of friends, family and colleagues. Don't hesitate to use it, and to pay that forward when you can."

Kepcher pays it forward by supporting entrepreneurs in their dreams of launching a business. She has partnered with Microsoft in the launch of new accounting software that will aid startups, and she has partnered with Microsoft and Yahoo! to develop mentoring programs for entrepreneurs. ▣

Carolyn Kepcher will speak at the Golden Gavel Dinner on August 13 at the Toastmasters International Convention in Palm Desert, California. Don't miss your opportunity to learn from this extraordinary workplace expert. For Convention details and registration information, please visit www.toastmasters.org/2010Convention.



By Theodore Lustig, DTM

Research links health maintenance to club membership.

Rx for Better Health: Toastmasters

“Take in two Toastmasters meetings and call me in the morning.”

Does this sound like an unlikely prescription from the doctor? Based on medical and sociological research, it’s actually sound advice for improving one’s well-being. Pick up any piece of Toastmasters literature or visit www.toastmasters.org and you’ll find an array membership benefits: improved communication and leadership skills, personal and career enhancement, development of self-confidence, networking and camaraderie. But what you might not find on this list is a mention that Toastmasters membership can be *good for your health!*

In the first century A.D., Roman moralist Juvenal touted the importance of “a sound mind in a sound body.” Now 2,000 years later, modern medical and health-related research supports the notion that a person’s active involvement in organizations that engage the mind – such as Toastmasters International – benefits one’s health. It can positively affect a variety of conditions, including stress, mild depression, heart problems and some of the debilities of advancing age.

Nothing in this broad spectrum of research specifically names Toastmasters. Therefore, I’m not suggesting membership in Toastmasters as a substitute for necessary medical treatment. But the research does indicate that socially oriented organizations like ours provide settings

that can benefit a person’s health. To be sure, Toastmasters engage in stimulating and interactive types of activities; they meet and become friends with a diverse group of people, and they learn and improve themselves in a mutually supportive environment. All of these activities can benefit a member’s sense of well-being as well as physical health.

Let’s take this concept a step further by looking at some specific health problems that are endemic in today’s society. Positive social relationships often help people deal with these issues. High among these problems is stress, which can help people be productive but is also debilitating in many ways.

Mark Gorkin, a Washington, D.C., social worker, says, “A person, in

response to prolonged stress and physical, mental or emotional strain, detaches from work and other meaningful relationships.” The result is lowered productivity, cynicism, and a feeling of being drained. Consequently, health problems emerge.

Combat Stress with Social Support

Experts say these stress-related problems can be diminished when people develop a strong social support system and become involved in activities that spark their interest and sharpen their cognitive skills. One solution, says Dr. Andy Morgan, a psychiatry professor at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, is to seek a sense of personal accomplishment, so that stress becomes a challenge and not a burden.

The Toastmasters program provides both the environment and the opportunity to fulfill such goals. Successfully preparing and delivering speeches can counteract several basic causes of stress: tensions generated by an inability to communicate, lack of self-esteem, and the feeling that one is isolated from and unsupported by other people.

Remedy for Depression and Burnout

Stress is often a precursor for another, more acute ailment: depression. This condition can take two forms. The first, called clinical or unipolar depression, can be life-threatening, requiring medical treatment and extensive therapy. The second, called mild depression, can affect energy levels, self-esteem and concentration, but is usually less debilitating and of shorter duration. (It still, however, may involve therapy and medication of some form.)

Mild depression is often triggered by a loss, such as the death of a family member or friend, the end of a close relationship, an illness, a

business reversal or the loss of a job. Most therapists urge those struggling with mild depression to avoid isolating themselves and to engage in supportive activities that offer education, reassurance or confidence-building.

Again, the Toastmasters program fits the bill. Members learn a great deal by delivering and listening to speeches on a wide range of subjects, and they develop self-esteem by building their communication and leadership skills.

“Successfully preparing and delivering speeches can counteract several basic causes of stress.”

Another major result of stress – burnout – is usually job-related. Whereas most stress is a result of events that have a beginning, middle and end, burnout is a prolonged process that leads to physical, mental and emotional strain.

The Rev. Dennis Kenny, who is also a psychologist, says that when the values we hold in the workplace are no longer being realized, “That’s when we often hit the wall.” To mitigate burnout, one has to restore flexibility and balance in life, says Kenny. One way to do that, he adds, is to get involved with activities that challenge you, where you learn new talents and broaden your horizons.

Stretch Yourself in Toastmasters

Toastmasters provides a more relaxed environment for both the workaholic and the burnout victim, while also offering the opportunity to learn career-enhancing communication and leadership skills. This can improve a person’s currently untenable job situation or provide the additional skills needed to seek a job that’s a better fit.

Being an active member of Toastmasters can also help with heart problems. In 2004, a study presented at a meeting of the American Heart Association showed that men and women who join clubs or other groups that extend their circle of friends, “have significantly lower blood pressure and other heart disease risks.”

In a 2004 issue of *Psychosomatic Medicine*, another study reported on women prone to heart problems. Those women who established

large social networks that included club memberships not only had fewer heart-risk factors, the report showed, they also had survival rates double those who did not have such lifestyles.

The connection between group social support and heart health has always been there, says Dr. Tim Gardner at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. “It was just a matter of looking for it,” he says. “We need to pay more attention to the behavioral aspects of our health.”

“Our biology likes positive relationships,” adds psychologist Teresa Seeman, Ph.D., Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology who conducts geriatric research at the UCLA School of Medicine.

This is particularly true of the brain. Cognitive skills tend to worsen as people get older, and neurologists have typically believed this process is inevitable and affects all mental functions, from memory and problem-solving to spatial orientation and complex judgments. New research paints a less gloomy picture, however.

Keep the Brain Sharp

According to an article in *Consumer Reports*, recent studies have raised the prospect that cognitive decline can be minimized by “stimulating, fueling and protecting the brain as it ages.” The challenged brain can

ties, but also in adding to a person’s vocabulary and word usage through Word of the Day activities at club meetings. Table Topics improves our mental agility as we tackle the challenge of impromptu speaking.

“You won’t get the full benefit by involving yourself only occasionally. You need regular participation.”

generate new circuitry that will help it grow, adapt and sometimes even improve in certain areas, experts maintain. It may also delay the onset of Alzheimer’s disease.

Membership in Toastmasters helps boost specific cognitive skills. The first involves *language*, and here Toastmasters excels, not only in improving speaking abili-

The second cognitive skill involves *learning* and *memory*, both developed through the preparation and presentation of speeches. Learning is aided in two ways, first by researching facts and using them in writing your speech, and second, by becoming more knowledgeable from listening to the speeches of others. Memory development comes when you memorize aspects of a speech – or the entire speech itself.

The third boost comes in the area of *management skills*, when you serve in the administration of the club. The mental benefits include learning how to plan and organize, as well as how to stay flexible and adapt to changing circumstances. In learning how to manage the club, one also learns to manage one’s self.

But don’t think your involvement can be off-and-on if you want to truly improve, says Dr. Robert Friedland of Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. “What’s important is that you do these activities consistently,” says Friedland, chief of the school’s laboratory of neurogeriatrics. “You won’t get the full benefit by involving yourself only occasionally. You need regular participation.” To stay well and happy, a person must not only receive support from these relationships, but must give support as well.

In his latest book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, Malcolm Gladwell looks at the case of a Pennsylvania town, Roseto, where it was discovered in the 1950s that virtually no one under the age of 55 had ever had a heart attack. This was a time when heart attacks were the principal cause of death in men under age 65 and before the advent of cholesterol-lowering drugs and or other aggressive measures to control heart disease. Moreover, researchers found that many of these people ate diets high in fats, smoked heavily and did not engage in much exercise, all among the usual contributors to heart disease, Gladwell notes.

But the researchers also discovered that almost all of Roseto’s inhabitants were immigrants from the same area in Italy, or their direct descendants. When it came to well-being, this bond apparently transcended any other health factor, the experts concluded. Up until then, none of the experts had ever thought about health in terms of *community*.

This same concept carries over into all Toastmasters clubs. Members are of different age and educational levels, and come from different societal, religious, political and ethnic backgrounds. But within the club’s confines, they meet to fulfill a common purpose: to learn communication skills together and enjoy support from each other.

Belonging to Toastmasters makes each member part of an inclusive community. Perhaps, in the same way as the people of Roseto, their continued membership provides them protection to some degree from a variety of health problems. Only time will tell. **T**

Theodore Lustig, DTM, is a member of the Round Rock Chambermasters club in Round Rock, Texas. He can be reached at **tlustig@austin.rr.com**.

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How to hit the right notes when speaking.

The Power of a Winning Voice

“In today’s high-tech world of sound, no other means of communication surpasses the human voice,” says Dr. Morton Cooper, author of *Change Your Voice, Change Your Life*. “Twenty-five percent of all Americans use a voice too low in their throats and 50 percent use a voice too high, nasal and thin... They often go through life unheard and unappreciated.”

Your voice is crucial in achieving success as a speaker. As a professional speech coach, I’d like to offer some valuable techniques I teach my clients – techniques you can practice for just five minutes a day to make your voice healthy and strong, and give your speeches more pizzazz.

What does your voice say about you? Do you sound confident? Credible? Even if you know your subject and dress appropriately, your voice can turn off an audience. Here’s a simple test you can use to practice different voice sounds using the word *hello*. Look at yourself in the mirror and say “hello” in an angry voice, then a happy voice, then a sad voice.

Notice the different sounds. Is your voice usually too high or too low? To bring out your best voice, it is important to move in the right direction. Knowing which direction to go is the key to finding your winning voice. Practice these techniques to build a credible and confident voice that commands audience attention:

- **Close your lips and hum “Happy Birthday.”** You should be able to feel a vibration around your

nose and mouth. That area is known as the “mask.”

- **Repeat the words “zim, zim”** to help you find your mask area.
- **Read a newspaper or magazine aloud, but hum the words.** The buzz or tingle in your mask area will tell you if you are using your voice correctly.
- **Repeat slowly: “Really one. Really two. Really three.”** Control your sound by repeating both the word “really” and the number in the same tone of voice.

To find your winning voice, it’s important that you practice breathing properly. Your breath – when duly controlled – adds quality to your voice. Practice this control by inhaling slowly through your nose as you inflate your stomach. Think of inflating a balloon while breathing

stage fright, reduce stress and begin a song or speech confidently.

Putting Pizzazz in Your Voice

Before you begin your next presentation, take a controlled, deep breath and give your first comment on the exhale. Your voice will come out fuller and richer – you’ll project energy and enthusiasm. When you project these qualities, your audience is excited to hear what you say.

Imagine this scene: You step up to the lectern. You’re dressed for success. You know exactly what you are going to talk about. But you’re still nervous. As a result, your voice may falter or maybe you mumble or say too many *abs* and *ums*. What can you do?

Face your audience and think about using the techniques you have practiced. Take the kind of controlled,

“Concentrate on what you have to do, not on how you feel.”

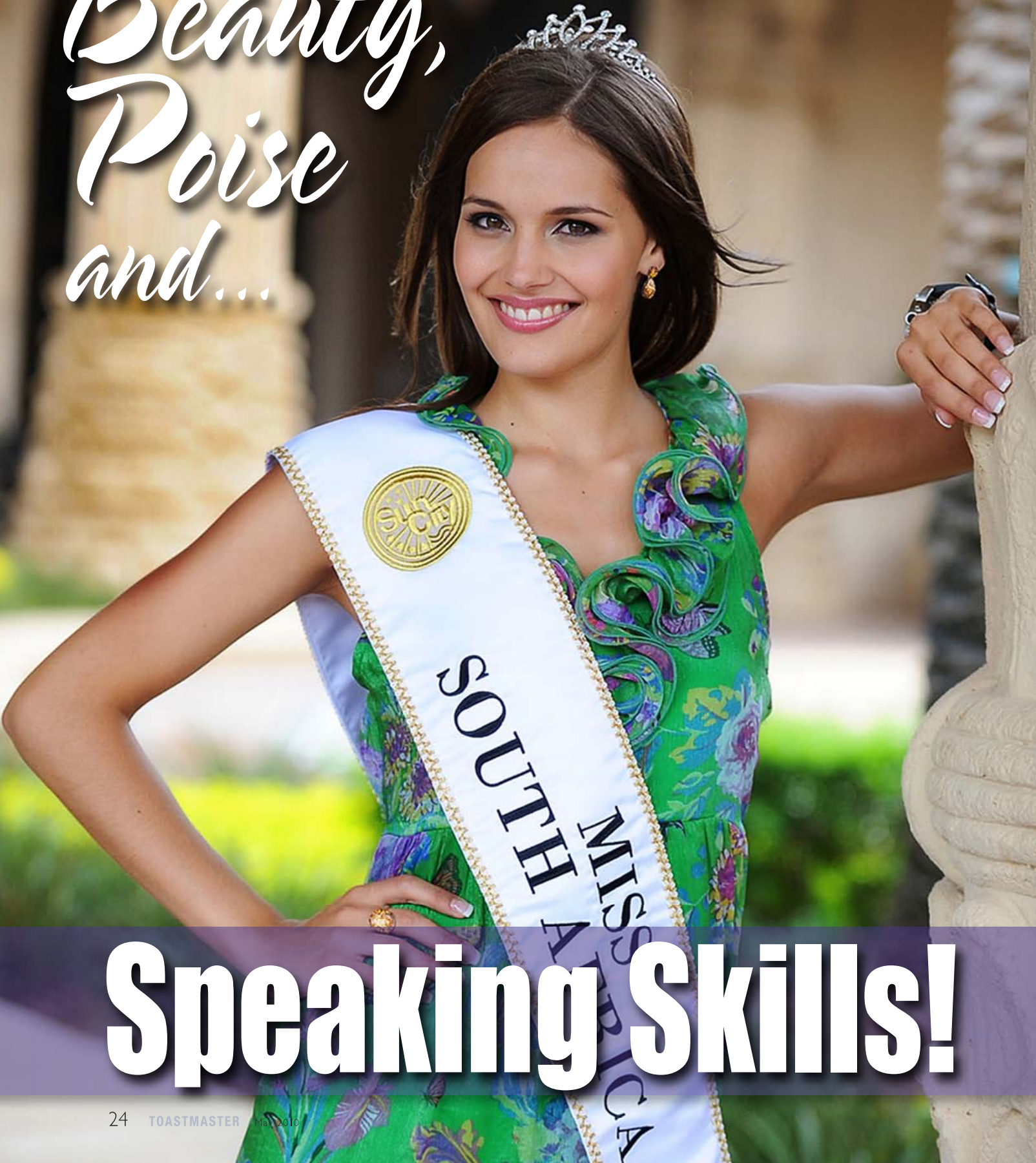
in. Now say the word “hello” while exhaling. Think of the balloon deflating and pull in your stomach as you speak. Notice how the sound comes out fuller.

Breathing in this way is the opposite of the way we normally breathe. It takes a little practice before you can master the technique so it isn’t obvious when you speak. Taking the occasional breath like this when you’re at the lectern can help you overcome nervousness and project a winning voice. Singers and speakers use this deep-breathing exercise to overcome

deep breath you’ve been preparing and open with your first sentence on the exhale. Concentrate on what you have to do, not on how you feel. With concentration, your voice will come out stronger and you will sound more confident. Enjoy the power of a winning voice – it’s awesome! **T**

Eve Cappello, Ph.D., DTM, is a speech coach and author of eight books. She has more than 40 years of experience in voice projection – as a professional singer as well as motivational speaker. Reach her at www.dretraining.com.

*Beauty,
Poise
and...*



Speaking Skills!

Beauty pageant winners from around the world credit Toastmasters with helping them win their titles.

By Katie De Boer

What does it take to win a beauty pageant today? You might be surprised.

A contestant's communication and leadership skills are as important as her poise and appearance, which is why a number of pageant contestants – and winners – from around the

world are members of Toastmasters. They credit the program for helping them become confident speakers and leaders, enabling them to impress judges and serve gracefully during their terms as reigning beauty queens.

Ceylone Boothe-Grooms, a Toastmaster from Middletown, New Jersey, won the title of Mrs. New Jersey in 2009. "It is true – winning the contest is dependent on how well you can answer your interview questions," says Boothe-Grooms. "Just like in Table Topics, the questions are simple and off the cuff, which you are required to answer quickly and clearly."

A contender needs to intelligently voice opinions on current events and controversial topics – if she wants to win. "Be educated," says Kristen Dalton, Miss USA 2009. "You need to know what is going on in the world." As it turns out, opinions are easy to come by, because these women have plenty to say.

Ultimately, for a true beauty queen it's not about the title, the crown or the attention; it's about the experience and the passion "to promote and speak about a platform – a cause that is important to you," says Boothe-Grooms.

Here's what a few beauty-contest winners from around the world say about their Toastmasters training:

Ceylone Boothe-Grooms, Mrs. New Jersey United States, 2009

Boothe-Grooms won the Mrs. New Jersey crown – all contestants are married – at the age of 38. She entered the competition, in part, because of her interest in raising awareness for the early detection of cervical cancer. Ever



since her sister died from the disease, she's been a passionate advocate for early detection.

Boothe-Grooms competed in her first pageant at age 19 and won several titles. She took a break to focus on family, becoming a mother of four, but returned to the pageant scene in search of opportunity and challenge.

During the interviewing process she discovered that much had changed since she last competed, and she found it difficult to communicate her answers clearly. Fellow contestants told her about Toastmasters and she soon joined the AT&T Middletown club in Middletown, New Jersey.

She credits Table Topics with building her skills and confidence. "It felt like someone had spoon-fed me my answers and I was able to grab my audience's attention," says Boothe-Grooms about her winning responses.

Boothe-Grooms now uses her pageant-title platform to promote the importance of regular health checkups. She is also starting her own foundation to help friends and family members of cancer patients find resources related to medical care and support.

"My experience in Toastmasters has been incredible," says Mrs. New Jersey. "My club is extremely supportive. I am so thankful to have met such wonderful people."

Rachael Rees, 2009 Miss World, New South Wales, Australia

Rachael Rees, 21, always dreamed of competing in a beauty pageant and knew public speaking skills were critical in carrying out the duties of being Miss World.

"When I first entered the Miss World competition, I had a fear of public speaking," says Rees, who discovered the importance of communication skills – particularly tone of voice – in such competitions. She turned to the Wagga Wagga Toastmasters for help.

The club in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, Australia, quickly became one of her strongest networks of support. From providing help on her Ice Breaker speech to lending support when she took on leadership roles, members



were always available to offer guidance, advice and reassurance.

She noticed a dramatic improvement in her poise under pressure. "I have become such a strong and confident public speaker that I now have the ability to give a 20-minute presentation without any written [notes]," says Rees. "It is a great feeling when you can get a laugh from your audience; you know they are enjoying the experience as much as you are."

Like other pageant winners, Rees has used her Miss World platform to be a health advocate, serving as an ambassador and community representative for Multiple Sclerosis Australia.

This once-shy girl has chosen a career in the media industry. She is a graduate of the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), a highly competitive training institute in Kingston, New South Wales, for students of theater, film and television. Rees now says speaking off the cuff – connecting and laughing with her audience – is her favorite part of giving a speech.

Nicole Flint, 2009 Miss South Africa

Nicole Flint, 21, is no stranger to Toastmasters. Her father, Ian Flint, DTM, has been a member for 26 years and served as District 74 Governor in 1991. Ian impressed his daughter with the value of Toastmasters by conducting Youth Leadership programs (YLP) at her primary school. Nicole started modeling in high school but realized the value of vocal projection and joined her school's public speaking team. She also participated in two additional YLP courses. "This exposure to Toastmasters improved her self-confidence, and this, I firmly believe, made the difference in her pageant successes," says her father, a member of the Forum Club in Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa.

Nicole agrees heartily, saying Toastmasters helped her add the finishing touches to her professional performances. "It's being able to understand how important manners are in the presenting of a speech," she says. "I have learned that it's the little things that make the difference between good and bad delivery."

Nicole learned not only how to speak confidently and effectively but discovered other valuable Toastmasters skills. "It is important to arrive on time and ensure proper preparation for all engagements," she says.

On the heels of her Miss South Africa success last December, Nicole is giving back to her community as a guest speaker at various Toastmasters events. Once



her busy schedule slows down, she plans to join a club in the Pretoria area.

Nadia Moffett, 2010 Miss North Carolina USA

After being crowned Miss North Carolina in November 2009, Nadia Moffett expressed gratitude to Express Yourself Toastmasters in Tobaccoville, North Carolina, where as a member she developed grace, eloquence, confidence and the ability to articulate – all skills necessary to ace her personal interviews with the judges.

When she started participating in beauty pageants, Moffett realized she needed help with her speaking skills. "Rambling was my biggest downfall," she says. "I would make a point and wouldn't stop." In Toastmasters, she learned to control the content of her answers. She didn't want to ramble, but she still wanted to say enough to connect with the judges and audience. "Something else that is really important to grasp is to know how to let your words flow," says Moffett. "Be connected in your heart and how you are feeling. It is important to trust your instincts."

Toastmasters training allowed her to develop the skills she needed to follow those instincts. "I was able to confidently speak my views, thoughts and opinions on various topics with no hesitation," she says.

As Miss North Carolina, Moffett, 25 this month, is constantly meeting, speaking and interviewing people. "Every time I put my sash on, I get to meet a whole slew of new people... I've always been a social butterfly, but this takes it to another level."

After graduating from college, Moffett went to work at American Express in Greensboro, North Carolina, and two years ago joined its corporate club, Express Yourself Toastmasters. She had no idea how big of an impact Toastmasters would make on her career and personal aspirations.

Susan Mitchell, Express Yourself club president, says Moffett "is an asset to American Express and our Express Yourself club. Her positive attitude and willingness to help make her unique."

Moffett is also co-founder of the "Make Me a Queen" foundation, dedicated to helping young women build self-esteem. Toastmasters helped build hers. "I have gained the level of confidence needed to perform my best as I prepared for my title, and now prepare for the Miss USA contest [in May], and as I work to be my best in my career in corporate America," she says.



Brittany Hoff, 2004 Miss Lewis County, Washington, and 2006 Miss Nampa, Idaho

Brittany Ann Hoff, ACB, CL, discovered Toastmasters from her parents as a senior in high school. But she wasn't convinced to join until 2004, after her first pageant interview in Lewis County, Washington.



The interviews at the county level lasted 30 minutes, with an additional 10 to 12 minutes for questions. "It's more like Table Topics on fire," says Hoff. The board had brought in Toastmasters from the community to "practice judge" the interviews, Hoff says, and after the evaluations it was apparent she needed help with her excessive rambling. "There are a lot of things I love to talk about, so I needed to learn how to keep focused."


Like the other winning contestants, Hoff credits her Toastmasters training with helping her organize her thoughts. "The most important thing is to state all the points you will cover in your speech and then explain each one separately," says Hoff. This helped her keep her answers succinct. "Typically when you see a young contestant who stumbles or rambles in her interview, it

is most likely because she is over-thinking her answers. I know, because I used to do the same thing."

As Miss Lewis County, she made more than 80 appearances in one year, promoting her platform of a healthy lifestyle and the dangers of diabetes. To connect with her audiences, she started using props and learned to involve audience members in her presentations.

Two years later, in 2006, Hoff moved to Idaho. She soon joined another club, entered the Miss Nampa, Idaho, competition – and won. She continued to spread her message and made more than 60 appearances in six months.

Hoff, 23, will soon graduate from Boise State University and looks forward to traveling the world.

Hoff credits her Toastmasters mentors with her successes so far. "It is extremely important to have a mentor and learn how to become a mentor," says Hoff, whose own mentor is current District 15 Governor Dave Manning. Because of his advice, she is now serving as an area governor. Hoff did not expect to come this far in Toastmasters. She says, "It has been an incredible journey and experience." 

Katie De Boer is the Editorial Assistant for the *Toastmaster* magazine.

Chuck Blethen, DTM, also contributed to this article. He is the public relations officer for District 37.

How the time limits you learned as a club leader hold value in your professional life.

My Time is Your Time

“One of the lessons to be practiced in speech training is that of expressing a thought within a specific time,” says the Toastmasters *Competent Communication* manual. It’s too bad many speakers have never learned that. My husband was once asked to be the second speaker at an event that should have lasted about an hour. After an hour and 15 minutes, the first speaker was still in front of the audience. My husband quietly told the person in charge that he would come another time, packed up his projector and presentation materials and left, wondering if he was being rude.

Whose responsibility is it to make sure a program moves along in a timely fashion? When the program planner and the speaker work together, the program runs smoothly and the audience enjoys the presentation. When one does not take responsibility, the program can still work if the other one steps in and does his or her part. But when neither the program planner nor the speaker assumes responsibility for time management, it can become a disaster, as it did in my husband’s case. Let’s look at it from both angles:

The Speaker

It’s an honor to be asked to speak to a group. You may have knowledge

that can benefit others. Or you may have been invited because of your humor and ability to entertain. No matter why you were asked, always keep in mind that by attending and listening to you, the audience is giving up other activities. So respect the audience members’ time and the other presenters on the program.

In club meetings, Toastmasters always check the timing on speeches and the timer holds them accountable. You’ll find this practice of watching the clock useful in your professional presentations, too. Always ask how long the speech should last and then stay within those limits – better to leave them sighing! If necessary, ask your host to give some kind of signal when your time limit is close. If your host will not give a limit, determine the best timing for your audience’s needs and insist on adhering to it anyway. My husband asked the pastor of a small church where he was speaking how long the presentation should be, and the pastor said, “Oh, just take as long as you need! It’s okay.” If your host says that, don’t believe it; it’s not okay with the audience, and it’s not okay with other speakers on the program.

It’s a good idea to check in with the person who invited you to speak a few days before the speaking engagement, especially if you were

invited several weeks or months in advance. A phone call or e-mail confirming the date and time can be invaluable. It is not uncommon to write down the wrong date or time, or learn that not every participant was notified of a program change.

On the day of the event, arrive in plenty of time to get oriented to the location, set up any equipment and consult with the program planner. If you’re using audio visuals, don’t assume that anything will be provided. If you need the host to provide any equipment (even an extension cord), or if you need the room set up in a special way, ask about it the day before. You may not be able to check out these needs at program time without delaying the program.

The Program Planner

As a program planner your job is to ensure that the program moves along smoothly and that the needs of the audience and participants are respected. Your Toastmasters training should have prepared you for this. To start, you can decide beforehand how long the program should last and then plan the event in such a way that it begins and ends on time. You’re on the road to success when you contact your first speaker.

Determine the length of each presentation by the overall duration of your program and number of



plan to allow only a specific amount of time.

Finally, don't be afraid to take charge if a speaker doesn't respect time limits. It's acceptable to stand, thank the presenter and tell the audience that it's time to move on to the next speaker. Remembering skills you've learned as a Toastmaster will help you to take control of the meeting and guide your speakers.

Different cultures and situations require that programs be adapted to meet the needs and expectations of the audience, but in all situations program planners and presenters must respect the fact that people have busy schedules and are often concerned about time. When my husband went to the event I mentioned in the beginning of this article, he missed an important meeting in order to make his presentation. If the other speaker or the program planner had used Toastmasters training and assumed responsibility for conducting the


presenters, and consider meals and other matters that will require time. Then, when you invite your speakers, be sure to tell them exactly how long their speeches should be, so they can plan accordingly.

Also ask them to arrive at the event early. How many times have you been in a meeting where the audience is waiting for the first speaker to arrive? They probably weren't Toastmasters meetings! Discuss equipment requirements with your speakers – remind them to set up early, and make clear what equipment they expect you to provide and whether you can do so. You can avoid problems by remembering how a Sergeant at Arms helps speakers to set up for a Toastmasters presentation.

“Always ask how long the speech should last and then stay within those limits.”

If you have contacted speakers weeks or months in advance, be sure to confirm the engagement a week before the presentation. Keep in mind the way your club confirms meeting agendas in advance.

When the speakers arrive, it's helpful to remember your timer's training. Offer to work out a signal with your speaker that is inconspicuous and will allow time for that person to end the presentation gracefully. Most speakers will appreciate this. Be clear that you

program in a timely manner, the incident could have been avoided. It is often said that time is money. If this is true, then we must spend one another's time wisely and with consideration. 

Merrill J. Davies, ACG, is a member of two clubs: the Rome Toastmasters and the Floyd Medical Center Toastmasters, both in Rome, Georgia. She is a retired English teacher and freelance writer. Reach her at <http://.merrilldavies.com>.



FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT!

By John Cadley

The perils of making a good first impression.

I'm Not Impressed

After 30 years in professional life, I don't have to worry about making a good first impression anymore. If they're not impressed by now, they're never going to be. All I know is I must have impressed somebody, because they're still giving me a paycheck. In fact, I now conduct job interviews, meaning people have to make a good first impression on *me*. Yet I'm more nervous than they are. Whenever I see someone trying to make a good initial impression, it's a sure sign he needs Toastmasters to learn how to avoid the following:

First, I'd like to shake the hand of the person who told everybody to use a firm handshake – not to congratulate him but to show him how his disciples interpret “firm.” He'd be on his knees begging for mercy. Just for the record: *Firm* does not mean a bone-crunching vice grip where I still can't make a fist an hour after the interview. And I'm talking about men and women. Women seem to think they've got to squeeze even harder just to prove they're as tough as a man. They are, trust me. I've had a 5-foot female weighing 100 pounds get me up on the tips of my toes with tears coming out of my eyes.

And speaking of eyes – what's with eye contact? Let's dial that one way back, okay? A little goes a long way. I don't need to be locked into a laser Vulcan hypno-beam where I feel like I'm being X-rayed. I *know* you're talking to me; I'm the only person in the room. I met with a man once who never took his eyes

off me for an entire hour, not even to blink. I felt like saying, “Do you have eyelids?”

Then there's this business of knowing when to arrive. Obviously, arriving late for a job interview will not make a good first impression. It won't make *any* impression, since you're not even there yet. But far too many job candidates seem to think, “If arriving late is bad, then arriving early is good, and arriving really early is really good.”

No, it is not. If there's one thing I hate, it's getting a call from the front desk at 9:30 a.m., saying that my 10 o'clock appointment has arrived. That gives me half an hour to feel like *I'm* late for the interview. One insightful business guru suggests that if you arrive too early, you should spend the time in the rest room. No, you should not. It will make people wonder who you are and what you're doing there. At the very least they'll think you're strange, and they might even call security. Then you'll have to explain what you're doing there, which will make you late for the meeting you were so early for. Coming into a job interview late while being introduced as “the weirdo who was loitering in the men's room” does *not* make a good first impression.

Physical appearance and hygiene are supposed to be important, too. Now there's a searing insight. One consultant even feels it necessary to say – and I quote – “Always bathe the morning of the interview. They shouldn't smell you coming before

they see you.” If a person has to be told this, making a good impression is the least of his problems.

And let's not forget body language, which research says constitutes 55 percent of a first impression. You're supposed to act calm, confident and relaxed when in fact you're as nervous as a long-tail cat sitting next to a rocking chair.

Have you ever seen people try to relax when they're not? It makes *me* squirm. They sit back in the chair and nonchalantly cross their arms over their chest, which is really saying, “I feel threatened. Don't hurt me.” They throw one leg casually over the other – while their foot is going up and down faster than a hummingbird's wings. And then, God help us, they smile. They're thinking: *Does he like me? I should have worn the brown suit. There's dandruff on my shoulder. Am I getting that red nervous rash on my neck? He hates me. I'm finished! I'll never work again! Okay, now smile.*”

A smile like that looks like plastic surgery gone bad.

The irony is that all this advice – all these drastic changes you should make in your dress, speech and behavior to be deemed socially acceptable – is given in the context of, “just be yourself.” As in: Don't be yourself. Just be yourself. No wonder there's a 10 percent unemployment rate. **T**

John Cadley is an advertising copywriter in Syracuse, New York. Reach him at jcadley@mower.com.