

The TOASTMASTER®

DECEMBER 2002

SPECIALTY SPEECHES:

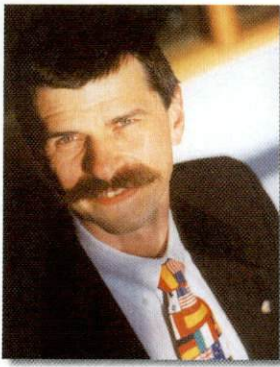
Speeches for
Social Action

Points on
Using Props

From Media
Bomb to Media
Darling

Here's to
Your
Toast

May all your toasts be received
in the spirit they're proposed.



VIEWPOINT

Building a Better World

Our vision is to make effective communication a worldwide reality. And it's happening. We now have more than 9,000 clubs in 70 countries. On average we charter a new club somewhere in the world every 10 hours. That's extraordinary!

Since the International Convention in San Antonio, Bea and I have enjoyed meeting more than 2,000 of our enthusiastic members. We have traveled to the Middle East to visit our members in the Gulf Territorial Council and participated in six fall conferences in the United States and Canada.

During our visits we have been privileged to witness many instances of our members building a better world – by improving people's communication and leadership skills.

- Maisoon, Betsie and the Jordan Toastmasters have been running Speechcraft courses for staff in the diplomatic service. They are helping international relations by building the communication and leadership skills of diplomats working in and around Jordan.
- Ponnuchamy, Philip and the Toastmasters of Bahrain run Youth Leadership courses for students in Bahrain. They recently formed a gavel club for their city's young people. These members are investing in their nation's future.
- William, Chris and Cheryl formed a club at Capitol College in Maryland, USA, so that engineering and technology students can develop and hone their communication skills.
- Qatar Toastmaster Vicki's dream is to return to Palestine and start Toastmasters clubs as a way to rebuild the community through communication and leadership development.
- Julie is the Vice President Education of my club in Australia. She does an outstanding job providing club members with an educational program. She challenges us to take on new roles and to exceed our own expectations. Her dedication helps our club members to bring out the best in themselves so they can apply their skills in their family, work and community.

When I was Third Vice President, International President Tim Keck's theme was "Building a Better World." Now, traveling the world as International President, I am seeing firsthand how Toastmasters everywhere are building a better world.

I challenge you to complete your CL, AL, CTM, ATM or DTM, to invite new members to join your club, to start a new club in your community, and to embrace the opportunity of being a Toastmasters leader. You will not only be building a better you, you will be building a better world.

Gavin Blakey

Gavin Blakey, DTM
International President

The TOASTMASTER

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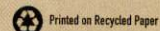
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Contents

December 2002

Volume 68, no. 12

departments

2 **VIEWPOINT: Building a Better World**
By International President Gavin Blakey, DTM

4 **LETTERS**

5 **MY TURN: The Gift of Dad's Eulogy**
By Michael S. Turner

6 **CAN WE TALK? Opening a World**
By Elise Dee Beraru, DTM

16 **MANNER OF SPEAKING: Talking to the Press**
By Jeremy Bagott, ATM

22 **TI'S ONLINE POLL SUMMARY**
By Dr. Ken Tangen

23 **LEADERSHIP: If It Isn't Special, Don't Say It**
By Ken Askew

27 **HOW TO: Speaking Outside the Club**
By Patricia L. Fry, CTM

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.

features

8 **SPEECHES FOR SOCIAL ACTION**
Use your speaking skills to advocate a cause.
By Caren S. Neile, ATM-S



12 **THE BOARD CALLS: A TIME TO PANIC – OR PREPARE?**
Be up for the task when the pressure is on.
By Barney King, ATM-S



14 **FROM MEDIA BOMB TO MEDIA DARLING**
What to say when facing the spotlight as the company spokesperson.
By Carmine Gallo

18 **HERE'S TO YOUR TOAST!**
May all your toasts be received in the spirit they're proposed.
By Natalie MacLean



24 **THE ROPE MASTER'S POINTS ON PROPS**
A Toastmaster's anti-drug message comes alive through the creative use of props and ventriloquism.
By Julie Bawden Davis

30 **THE TOASTMASTER ANNUAL ARTICLE INDEX**
Use this guide as a reference to find magazine articles from the past year.



LETTERS

SPECIAL TOASTMASTERS

Toastmasters in Wisconsin have partnered with Special Olympics Wisconsin for a number of years to help with basic presentation skills training. In one day, athletes learned how to build a speech, add hand gestures, use a microphone and understand the meaning of vocal variety.

Kelly Kloepping, Director of Marketing and Communications, Special Olympics Wisconsin and Nancy Mueller, DTM • Uptowners Club 1159-35 • Madison, Wisconsin

NEWSPAPERS ARE NECESSARY

I am extremely offended by John Cadley's article, "Why People Read the Newspaper" (September). I have spent five years teaching our children about the benefits of reading the newspaper through numerous "Newspaper in Education" programs, and educating teachers on the benefits of using the newspaper in the classroom. I am sure you are not aware of these programs, the impact they have on future readers and the power they hold in building a more literate society. Your article is truly a slap on the face to those of us who have worked hard to help children, students, teachers and adults realize the power of newspapers. As a new Toastmaster I am appalled that I have joined an organization that promotes this story for the sake of humor. I hope future stories will be more positive.

Kim Svoboda • Mount Auburn Club 6670-31 • Cambridge, Massachusetts

MEA CULPA

I would like to draw your attention to an error in the October issue of the magazine: the photo on page 13 under which you state: "Taped speech contest winner Satish Kini from Saudi Arabia receives his award from President Gavin Blakey." Indeed Satish Kini won first place in the Taped Speech Contest, but the photograph is depicting Gulf Toastmasters Council Governor A. Ponnuchami accepting the third place award on behalf of Ronald Olivera.

Austin T. Nevis, ATM-G • Oasis Club 8258-U • Alkhubar, Saudi Arabia

Editor's Note:

Our apologies for this error. Here is the correct picture of Taped Speech Contest Winner Satish Kini.



PRAISE FOR THE TOASTMASTER

I have always enjoyed reading our organization's magazine, but I've been truly impressed by the most recent issues. Your writers, their topics and the overall quality of the magazine is something I am proud to share with current and potential members. When I visit clubs, I consistently hear praise for each issue of our publication.

I want to also compliment the cover designs for the June, July and August issues. Each had a different style, yet was clean, powerful and attractive. All three covers promised valuable, enjoyable and practical content – and kept the promise! I also commend you for choosing the theme of leadership for your September cover. Each element supported International President Gavin Blakey's statement that "We have the power to make a positive difference in other people's lives."

As a member of District 46, I was especially moved to read Daniel Daly's account of his experiences during and after 9/11. Now a FDNY Fire Chief, Dan has been a treasure and inspiration for many Toastmasters in New York and New Jersey, and we applaud his continued contributions to our local clubs, the Toastmasters organization and countless people throughout the world. Chief Daly's article, "A Toastmaster at Ground Zero," was eloquent, moving and a very appropriate choice for the September 2002 issue.

Focusing on positive change is vital for us all, especially in these challenging times. Thank you for bringing us an abundance of examples, ideas and encouragement!

Shelia Spencer, DTM • Member of several clubs in District 46 • New York, New York

RIGHT ON TARGET

The October article, "No Non-Manual Speeches," by Robert Nearingard is timely and on target. Recounting the conversation between Helen and John was a perfect "How To" example of communicating the importance of giving manual speeches. The situation where John had completed his CTM but lost his manual is often the reason members lose interest in following the program. If a member gives non-manual speeches, they find themselves floundering with no direction. They end up cheating not only themselves, but their club as well. Bravo! This is one of the best articles I have read in the magazine.

Jackie Tanase, ATM-B • Executive Club 266-14 • Marietta, Georgia



By Michael S. Turner

The Gift of Dad's Eulogy

I WAS STANDING IN THE CHURCH PULPIT, IN FRONT OF 650 PEOPLE, silent, waiting for words to come out. The opening sentence I had practiced didn't seem right anymore. I was searching for the exact words to describe how I felt about my Dad's

death. Did I make a mistake trying to give Dad's eulogy? Would my good intentions turn into a nightmare and embarrassment for our family?

To understand how I got into this position, let's go back a year. I was invited to hear Lou Heckler, a nationally recognized keynote speaker. He was mesmerizing. I felt a rush of excitement and knew then that I wanted to learn how to communicate professionally.

I had taken speech classes in high school and college, but hadn't used those skills for 25 years. As a CPA, artist and photographer, I knew public speaking would be helpful in marketing my services.

My friends recommended Toastmasters and with about 100 clubs in Houston, I chose PSST – Professionally Speaking Single Toastmasters. As the largest regular Toastmasters' group in Houston, PSST averages 50-60 people each Monday night. I liked the members and figured the club would help me speak in front of large audiences.

I remember giving my Ice Breaker speech in late October 2001. To my amazement, people actually listened to what I said, laughed and found my story interesting. Maybe public speaking wasn't too bad after all.

Over the next nine months, I attended Toastmasters almost every Monday night. All my practice was starting to pay off. I had no idea my next speech would be at one of the most important events in my life.

In September I flew home to visit my family in Midland, Michigan. My father and grandmother had been ill, and I wanted to see them before Christmas. I was afraid something might happen to one of them if I waited.

After a wonderful family weekend, my father passed away on Labor Day morning. The finality of his death, the unexpected timing, talking with him just a few minutes earlier... these were all hard to accept.

Later that day we began making funeral arrangements. Several close friends and business associates were asked to

give eulogies. As a member of Toastmasters, it seemed natural that I would give the eulogy on behalf of our family. I suddenly remembered the phrase "easier said than done."

Being able to speak publicly at such an important event is a gift. You are given the opportunity to communicate what's in your heart to hundreds of people and touch their souls. I immediately went to work. Although I wrote out the entire speech, I used an outline with paragraph headings as reminders. I didn't intend to read the words, but it helped knowing they were there, in case I'd become overwhelmed with emotion.

Like any good speech a eulogy needs two or three goals or points, no more. I wanted to include everyone in the audience and comfort them. I decided to concentrate on how Dad influenced others, his drive to lead a productive life and his love for everyone. I described his personality and memorable events in his life. This included some of his funny quirks, to help celebrate his fun spirit and avoid being too sullen.

So there I was, standing silently in front of a packed church, looking out into a sea of faces. Then I began to look around for familiar faces and make eye contact. They looked at me intently, eager for my first words. My planned opening sentence seemed inadequate, so I searched for new words. By practicing my eulogy and drawing on my Toastmasters experience, I was able to visually concentrate on my audience. The words ceased to be a problem. I was given the power to touch so many lives, simply by looking into their eyes and speaking from my heart.

Looking back, it seems almost eerie how I decided to join and participate in Toastmasters. Yet without it, I can't imagine being able to give Dad's eulogy or enjoying my connection with the audience. All of us may be unexpectedly called upon to speak at some important event. Thanks to Toastmasters, I was prepared and given a wonderful gift for which I will always be grateful. **T**

Michael S. Turner is a member of Professionally Speaking Singles Club 484-56 in Houston, Texas.

By Elise Dee Beraru, DTM

Opening a World

It was a tiny notice in the *Der Rosenkavalier* program. "L.A. Opera starting Speakers Bureau; Call..." Wow! I had just fallen in love with opera. This was my first year as a subscriber. I'd been a Toastmaster for 15 years. I could catch up on the opera part. The next work day I called, and soon I was one of 28 volunteers chosen to be the inaugural "class" of the Los Angeles Opera Speakers Bureau.

Our mission was simple. Los Angeles Opera, founded in 1986, decided the best way to attract future audiences was to grow their own, starting with kids in the public high schools who would attend free matinees. (The Los Angeles Opera is the only major opera company in the United States still offering free performances for secondary school students.) However, in 1992, high school seniors invited to see *Lucia di Lammermoor* were so ill-prepared and ill-behaved that the fledgling program was nearly scrapped. Someone suggested that the teachers prepare lesson plans and preparatory programs – including having a volunteer speaker give a presentation at the school – to prepare the kids for the opera.

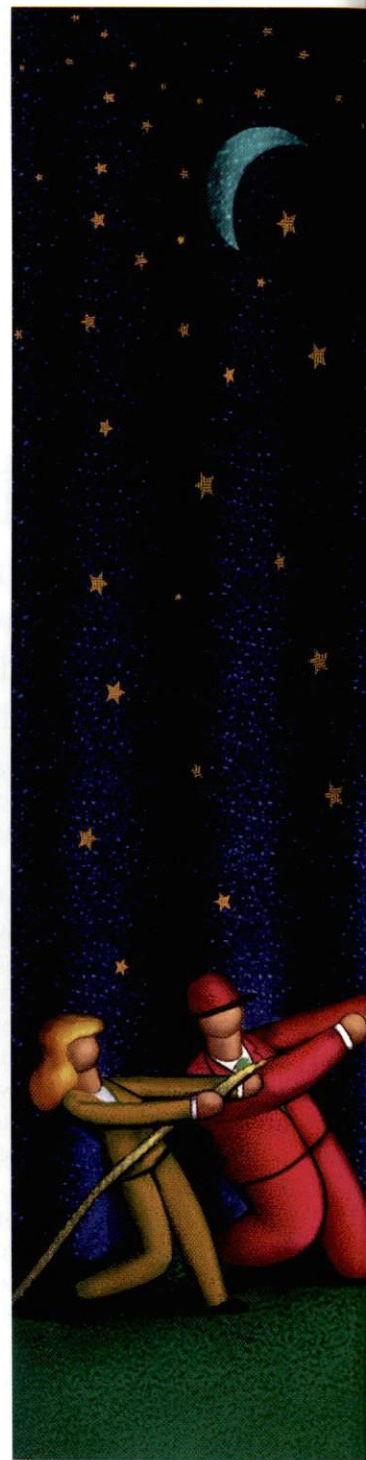
That's where we came in. As a single, childless lawyer, the prospect of making four different presentations at four high schools was more frightening than facing a jury or giving my Ice Breaker. What I knew about high school kids you could put in a thimble and still have room left over!

But being part of the Speakers Bureau opened a new world both for these teenagers and me. In the schools where I spoke, the student populations were predominantly Latino or African-American. Most were eligible for government free-lunch programs, and many had lost

friends and relatives to drugs or gang violence. For some, the opera would be the first live theater or music they'd ever experienced. This was not the public school world I graduated from in the early 1970s. The closest most of these kids had ever been to opera was the CD recording of the musical *Phantom of the Opera*. And 5,000 of them would be seeing *Porgy and Bess* in a matter of weeks.

My Toastmasters training made it possible. I was able to tailor my presentations to fit their needs. (Many of my Speakers Bureau colleagues planned one presentation and gave it to everyone.) I learned to simplify my language without talking down to them. I dealt with a group of hostile ninth graders who didn't want to be there by speaking to the five or six who did. I had to be flexible enough to change my complete presentation on 15 minutes' notice when I arrived at a school and was told that I would be speaking for 45 minutes to the entire student body about opera in general, rather than just to the students scheduled to attend the performance. I used storytelling to teach the synopsis to a class of developmentally disabled students. I prepared giant-font handouts of the lyrics for visually impaired kids. I learned how to use musical clips as a

Use your
Toastmasters
training to
make a
difference in
people's lives
— and in
your own.





speaking aid – which is a good thing, since I can't play the piano and have a limited singing range. (Good rule about music: Limit the playing time to about 30-45 seconds for kids; no more than a minute for adults if the singing is not in English.) I was also able to answer questions that came right out of nowhere. (Such as "If an overture begins an opera, what is the *1812 Overture*?")

I went to one of the student matinees of *Porgy and Bess*, first working outside the Music Center greeting school busses. As I passed the lines of well-behaved, nicely dressed kids, one of the developmentally disabled kids to whom I had spoken left the line, ran over and hugged me while thanking me for coming to talk to her

class. Once inside, the performance was stunning. The kids behaved better than the adults I had been seated with during an evening performance. But when Maria chased the drug-dealing Sportin' Life out of Catfish Row at knifepoint – the spontaneous cheering and applause was overwhelming. These were kids who'd been there and wished they could have done that. I'm not sentimental, but there were tears in my eyes.

Later, we got letters. They said things like, "I didn't think I was going to like opera before I went. Now I want to go again." These teens discovered a new world they never before knew existed and found they liked it. Some even fell in love with it.

I made a discovery too. I stepped way out of my safe, secure Toastmasters club and my safe, secure district events and used my public speaking skills where they made a difference in people's lives.

Ten seasons later, I'm still in the Los Angeles Opera Speakers Bureau. I helped design the form we now use to evaluate speakers' progress and performance (with a little help from you-know-where). I've made 12 to 20 presentations each year for book stores, civic and senior groups, plus the school presentations. In an eight-day period I made eight presentations in three high schools to 250 kids going to see *La Bohème* – including a class that meets 25 miles from my house at 6:45 a.m. For the 2002-2003 season I've become the resident specialist on Baroque opera and will give a series of presentations on Monteverdi and *The Coronation of Poppea*, as well as the school talks this coming spring on *The Barber of Seville*. I even have "groupies" who've told me they come to the senior center when they see my name as the speaker, no matter the subject!

This is something you can do too. Yes, I'd been a Toastmaster a long time when I joined the Speakers Bureau, but most of my colleagues were opera lovers with very little speech training. It doesn't have to be opera – that's my passion – but maybe your local symphony orchestra, art museum or repertory theater has a speakers bureau. Of course, it doesn't even have to involve the arts. Maybe you have a charitable, social, religious or political cause you support that needs speakers. Maybe your professional association has a speakers bureau. You have the opportunity to use your Toastmasters training to make a difference in people's lives – and your own life while you're at it. **T**

Elise Dee Beraru, DTM, was District One Governor 2000/01. A member of Sand & Sea Speakers 5983-1 in Santa Monica, California, she is a workers' compensation attorney in solo practice and a multi-published romance novelist. A Toastmaster since 1978, she can be reached at Elise0511@aol.com.



Speaking Our Peace:

Speeches for Social Action

*"There's nothing
wrong with doing
good and doing well
at the same time."*



say to you today my friends – even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

When Martin Luther King Jr. spoke those words at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, 250,000 people were gathered at the Lincoln Memorial to listen. Millions more watched the speech on TV or read it in newspapers. “I Have a Dream” became the most famous American public address of the 20th century. It also changed history, presenting to the general public for the first time the demands of the civil rights movement in a cogent and memorable argument, in breathtaking language shimmering with emotion.

Like Dr. King, we live at a time of critical social and political issues: war and peace, tolerance of diversity, the environment, bioengineering, ethics – the list goes on. We also live at a time when groups are clamoring for intelligent, articulate speakers to fill their meeting agendas.

Granted, the pen is mightier than the sword, but the tongue is the most effective tool of all. When speaking, we all have the ability to reach out and capture our listeners’ attention. We can respond to their questions and concerns. We may not all have the eloquence and dynamism of Dr. King, but our public speaking skills make us formidable advocates for the causes that are dear to us. And we don’t have to march on Washington to get out our message.

A couple of years ago, a friend of mine in New York joined a group of neighbors who were protesting a plan to bring a megastore to their area. Chris attended meetings. He joined committees. He spoke up about his concerns. And who do you think was interviewed by the TV news reporters when the neighborhood group won its battle? My friend’s words, at first spoken to just a few like-minded neighbors, changed the course of history for his town.

There was also something in it for him: Speaking out for social causes is a wonderful way to volunteer for your community while exercising your speaking skills. It’s a great technique for promoting yourself and your business, as well. You will be introduced, and more often than not, you’ll supply the information for that introduction. And if you bring an evaluator and fit your speech into a manual, you can get credit too! Is it a little sneaky to help yourself while you’re promoting a cause? Not to my mind. There is nothing wrong with doing good and doing well at the same time. If you are giving your time and your talent to help others, why shouldn’t you get a little something in return?

We are angry at the waste of resources that goes on every day for militarism while human beings live in misery and sometimes even live in the hope of a quick death to release them from their hopelessness. We rage as 500,000 dollars are spent every minute of every day on war and the preparation for war; while in every one of those minutes human beings, more than eight people, die of neglect. Every day 12,000 people die of neglect and malnutrition and misery; yet every day 720 million dollars are spent on armaments. Just think of those insane priorities: after all, we have time to think while others die.

That is a snippet from the Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech of the Irish activist Betty Williams in 1977. If you wouldn’t dream of comparing your speaking with that of a Nobel Laureate, listen to this: Ms. Williams was an ordinary working mother in her hometown of Belfast, Northern Ireland, when three children were inadvertently killed in a political attack. She was so incensed by the ongoing misery of her homeland that she began to speak out about it. More than a quarter century later, she is still addressing

BY CAREN S. NEILE, ATM-S ■ PHOTOGRAPH BY CORBIS

audiences throughout the world. I have seen her speak several times. She couples the warmth of a mother with the fierceness of a warrior. She is awesomely effective.

THE MOTIVATED SEQUENCE

The most powerful speeches for motivating people to action are a combination of information, inspiration and a call to action. The classic formula for such a speech – which is so powerful, incidentally, that it is also the formula for sales and commercial advertising – is called the motivated sequence. It is divided into five parts: 1) get their attention, 2) identify the need, 3) satisfy the need, 4) present a vision of life with the need satisfied, and 5) call to action

Rigoberta Menchú Tum, a Guatemalan human rights activist and Nobel Laureate of Mayan descent, delivered the speech excerpted below at a conference on racism. She followed the motivated sequence down to the letter. A few snippets of her talk will demonstrate how it worked, and how it can work for you too.

STEP 1: GET THEIR ATTENTION The speech begins with a poetic and heartfelt sentiment, then gets right to the point:

Animated by the spirit of spring, spirit of hope for peace in my native Guatemala, I send my best wishes for the success of the Sixth Lascasianas Symposium called by the Institute of Juridical Investigations of the National Autonomy University of Mexico. The central theme of this Sixth Symposium, "The Problem of Racism on the Threshold of the 21st Century," approaches an aspect of human coexistence that in my opinion, has historically manifested itself as a symptom of what humanity has left behind.

This is a relatively muted attention-getter. Depending on the venue and the message, you may choose to open with a call for a show of hands, ("How many people are scared by the recent news of child kidnappings?"), or a quote, or a highly provocative statement. Sometimes loud noises or extravagant gestures are also appropriate.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE NEED

If a phantom has at some time traveled this earth, it is racism. I understand this as a phenomenon that is supported by the belief of superiority in the face of difference, in the belief that one's own culture possesses values superior to those of other cultures. It has not been stated often enough that racism has historically been a banner to justify the enterprises of expansion, conquest, colonization and domination and has walked hand in hand with intolerance, injustice and violence.

This is an eloquent description of the need to overcome racism. If you are advocating the development of a new park for your neighborhood, you may wish to describe the problem of children unsupervised in the street.

STEP 3: SATISFY THE NEED

... what can we propose to contribute to overcoming this evil? I believe that the organizations of the United Nations system, governments, national and international organizations and institutions, means of communication, schools, universities, etc., committed to world peace, should generate programs on a grand scale to redefine education, and the influence that they project toward society.

Here is the general solution to the problem of racism. In your speech, you might introduce the idea of the park here.

STEP 4: PRESENT A VISION

We can dream of the construction of multicultural and plurilingual societies: if we are capable of recognizing and respecting differences. This theme revisits a theme of special importance for indigenous communities, who up until the present, with the same patience with which the women of our communities weave truly multicolored mosaics, have been weaving the basis of a new order of relationships with governments, institutions and non-indigenous societies.

What would your vision be? Children playing under the watchful supervision of parents? Jungle gyms, slides and other activities for them to enjoy? Or perhaps a safer neighborhood?

STEP 5: CALL TO ACTION

... I am convinced that we should make the necessary efforts so that the United Nations approve the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Communities as soon as possible and that it is also ratified by the member States.

Likewise, we should take advantage of the International Decade of Indigenous People as a time for reflection and an impetus for actions at a national and international level, that seek permanent recognition and respect for the rights of Indigenous Communities. We should seek the approval of instruments and legislation of an international and national character, but we should also struggle to eradicate racist practices by modifying cultural patrons that give sustenance to discrimination and segregation.

The appeal to action here is direct, with relatively specific suggestions. In your park speech, you might outline a plan that includes speaking at zoning-board meetings, writing articles to the press, or fund-raising.

The speech on racism simultaneously informed, inspired and outlined a plan for getting the job done. You may also wish to include personal stories, which work well at every stage of the motivational sequence except, perhaps, the call to action.

You may have noticed, by the way, that this article is written in the form of the motivated sequence. I got

your attention with the quote from Dr. King. Then I identified the need for speaking on social issues. Then I showed you how to satisfy that need. Next I helped you envision a successful experience with speaking on a social issue. And finally, I called you to action with the motivated sequence and the tips below:

1 Take a look at famous speeches on social issues. Although I do not recommend pilfering from the speeches of others, you will get tremendous inspiration – and education – from reading or hearing them. You can also quote them in your own speeches, with attribution, of course. Here are a few good sources:

Douglass Archives of American Public Address
douglassarchives.org

History Channel (sound clips)
www.historychannel.com/speeches/

Public Broadcasting: Great American Speeches
www.pbs.org/greatspeeches/

Historic Audio Archives (sound clips)
www.webcorp.com

Gifts of Speech: Women's Speeches from Around the World
gos.sbc.edu

Great Speeches (sound clips)
www.chicago-law.net/speeches/speech.html

Torricelli, Robert and Andrew Carroll. In *Our Own Words: Extraordinary Speeches of the American Century*. Kodansha America, 1999.

2 Identify a cause you wish to advocate. It could be local, as in the example of the park, or it could be national or international, such as a call for peace or strong penalties for corporate polluters. You might decide to support a cause to which you already make financial contributions.

3 Do your homework. Research topics, as well as organizations that support your cause, through newspapers (you can get back issues at your library or online), books, the Internet, or personal interviews. Make a note of which groups maintain speakers bureaus that you might join. When I was a patient-care volunteer for a nonprofit hospice, I became so interested in the hospice movement that I joined the organization's speakers bureau. The same thing happened after I did some work for an HIV/AIDS educational group; I became not only the organization's writer, but also a speaker.

You might also wish to offer to start a speakers bureau yourself, perhaps with the assistance of members of your club. I am in the midst of doing that now with a local nonprofit group that supports the homeless.

4 Develop your speech according to the motivated sequence, or some variation of it that works for you. Consider how to adjust the speech for different lengths of time and different audiences. Presentation times may vary from 10 to 45 minutes or more. Some groups want a lot of facts; others will be more swayed by an emotional appeal. All of your speeches should include both, but in varying amounts.

5 If you are not joining a speakers bureau, your next move is to make contacts. While you are learning your speech, start making calls to service organizations and other groups in your area, such as Rotary International or the Elks. Along with church and retirement groups, nursing homes and other venues, they are often on the lookout for speakers at their meetings. All you need is your speech, a handout or two, and enough information to be able to respond to questions. (Don't worry; you don't need all the answers. You can always tell your listeners you will research the information they are requesting and get back to them. Then be sure you do.)

If you prefer to speak as part of a larger forum, check the local section of your newspaper for meetings, or contact your town or city hall. If no such opportunity exists, create one.

Finally, go out and speak your peace! I promise you, it will be one of the most satisfying experiences you will ever have – both as a speaker and as a human being. **1**

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Whatchathink?

We want your opinion. For the next few months we're going to ask for your response to different types of questions. To answer, visit the home page of the TI Web site at www.toastmasters.org and click on the button to take our online poll. The results will be posted in a future issue of *The Toastmaster*. This month's question is:

What's it like to compete in a speech contest?

We look forward to hearing from you!

The Board Calls:

A Time to Panic – or Prepare?

Kathleen," her boss, the head nurse, said. "The board of trustees heard about your proposal and would like you to present your ideas at the board meeting in three weeks."

Kathleen, my wife, told me about this challenge that had been laid in her lap. Knowing that her Toastmaster-husband had presented to various boards dozens of times, she turned to me and in her most confident, yet urgent, voice said, "Help!"

Kathleen works for a local nonprofit organization and is passionate about her work. She works superbly one-on-one and is quite persuasive in those situations. But she's anxious about presenting to groups, and the thought of standing alone before her organization's board of trustees was intimidating.

As I assessed the situation, it seemed the best advice I could provide would be along the lines of basic speaking hints – the stuff we find in our first manual – as well as some specific help for presenting to a board of directors or trustees.

Since we had limited time to prepare, I broke our task into five essential components: preparation, content, logistics, presentation and practice.

PREPARATION

In getting started with any speech, the first task is to determine the objective and the speech parameters, which include the time and the audience.

■ **Objective.** Sometimes a speech is designed to provide information, sometimes to entertain, sometimes to persuade. In Kathleen's case, we determined she needed to both provide information and to persuade; in short, it was "strategic selling."



■ **Time.** With only 10 minutes allotted for the entire presentation, we decided to target seven minutes for the presentation and three minutes for questions, considering the possibility that the board would interrupt her presentation rather than wait until the end to ask questions.

■ **Audience.** After determining objective and time, Kathleen obtained from her boss a list of all the board members and their affiliations. This step, when preparing to speak to a nonprofit board, can be especially helpful because many of the board's members may have no particular expertise in the technical aspects of the organization's work. However, they are likely quite interested, and a speaker should count on their asking a lot of questions about the basic assumptions behind any idea presented.

Kathleen learned from the list that only a third of them had background in the area of her proposal. This meant she was going to have to do an efficient job – short, but thorough – of providing background and rationale. Probably the most important part of this exercise was to try to ascertain (in our case, guess, since we couldn't ask) the WIIFM ("What's In It For Me" factor) for each of the members.

On for-profit company boards, the composition is usually different. In these cases, it would be important to discuss with the company president what particular vantage point each member brings to the board and perhaps why they were brought onto the board in the first place. But one should still approach each member by doing the WIIFM analysis.

CONTENT

■ **Organization.** Since Kathleen's presentation had to be short, the organization needed to be simple. We included only an introduction, background, a clear rationale, the results of her study of the problem, and then a proposal that the board take some straightforward, direct action steps.



“Grab the audiences’ attention with the first sentence, and seal the sale with the last one.”

■ **Introduction and background.** Kathleen would start by introducing herself and stating her function within the organization. Then she would very briefly identify the problem she was trying to solve and why she – and the board members – should care about it.

■ **Rationale.** The rationale for her approach – how she conducted her study and analyzed the problem – and her conclusions had to be presented in the shortest possible time. Yet, since she was “selling,” what she said had to be clear, direct and convincing. This is where Kathleen’s passion would provide the exclamation point to her presentation.

■ **Action.** The call for action was Kathleen’s clincher and should be included in any talk like this. The speaker must give those who make the decisions a roadmap to follow. Make the action steps clear, simple, direct and immediate.

LOGISTICS

For anyone presenting in this type of situation, all the mechanical details must be taken care of before ever stepping in front of the audience. For Kathleen, working through these things ahead of time enabled her to relax a bit and to concentrate on her message.

She had to understand in advance the room layout and the availability of items such as microphones, pointers, screens, projectors (overhead and LCD). We determined that, although the room was not large, it afforded ample space for Kathleen to stand next to the screen she would use for her PowerPoint presentation. She could stand next to the screen and face her audience while being able to use her right hand (rather than a laser pointer; it was more natural for her) to point periodically to the material on the slide. There was no microphone, so we knew she would have to speak up. She kept the presentation simple: one slide for each of the main categories listed above – introduction, background, rationale and action.

PRESENTATION

■ **Voice.** Because there was no microphone, we worked on Kathleen’s voice projection and vocal variety. When people find themselves in these uncomfortable situa-

tions, they sometimes speak in a monotone that is almost a shout. We identified a couple of places in Kathleen’s talk to increase volume and quicken her pace and a couple of other places where she would speak more softly and slow down. We identified “hidden” word cues on Kathleen’s PowerPoint slides to prompt her.

■ **Gestures.** Gestures are very important in these situations because they convey sincerity and cement the human contact with the audience. Kathleen has terrific sincere gestures, so all we did was to slightly amplify them to match her vocal emphasis.

■ **Eye contact.** Since this was a selling job, I emphasized the importance of eye contact. It had to be natural, but Kathleen had to engage the board members and make each feel as if she were speaking directly and solely to him or her. We worked out a pattern that enabled Kathleen to avoid the “typewriter-carriage-return” type of eye movement.

■ **Smile.** This was easy for Kathleen; she has a great smile. Others may have to work at it. But I can’t emphasize it enough. It is the last great seal of a favorable relationship between speaker and audience.

PRACTICE

■ **Memorization.** I suggested that Kathleen memorize her first sentence, her outline (the PowerPoint slides were a help here), and the last sentence. Her objective: to grab the audiences’ attention with the first sentence, and seal the sale with the last one.

■ **Visualization.** Kathleen practiced out loud in front of a mirror. You’ll find it amazing how unscary an audience can be once you deliver a talk staring at yourself!

FINALLY!

Know your objective, understand your audience and your venue, be sincere and practice like crazy! Convert these principles to action, and you’ll never have to be afraid of a board meeting again.

By the way, Kathleen’s presentation was quite successful. Her project is now underway – and is following each of the action steps she had outlined. **T**

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By Carmine Gallo

When You are the Spokesperson:

From Media B to

it." What's Chambers' secret? Simple. He sells a dream, not technology. It's a strategy company spokesperson should be familiar with – they should adopt it, embrace it, use it.

For example, Chambers never starts a talk by saying something like, "The new Cisco Catalyst 6500 serial 1550 10 Gigabit Ethernet Module is targeted for high-speed metro distances connections between POPs, Cos, Internet data centers as well as between campuses in Enterprises." Instead, he repeats his company's "mantra" as he sells his audience on the opportunity ahead. His standard pitch, which he uses in virtually every interview or speech, is simple and inspiring: "The Internet is changing the way the world lives, works, learns and plays." That's part of his elevator pitch. It rolls off his tongue effortlessly.

You might be surprised at how few corporate executives or spokespersons take the time to develop and memorize a short description or "attention-grabber" that they can use to kick off any talk – whether speaking to the media, a workshop, or large audience. The vast majority of my media-training clients don't have a standard pitch when I first start working with them. Get one! It's what makes the audience eager to listen to the rest of what you have to say. It should be brief, clear and passionate. A standard elevator pitch should answer the following questions: Who are you? What do you do? How does your product/company/service improve my life or the lives of my readers/listeners/viewers?

Grabbing the attention of your audience is just the start. Over the last decade, I have interviewed the most prominent CEOs, executives, economists, analysts, journalists, authors and experts in their fields. The best have mastered the following 10 traits:

■ **Brevity:** The fewer words, the better.

In the new book, *The Fall of Advertising and The Rise Of PR*, author Laura Ries makes the following point: "What's missing in most PR programs is a spokesperson. If you want to make your brand famous, you need to make your CEO famous too. The spokesperson is the face and voice of the brand. The ultimate success of any PR program depends, to a certain extent, on the effectiveness of the spokesperson."

How very true. A compelling spokesperson can make or break a company or product launch. A strong spokesperson can help a company stand apart from the crowd, regardless of the industry. And yet, how often do you find yourself on your feet after listening to someone pitch his or her company, product or service? Probably never.

One prominent American CEO, Cisco's John Chambers, is undeniably one of the most charismatic and inspirational executives currently speaking to audiences or the press. Despite his company's lay-offs and sinking stock price, Chambers continues to dazzle audiences. A *New York Times* reporter recently wrote, "After [listening to Chambers speak] in Atlanta, many people in attendance remain convinced that Cisco's best days are not behind

"Great spokespeople have the ability to sell the message as well as themselves."

omb Media Darling

■ **Passion:** Don't be bland. The best speakers communicate their passion for their product, company or industry in all their appearances.

■ **Clarity:** Lose the jargon.

■ **Energy:** You'd be surprised at how many speakers look and sound as though they'd just rolled out of bed. You will lose your audience in the first 30 seconds if you fail to exhibit enthusiasm, excitement and energy.

■ **Inspiration:** Always remember, you are selling a "dream," not a piece of hardware. The best speakers inspire and motivate, then end with a call to action.

■ **Cooperation:** In other words, do not be "difficult" with journalists or conference organizers. One author I interviewed for CNN made unreasonable demands and refused to go along with anything we needed to make the segment look good. Poor woman – she tried to get back on the show repeatedly. Needless to say, she never did. Another spokesperson, the CEO of a small company, was engaging and went along with everything we requested. He even sent cookies to the crew after his interview! Whenever we needed a spokesperson for his particular industry, whom do you think we turned to first? It is not a coincidence that you see the same familiar faces on CNBC and CNN – they are good spokespeople, they speak in short sound bites and yes, they are cooperative.

■ **Concise:** In 1961, John F. Kennedy galvanized a nation with his inaugural address, which was written as a 20-minute speech, without pauses for applause. Think about it. Do you really need 50 minutes or more to tell an audience why they need your product or service? If you are addressing the media, don't spend three minutes answering a question when 15 seconds will do. A prominent

analyst once told me, "Anything after the first 15 minutes is forgotten."

■ **Expression:** Do not be afraid to smile or show some emotion. It amazes me how often executives appear on television with a stern expression on their faces for the entire interview. Their reason? "Well, I want to come across as professional." Think of Ronald Reagan – endearing, confident, happy. A smile makes it easier to secure that emotional attachment with the audience. Believe it or not, "smiling" also comes across on the radio or over the telephone.

■ **Varied Tone:** A few weeks ago, I was working with the CEO of a computer company as he prepared to present a slideshow to potential investors. I could not tell when one slide ended and the next began, or when he finished a thought. His tone and pitch remained neutral during the entire presentation. Just as you break up thoughts, concepts and slides, vary your tone, pitch and volume. Think of a great preacher. After all, spokespeople "preach the gospel" of their companies.

■ **Flexibility:** Think nonlinear. This is tough for former engineers, programmers or accountants who climb the executive ladder and are suddenly company spokespeople. They think logically, methodically, in a certain order. But the press might want you to start in the middle. Be flexible. Answer the question first, then create a bridge to your central message. If someone in the audience interrupts your workshop with a question you had planned to answer later, just answer it. It might be an important component that you buried in your presentation. You can always refer to it later, or skip it altogether when you get to that point. That's flexibility. Can you end your presentation early if you sense the audience is restless? That's flexibility.

All of us are, in some capacity, our own "spokespeople." We act as spokespeople for ourselves or the products/services we offer – whether or not we speak to the media. Great spokespeople have the ability to sell the message as well as themselves. That trait is vital when addressing any type of audience, but especially the media. Adopting the above rules will transform even the dullest speakers from media bombs to media darlings! **T**

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You're sitting in your office at the local water district just about to begin poring over a mound of papers on a new triple-osmosis filtration system when the phone rings. You pick it up, and on the other end of the line is the friendly voice of a local reporter who wants your comments for a story she's working on for the next day's edition.

Of course, you could go the easy route and immediately transfer the call to your organization's high-paid director of public affairs. Or you can apply the confidence and principles you've learned in Toastmasters. Here's what to do:

Find out what the reporter's deadline is for the story and jot it down. Tell the reporter that you'll have to get clearance to speak to the press, but that it shouldn't be a problem. You will just need to know what questions she will ask you. (When she tells you, write them down.) Finally, tell the reporter you will get back to her within an hour and get a callback number.

Hang up the phone, take a deep breath and then spend a few minutes putting together a brilliant and highly quotable answer for each question. (Hint: Think Table Topics.) Keep each answer short – a few sentences – and to the point. Next, call your organization's PR person and say something like, "Reporter Jill Smith of the *Eagle Democrat News-Free Tribune* has called me on (insert issue here). Here's what I plan to tell her. (State your answers.) Is that OK?"

Nine times out of 10, the PR person, since you've done his work for him, will say yes. But whether you are automatically cleared to speak to the press or must seek clearance, there are a few basic things you should remember in all of your dealings with the media.

■ **Never answer a question with "No comment"** – This is right out of Public Relations 101. If answering a question would violate patient confidentiality or taint an

Talking to the Press

What to say and not say in an interview.

ongoing probe, simply say so. If you can't answer a question because that's your company's policy, say so. People like to be given reasons when they are denied something, and when they are given a reasonable one are more apt to be sympathetic. "No comment" elicits a visceral reaction in people. It implies you're hiding something. While you're at it, don't "plead the Fifth," either.

■ **Never give an exclusive** – You may gain in the short term, but in the long run this practice will come back to haunt you. Give all interested media the same information and equal access to you and other contacts at your company or agency. If you have an idea for a feature story, be fair and up front about the fact that you are giving all interested media equal chance at the story.

■ **Answer the questions and shut up** – Your Table Topics experience has already taught you much about formulating your thoughts on the fly. Take your time in answering. Restate the question to ensure you understand it, and then answer only the question that was asked. This is especially important when bad news is afoot or you sense the story will not be a positive one. For a human-interest story, on the other hand, you can afford to be a little chattier.

■ **Never fail to call a reporter back** – Ignoring the press will not make it go away. It often has just the opposite effect. Ignoring a reporter's call will likely result in the following blurb about you and your company right in the middle of the story: "(Your Name Here) of (your company's name here) failed to return numerous calls soliciting comment." This will look to the reader like you and your company don't care enough about the matter to even answer your phone – or worse, that you have something to hide.

■ **Always be truthful** – It is preferred to say nothing rather than embellish facts or supply half-truths. If you don't know the answer, simply say so. Then, if you can, provide

the information to the reporter as soon as possible. In the words of Mark Twain, "Tell the truth. It will astound your friends and confuse your enemies." Most readers are amazingly forgiving of negative news, provided they feel you are being honest and are sincerely trying to fix the situation. To quote that other great source of wisdom, your mom: "Tell the truth – it's easier to remember."

OK, you've delivered your riveting, truthful answers to every question the reporter can muster. Here are three tips for ending the interview:

■ **End on a cliché** – Forget what your high school English teacher told you about avoiding clichés. Pause dramatically, seem reflective and say something like, "You know, hindsight really is 20/20," or "Politics does make strange bedfellows." The reporter will love you. His or her editor will love you. The public will love you.

■ **Get the reporter's pager number** – If circumstances in the story change or you want to amend your comments, you can usually call them in to the reporter, or to the night editor, until about 11:30 p.m. (Most morning dailies go to press around midnight). Get as much callback information as you can, including the number to

the publication's main news desk. Some reporters will even give you their home number.

■ **Unsheathe your business card** – Cram a business card or two in the pocket of everyone within a 20-foot radius. This has one important purpose: It provides a printed document attesting to the true spelling of your name and title. It will help the reporter and photographer to spell your name correctly in the story and captions.

■ **One last point: Relax, you'll do fine.** Any nervousness you experience can be turned to your advantage. Harness it to add emotion and a sense of conviction to your voice. This is where your Toastmasters experience will give you a strong edge. Think of dealing with the press as just another project in the basic manual. Better yet, take it up a level and consider the Public Relations Advanced Manual, especially if you are in a position where you are often sought out by the press. **T**

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My Five Minutes of Fame

By John Deysher, ATM-G

Everyone knows that the speaking skills learned at Toastmasters can get you through some pretty tricky situations – job interviews, group presentations and social toasts to name a few. They may even get you through a live media interview when you least expect it.

Let me set stage. It was the Friday morning, November 29, 2001, when the world learned of George Harrison's death. Like many Beatles fans, I immediately flashed back to all those wonderful songs and how they had influenced my life at various moments. I'd always liked George, the quiet one. We all know he was the lead guitarist and wrote some of their biggest hits. But did you know that the Beatles' early practice sessions were held at George's house? His mom was the only one who'd tolerate their noisy racket!

The question was, how to pay my last respects to George? Living in New York City, I immediately thought of Strawberry Fields in Central Park. Getting there around 7:45 a.m., I noticed few people, nothing like the crowds to come. There were, however, lots of TV crews. Before long a reporter walked over, notepad in hand. "Do you come here often?" he asked. "No, I made a special trip to say goodbye to George," I replied. "Hold on a minute," he said and walked over to his TV crew. They asked if I'd do a live interview. Of course, I said OK.

He brought me over to the camera crew and introduced me to Virginia Cha of CNBC. After a few minutes of setting up, we were rolling – live! Virginia asked how I felt about George

Harrison and his music. How about his role as a Beatle? Did knowing about his health problems help me to better deal with his death? Probably six to eight questions in all, kind of a sequential Table Topics.

At first I was pretty nervous – I was talking with Virginia but there was a big camera about five feet away. By the second question, a funny thing happened – my Toastmasters training kicked in. Pretty soon I was smiling, thinking about vocal variety, gestures, enthusiasm – all that good stuff. After a few minutes, we were finished. Virginia and I thanked each other and I was off to work, wondering how I'd come across and whether I'd make the final cut that day.

I didn't have to wait long. A few hours later, a friend in Maine called. She was watching me on CNBC. She said I came across poised, articulate, believable – she said they ran almost the entire interview. That night my parents and other friends called; they couldn't believe I looked so relaxed and confident.

All those speeches and Table Topics at Toastmasters paid off. I survived the cut and enjoyed my five minutes of fame. So remember: The skills you learn at Toastmasters can help you in many ways – professionally, socially and even during the occasional television interview. **T**

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Here's to Your Toast

May all your toasts be received
in the spirit they're proposed.

In this season of holiday celebrations, there's one sure way to either distinguish or disgrace yourself. It's a social skill that can bind hearts and deals, make lovers swoon and parents cry, or sweep a social gathering to a crescendo – and all the guests to their feet. Then again, it can also leave you stuttering and sweating, as people glance at one another in embarrassment. Perhaps you might be interested then in a few tips on how to propose a good toast?

Today, toasts are as rare as place cards. If proposed at all, they often involve no more forethought than “Down the hatch!” or “Here's to Jack and Jill!” But it wasn't always that way; toasts have been given with great eloquence since classical times. Back then, they usually involved kissing up to the gods: The custom was to toast them first. In Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*, Odysseus drinks to the health of Achilles. The ritual involved looking up to the sky, then spilling some wine as an offering.

The term “toast” originates in ancient Rome, when the Senate ordered that the emperor Augustus be honored with a toast at every meal. The senators dropped a piece of burnt bread into their acidic *vin ordinaire* – the charcoal masked the wine's nasty flavors. (This was the Latin equivalent of over-oaking flawed wines.) This piece of bread was called “tostus,” meaning roasted or parched – and the name eventually came to mean the custom itself.



But back in those less-civilized days, camaraderie and treachery were often guests at the same dinner table. Poisoning was the preferred way to pay off outstanding debts and unpleasant people. When Greek hosts in the sixth century B.C. toasted each guest, they would drink first from a common bowl to show that the wine wasn't poisoned. If the host showed no signs of oxygen constriction, the guests then drank too.

Other drinking rituals were also aimed at detoxifying the custom. The point of intertwining hands, for instance, was for guests to drink from each other's glasses. Likewise, the point of clinking glasses was to spill a little of your wine into the other person's glass. The sound of the glasses clinking was also thought to ward off evil, since demonic creatures were repelled by bell-like noises.

Today, even though poisoning is no longer fashionable, touching glasses still reminds guests that although the wine is now separated, it originally came from one source – and so, is a symbol of unity. Some toasters still like to smash their glasses after the toast – the old fireplace toss. This gesture of reckless generosity is seen as a way of binding the toast. (But think twice before doing this with your Riedel stemware.)

However, not all toasts have their roots in social grace. The Swedish toast "Skål!" came from the 11th century practice of drinking mead or ale from the skulls of defeated enemies. (The tamer modern version is drinking from a woman's shoe.) And just throwing your head back to quaff a toast meant sticking your neck out: The Danes, for example, cut the throats of Brits while they drank. (That's why Shakespeare, in *Timon of Athens*, recommended that "Great men should drink with a harness on their throats.")

How many ancient Anglo-Saxons were needed to complete a toast? (This isn't a light-bulb joke.) Traditionally, three: one to pass the cup, one to drink from it and one to defend the drinker. In fact, proper toasting required holding the cup with a straight arm, to show that the toaster wasn't hiding a sword under a cloak. Toasts could be used to challenge the fortitude of adversaries: Often glasses had to be turned upside down after the toast, to prove that they were indeed empty. This wasn't a problem for the first round, or even the second – it was the 23rd that caused the trouble.

And though we're used to wishing friends good luck in our toasts, many toasts were dedicated to enemies back then – wishing them tight shoes and big blisters, pigs that

didn't grunt, spades that broke and horrid medical conditions that would baffle even the brightest physicians.

But gradually, toasting became a way of welcoming strangers and of learning their names – though in fiercely hierarchical societies, inferiors weren't allowed to actually use the names of their betters when toasting them: They had to be content with "To Monsieur's good health." (Even though everyone might share the same magisterial hangover the next morning, you were still only the second cousin of the duchess.)

The British began the custom of toasting not only friends present, but also those absent, especially women, who, of course, were banned from bawdy barrooms. These eulogies usually involved standing on a chair, with one foot on the table, and yelling some version of, "May the pleasures of the evening bear the reflection of the morning." If the woman's popularity was widespread, she became known as the "toast of the town." (Or in Madame Pompadour's case, "the toast of France.")

Such was the popularity of toasting in England, that not doing it was considered uncivil – tantamount to drinking on the sly. Many groups opened meetings with toasts, even when the gathering didn't involve a meal. In Scotland, toasting was even used to make covert political statements. When called upon to toast the king, outlawed Scottish Jacobites would honor their exiled monarch Bonnie Prince Charlie – who had fled across the English Channel to France in 1746 – by passing their glass over water. Thus, while outwardly toasting the usurper King George II, they were secretly drinking to their king "across the water."

Over time, toasting came to be seen as vulgar, an activity associated with the lower classes looking for an excuse to drink. Dignified people began to do it privately, and less often. Several European monarchs tried to ban the practice, including Charles the Great, Maximilian, Charles V – and even Louis XIV, who was known for his extravagance. Eliminating toasting was also one of the first objectives of the British Temperance movement in the 1500s.

The early 20th century produced especially witty toast-making, embodied by Dorothy Parker and her contemporaries of the Algonquin Round Table in New York: "I like to take a drink. One, two – three at the most. With four, I'm under the table. With five, I'm under the host."

But U.S. Prohibition in the 1920s and early '30s ushered in a Dark Age. Drinking was banned, and the art of

*Here's to
health in
homely rhyme
To our oldest
classmate,
Father Time!
May our last
survivor live to be
As bold and wise
and as thorough
as he!*

– OLIVER WENDELL
HOLMES

TOASTING TIPS

- The host should designate the toasters, and their order, before the event. Guests shouldn't propose toasts until the host, or the people designated, have finished.
- Toasting is usually done before or after the meal, or between dinner and dessert.
- To get everyone's attention, it's acceptable to clink a fork against a glass, especially since the next best alternative is the stadium whistle.
- Traditional toasting drinks are champagne, wine, mixed drinks, or even non-alcoholic punch. Coffee, tea and water are considered inappropriate.
- Before proposing a toast, ensure that all glasses are filled.
- If you're wearing a hat, it's polite to remove it.
- When proposing a toast, raise the glass in your right hand held straight out from the shoulder. Look at the person being toasted while you speak.
- Keep your toast short (no more than two or three lines), and focused on the person being toasted (it's not an audition, and now is not the time to even the score with your brother for not having picked you up after the junior high dance). It helps to prepare, especially if you may be nervous.
- It's acceptable to use traditional toasts or quotes, or shared memories, but not embarrassing ones.
- Opt for sincerity rather than levity – speaking from the heart usually goes over better than awkward attempts at humor. Avoid private jokes or references other guests won't understand.
- End by inviting the other guests to drink: "Please join me in a toast to Chip and Dale. Chip and Dale!"
- If you are being toasted, don't stand, raise your glass or drink the toast – just smile and look modest, then thank the toasters (a gracious smile or nod will do). You don't have to return the toast.

WEDDING TOAST ETIQUETTE

- The best man, friend or relative toasts the bride, or both bride and groom. Whatever drink is served, the bride should be served first, then the groom, maid of honor, parents and best man.
- Groom's response to thank the toaster, both sets of parents, his bride and a toast to the bridesmaids.
- Best man's response to thank the groom on behalf of the bridesmaids.
- Bride's response to the groom, if she chooses.
- Other friends may propose toasts.
- Father of the bride thanks everyone for coming, and indicates the dinner may start.



WEDDING TOASTS

Live every day as if it is your last, and every night as if it is your first.

*Here's to the bride that is to be,
Here's to the groom she'll wed,
May all their troubles be light as bubbles
Or the feathers that make up their bed!*

*May your joys be as deep as the ocean and your cares
as light as its foam.*

May all your troubles be little ones.

OTHER TOASTS

*With fifty years between you,
And your well-kept wedding vow,
The Golden Age, old friends of mine,
Is not a fable now.*

– John Greenleaf Whittier

*Another candle on your cake?
Well, that's no cause to pout,
Be glad that you have strength enough
To blow the damn thing out!*

*Here's champagne to our real friends and real pain to
our sham friends!*

*Here's to health in homely rhyme
To our oldest classmate, Father Time!
May our last survivor live to be
As bold and wise and as thorough as he!*

– Oliver Wendell Holmes

A toast to the graduate – in a class by herself!

*I drink to your health when I'm with you
I drink to your health when I am alone
I drink to your health so often
I'm beginning to worry about my own*

– Michael Levinrad, DTM

Here's looking at you, kid.

– Humphrey Bogart toasting Ingrid Bergman in
Casablanca

composing and delivering toasts suffered accordingly. But just as European monks in monasteries kept wine-making alive in the Middle Ages, in America toasting also continued in dimly lit places – saloons converted into speakeasies. Popular toasts at the time included: “Here’s to Prohibition – the devil take it! They’ve stolen our wine, so now we make it.” Of course, the repeal of Prohibition was toasted even more enthusiastically: “Temperance, I’ll drink to that!”

Formal state dinners have long been opportunities for toasts carrying political messages and one-up-manship. When Benjamin Franklin was the American emissary to France, the British ambassador led off with a toast to his king: “George the Third – who, like the sun in its meridian, spreads lustre throughout and enlightens the world.” Not to be outdone, the French minister said, “To the illustrious Louis the Sixteenth – who, like the moon, sheds his mild and benevolent rays on and influences the globe.” Finally, Franklin rose and responded: “To George Washington, commander of the American armies – who, like Joshua of old, commanded the sun and moon to stand still, and both obeyed.”

Some toasts are pure embarrassment. U.S. President Gerald Ford toasted Anwar Sadat in 1975: “To the great people and the government of Israel – Egypt, excuse me.” Ronald Reagan addressed the president of Brazil and the “people of Bolivia.” During dinner at the

Russian embassy, after Churchill and Roosevelt had both proposed toasts, Joseph Stalin made a quick remark in Russian. The English speakers were raising their glasses to drink to what they thought was a toast, when an interpreter stood up and translated, “Marshal Stalin says the men’s room is on the right.” Years later, former Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev did his diplomatic best to speak English by blurting out: “Up your bottoms!”

Today, we save our toasts mostly for formal dinners and weddings. The latter is just about the only ceremony that still has a traditional order for toasts – starting with the bride, and going on to other family members in turn. But of course we don’t need a special occasion to propose a toast. Some of the deepest-felt and best-remembered are those offered from the heart to good friends. My own favorite: “May friendship, like wine, improve as time advances. And may we always have old wine, old friends and young cares.” **T**

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Editor’s Note: What’s your favorite toast? Please send it to pubs@toastmasters.org.

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Results From Our

Online Poll

By Dr. Ken Tangen

In the October issue, we asked readers what topics they would like to see covered in *The Toastmaster*. The following summary is based on a randomly selected sample of those who responded to the online poll.

Although some are looking for articles on international news and future trends, most of the respondents were interested in learning how to write humorous speeches and improve club membership. They want the nuts and bolts of meetings and "how to become a better speaker and how to give a better evaluation."

Topics related to speech making and delivery were popular. Several suggested short articles ("I get so much information every day, I need to be able to read in small-time chunks") on "breathing and vocal exercises," on what has worked for other clubs, and "how to" and "resource articles." Motivation, time management and leadership were important topics. Some even suggested titles, such as "How to tactfully motivate slackers" and "Keeping your motivation high."

Some were in favor of personal accounts of Toastmasters (e.g. "How the Toastmasters experience is benefiting them" and "How it affects their jobs" or "I would like to read articles of the type which will contribute to the personality development, highly informative and inspirational." Others opposed the notion ("In general, I prefer the articles that deal with the fundamentals of public speaking and do not veer off into things like personal relationships. I think the latter type of article is not appropriate for *The Toastmaster*").

Just leaving things the way they are was also a popular option. "I have loved the selections you have had" and "Can't think of any at this time" comments were augmented with suggestions for minor changes, such as "lots of variety," "Maybe some ideas for activities," and "More articles for Toastmasters who do not have English as a mother tongue."

Our current poll is restricted to current members of Toastmasters. To take the poll, simply go to www.toastmasters.org **1**

**"What types
of articles would
you like to see in
The Toastmaster
magazine?"**

Dr. Ken Tangen has more than 20 years of experience as a research psychologist and management consultant specializing in surveys and the independent, third-party

evaluation of training programs. He is an expert in information processing, memory, and the integration of cognitive science, psychometric assessment and strategic planning. Visit www.kentangen.com for more information.

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Build every speech around an idea.

If It Isn't Special, Don't Say It.

QUICK: RECAP THE LAST SPEECH YOU HEARD. IF YOU CAN, IT was a good speech, whether or not you agreed with it. But I bet you can't.

Mea maxima culpa. I've written my share of drek. There's a vast pool of meaningless rhetoric in our daily lives, and speeches that aren't special – that is to say, meaningful and significant in some way – are by design intended to disappear into that pool, leaving scarce a ripple to show for the effort. They give public speaking an unsavory name.

And that's bad. Every wrong speech is background noise. Every good speech is a special event. Therefore, all good speeches are "specialty speeches," the theme for this issue of this magazine.

And that's good. Too little attention is paid to making speeches unique. More attention is paid to grafting "legs" to a speech – canned, off-the-shelf talks crammed with "boilerplate" language that overworked writers hope to dust off and use a few times.

Baloney. I've never seen it work. It's a corrupt concept. First, the implication is that this approach saves time and money. On the contrary, it's harder to rewrite a generic speech into something special than it is to start with a clean page. And in terms of outlay – say, the cost of paying the speechwriter – the effort and expense of writing an appropriate speech pales against the investment of a client's time. Consider that most executives' hourly rates – if you break down their salaries and bonuses that way – are astronomical. The investment of sending, say, a CEO across town, the country or the world, to deliver a weak speech makes no sense. May I suggest the speaker be armed with a customized talk?

Never send a cynical product to the podium: "Thank you, insert name; it's great to be in insert city here."

So let's talk about making every speech a special event.

1 Consider the above-mentioned "boilerplate." Generally this language, great chunks of approved rhetoric, is a detritus resulting from refining sensitive policy statements carefully over time. Blessed language from legal, perhaps – nothing wrong with that. But canned openings, generic assumptions about the audience and parroted party lines can be spotted a mile away. The audi-

ence becomes a body of victims, and they won't appreciate it. I've heard too many counterproductive speeches to believe the speaker truly saw the venue as an "opportunity." A duty, perhaps. This inauthenticity showed through, and damaged the speaker's cause.

2 Rule One of Speechwriting: Always consider your audience. Is the audience generic? Precisely the same as the last one? The answer is: Never. Rotary clubs in Mount Pilot and Mayberry may be 50 miles distant and worlds apart. Make it your due diligence to unearth the differences for that apparently routine United Way speech.

3 Arrest the minds of that unique audience. Make the speech local in the beginning, and make it universal in its body. The path to this is both pedestrian and celestial. Pedestrian in the sense the speaker demonstrates legwork in understanding what makes the audience unique. Celestial in the sense the speaker brings an idea to the speech – not simply facts, figures and opinions. Ideas are contagions – they burrow into a listener's imagination, begin to morph, and therefore become the recipient's own. Ideas are considered, remembered and shared. Sadly, most speech content never penetrates the imagination – it simply beads up on the mind and rolls off. Build every speech around an idea.

4 Be selective. Most speech invitations should be declined. If there's nothing to add – no unique idea, no purpose served – do the world a favor and decline to waste your energies, and those of the client and audience, by declining to add to the background noise we misname and exalt as "communication."

And finally, KISS: **Keep it short and simple.** No one ever complained a speech was too short and too easy to understand.

Follow these suggestions and you've got a speech that might actually be remembered. And you know what? That's one special speech, baby. **1**

Ken Askew is a former White House speechwriter whose current clients include Fortune 50 CEOs, executives from small businesses and a variety of other communicators.

By Julie Bawden Davis


This Toastmaster's anti-drug message comes alive through the creative use of props and ventriloquism.

The Rope Master's Points on Props

Thompson, a former Pan American Judo champion, entertains and educates kids and adults throughout the United States and world with amazing jumprope tricks and conversations with his puppet Soul Brother Ricky. Such props have enabled him to deliver his anti-drug message – No Hope in Dope – to children in a memorable and meaningful way. Like many Toastmasters, he has found that when used correctly, props can be a definite asset to a speech.

"My anti-drug message is so effective because of the props," says Thompson, who began performing in the late 1980s as a way to give back to the community and help children reach their true potential. "Without props kids wouldn't pay attention to my speech," he says. "My presentation is a mixture of talking and performing. The props help me get the message across. I usually get the kids' attention immediately by jumping rope with a favorite teacher or principal on my shoulders."

Thompson also plays the harmonica and does cowboy tricks, all while letting kids know that it's a waste of time to get involved with drugs. In a light-



When James Brewster Thompson enters the stage with his jumprope, the audience is a little surprised. After all, a jumprope isn't your average prop. Moments later, though, they're astounded when Thompson begins jumpropeing – with three people on his shoulders and back! Later they're surprised again when he treats the audience to ventriloquism.

hearted, fun-filled atmosphere, he shares his steps to success, which include goal setting, self awareness, overcoming challenges and building mental and physical strength.

Those who have invited Thompson to their schools comment on how well his message sticks with adolescents.

"The props are very visual and children listen," says Portia Harvey, a teacher at the Osborne School, located within Juvenile Hall in San Jose, California. "The fact that

he uses the props and his sheer physical strength gets the respect of kids, who remember what he has to say."

Thompson's main prop is his ventriloquist doll, Soul Brother Ricky, which always gets lots of laughs. Thompson bought him when he was in seventh grade.

"I was the class clown at the time, but I wanted to get attention without taking valuable time away from my teachers and fellow students," says Thompson, now 49. "I saw a little article in a comic book that said I could

STEAL THE SHOW WITH VENTRILOQUISM

By Julie Bawden Davis

Toastmaster James Brewster Thompson's favorite prop is Soul Brother Ricky, a ventriloquism figure he bought 36 years ago. Although audiences come to see Thompson, it's Ricky who gets their attention.

"Every culture and people of all ages are intrigued and mesmerized by ventriloquism," says Thompson. "As long as it's done well, ventriloquism is guaranteed to entertain, amaze and impress an audience."

Ventriloquism is so popular because it relies on illusion, says ventriloquist Nancy Roth of Brandon, Florida. "Ventriloquism is to the ear what magic is to the eye. Ventriloquism plays on the phenomenon that the human ear cannot discern the origin of sound, which is why you may think that a voice or sound is coming from a different location than it is."

As Roth sees it, an audience watching a ventriloquism act enters into a fantasy world where inanimate objects come alive.

"Ventriloquists invite their audiences to use their imaginations and play along, believing that the figures are real," says Roth. "Even though everyone knows that the doll isn't a real person, it's fun to suspend reality for a while and get caught up in the game."

Ventriloquism also allows you to tap an alter ego and get away with saying things you wouldn't be able to on your own, adds Thompson. "I have Soul Brother Ricky insult people, like hecklers, and he gets away with it. For example, during one speech, Ricky insulted a man who'd had too much to drink and was bothering the audience. The man got really mad at Ricky and wanted to beat him up, but he wasn't angry with me, especially when I sided with the heckler and asked Ricky to apologize."

Once nearly a lost art, ventriloquism has experienced a rebirth in recent years, with conventions springing up across the United States attracting hundreds of people.

Vaudeville performer Edgar Bergen and his sidekick puppet Charlie McCarthy made the entertainment form popular in the 1930s. Bergen, the father of actress Candice Bergen, was one of the top radio, television and film performers of that era.



Toastmaster James Brewster Thompson and his alter ego, Soul Brother Ricky.

Ventriloquism may look easy, but it's very difficult. "The brain has to think of many things simultaneously, which makes it so challenging," says Roth. "Not only are you using two different voices and not moving your mouth for part of the time, your face has to show personality and emotion for one person, while your mouth is saying completely different words and displaying different emotions. Your hand also has to work the figure. It's very hard to do all of this well."

Roth encourages Toastmasters interested in try-

ing ventriloquism to do it right, however.

"Be hard on yourself," says Roth, who produced and sells the video, *Vent 101*, which teaches ventriloquism basics. "Get the lip control perfect, because there's nothing worse than a sloppy ventriloquist. Anyone can learn ventriloquism; it's a matter of practice."

- To purchase *Vent 101* (\$22) – e-mail Nancy Roth at ventnr@aol.com.
- For information regarding upcoming ventriloquism conventions, see www.inquista.com and www.venthaven.com.

throw my voice and amaze my friends with this little square metal thing that went under the tongue. The device didn't work, but I still wanted to be a ventriloquist, so I checked out some books from the library and started practicing in front of the mirror every day for an hour. Then I took all of the money I had saved from my paper route – \$150 – and bought Soul Brother Ricky. Within six months, I was doing birthday parties."

In high school, Thompson also began jumping rope as a part of basketball training. Although he resisted at first, he soon found that he loved to jump rope and continued throughout high school and college.

"While everyone was lifting weights, I was jumping rope two to three hours a day," says Thompson. "In college, when I started to get a little bored with jumping, I developed tricks, which I use in my performances."

Jumping rope also helped him train to be an alternate for the 1984 U.S. Olympic judo team and compete in judo world championships in 1975 in Austria and 1979 in France. After graduating from college with a degree in psychology from San Jose State University, he got a job at the San Jose Juvenile Hall in the probation department as a juvenile counselor, where he works still today.

The key to Thompson's presentations is the props, which he feels performers don't always use to their utmost.

"People don't realize how effective props can be in helping to get a message across," he says. "In light of how useful they are, I don't think there should be a limit on how many you use. You should incorporate as many props as it takes to enhance your message and add impact."

Props definitely augment Thompson's presentation, agrees Mary McClelland, immediate past president of Thompson's San Jose Toastmasters club. "James has mastered props and uses them in such a way that there is a natural flow and polished quality to his presentations," she says. "He selects props that effectively support whatever point he is trying to make. The kids are always thrilled and ecstatic. It's a very emotion-packed presentation."

For several years, McClelland encouraged Thompson to join Toastmasters, which he did three years ago.

"My only regret is that I didn't join sooner," says Thompson. "The club has gone out of the way to help me. I've learned to use props even more effectively, and my diction, enunciation and vocabulary have vastly improved."

No doubt the former class clown will continue to improve and develop more amazing and hilarious antics to get his message across. **T**

Julie Bawden Davis is a freelance author living in Orange, California.

There are several tricks to getting

props to enhance, rather than detract from a message. Prop master James Brewster Thompson, ATM-B, suggests keeping the following tips in mind.

MAKE PROPS WORK FOR YOU

- **Write the speech first.** You can ensure that the props are effective if you know exactly what the message is. Selecting the right props is easier once the speech is written.
- **Choose appropriate props.** The wrong props can detract from your message and even confuse the audience. Make certain that the props fit the message and don't overpower it.

"I've used a bull whip during presentations, but I find that it tends to overpower my speech," says Thompson. "All the audience thinks about is me popping the bull whip. You want the props to emphasize a point you're trying to make, not upstage it."
- **Don't limit yourself.** Thompson believes there should be no set formula for how many props you use in a presentation. "Use as many props as you see fit," he says. "I use over 15 props, including my ventriloquist figure, a 15-pound jump rope, an 18-foot cowboy rope, a blues harmonica, a pack of cigarettes (in talks against smoking and negative influences in general), and a medal I won at the World Masters Judo Championship in 2001."
- **Keep props visible.** Rather than hiding props in the corner of the stage so that the audience is distracted and wondering what they are, keep props out in the open so that everyone can concentrate on your presentation.
- **Be prepared.** Back-up props are critical in case of loss or damage. When traveling by plane, carry on your most essential props and check those you can do without. Bring doubles of important props in case one breaks.
- **Be flexible.** Things go wrong and situations won't always be as you planned. It's important to be adaptable and professional when it comes to props.

"One time in Japan I had to jump rope in mud puddles," says Thompson. "On another occasion the ceiling wasn't tall enough for the jump rope. Flexibility is key."
- **Avoid overdoing props.** While it's okay to bring plenty of props, using them all for each presentation isn't necessary. Be aware when you've used enough props, which will vary from audience to audience and show to show. **T**

James Brewster Thompson can be reached via e-mail at theropemaster@hotmail.com.



Speaking Outside the Club

Do you remember how you felt during your first Toastmasters meeting? If you're like most of us, you were nervous beyond words. You somehow drummed up the courage to attend, in hopes of overcoming your fear of public speaking. But sitting in that room with seasoned Toastmasters, watching one member after the other speak confidently and eloquently, only made you feel more insecure.

I remember my first Toastmasters meeting. I so wanted to learn to stand before an audience and express myself with the same poise of the members who spoke that evening. It seemed hopeless. How would I ever get over my nagging fear?

I don't know what made me hang in there – the strong will to improve, perhaps, or the gentle nudging by proficient Toastmasters who convinced me that they once felt

**How do good speakers improve?
By challenging their comfort zones.**

the same sense of fright. But I agreed to give my Ice Breaker, and I survived the experience.

Yes, my knees were shaking, along with my voice. I stammered and stumbled through that introductory speech, but I did get through it. And I went on to give all my CTM speeches – one by one. Little by little, I improved and gained more confidence until I was pretty comfortable speaking before my Toastmasters peers. In fact, you probably could say I'd slipped into a state of complacency.

Are you complacent – comfortable and satisfied with what you've accomplished and not exactly motivated to challenge yourself any further? By now, you pretty much know what sort of responses to expect from each Toastmaster in your club when you speak. Joe, for example, will remind you to use gestures. Glenda might comment on your use of words. Brian's remarks always help you remember to maintain eye contact with the audience.

These are good reminders, and this is good training. But when you become too complacent – when you know what to expect – you may cease to grow. How do compe-

tent or even better-than-competent speakers improve? By going outside their comfort zones. If you've become comfortable speaking in front of your Toastmasters peers, it may be time to seek outside speaking opportunities.

Challenge yourself to present before a group of strangers in unfamiliar surroundings and allow yourself to experience a little fear and anxiety again. Appearing before different audiences, in different locations and in situations with different dynamics will provide a stimulus to help you become a better speaker. Here's how giving outside speeches can benefit you:

1 You can hasten your climb up the Toastmasters ladder. Did you know that you can count outside speeches toward Toastmasters awards? All you need is a Toastmaster's evaluation. Carefully choose a topic or speech type that fits a manual assignment and ask a fellow Toastmaster to evaluate your presentation. I invited a Toastmaster to an Optimist Club meeting to evaluate my No. 6 speech, and another Toastmaster graciously came out to a museum presentation and evaluated my 10th speech. Just make sure you have prepared a speech that will inspire or persuade your audience – for example, one that allows you to work with words or that otherwise fulfills manual requirements.

2 You'll learn flexibility. After being a Toastmaster for a while, you can count on certain things at your club. You meet at the same place and speak before the same people. But outside your club environment, you don't always know what to expect. Will there be a lectern, a microphone or a place to plug in a projector? How will the room be organized? Will the arrangement be formal, where you will speak from a stage, or more casual, where you'll perhaps sit in a circle of chairs with your audience?

3 You'll be required to do more research. At your own Toastmasters club, you know whether you'll be speaking over the clatter of dishes, how to activate the mike, where you'll be in relation to the audience – and you'll know your audience. Before you give an outside speech, visit the meeting place, if possible, or at least ask pertinent questions about the setup, availability of equipment and what sort of people make up the audience. How does your planned topic relate to their backgrounds, interests and needs?

4 You'll discover your strong and weak points. Your Toastmasters experience may have boosted your confidence as a speaker. However, venturing outside the comfort zone of your own club may challenge you in this area again. When I talked about an aspect of writing at a Toastmasters club meeting, I did so with ease. But when I addressed other writers, I feared that someone in the audience might know more about my topic than I did. I had to figure out a way to overcome this unreasonable fear. So I changed my attitude from one of intimidation to one of benevolence. Now, should someone from the audience challenge something I say or offer the benefit of his or her knowledge, I welcome the contribution so that we all may learn.

A friend of mine struggles with introductions when she gives outside speeches. She says, "It's awkward, because people without Toastmasters training don't greet you at the podium, nor do they always allow you to return control of the meeting." At first, she tried to manipulate the situation by trying to get the emcee to shake hands with her when she approached the podium. Now, she simply enters and exits as gracefully as the particular situation allows. "I'm actually getting fairly creative," she says.

5 You'll become more cognizant of the time element. The Toastmasters program aids us in staying within a time frame while we're speaking. By going outside the club structure, you must devise your own method of honoring time limits – a good skill to learn.

6 You'll get practice speaking off the cuff. Speaking outside the club will afford you even more opportunities to improve in this area – during question-and-answer sessions after your presentations, for example.

I give historical tours a couple of times a year, and the spontaneity of this kind of speaking-on-the-move has been instrumental in improving my ability to give impromptu talks.

7 You can learn to connect with your audiences. Face it, if you're at all aware, you've established a rapport with your Toastmasters audiences. However, drawing in a crowd of strangers and making them care about your topic probably will require more skill and effort. Outside speeches will help you learn and practice new techniques. By speaking before a variety of audiences,

"If you've become comfortable speaking in front of your Toastmasters peers, it may be time to seek outside speaking opportunities."

you'll have an even greater opportunity to learn about people and how to relate to them.

One woman I know has a rich supply of speech material, but no sense of how to present it. She rarely looks at her audience. Instead, she focuses on a spot on the floor. She never involves the audience. Thus, she has no idea whether they're interested or even receiving what she presents. Once, as she droned on, I saw two people in the small audience fall asleep. If she were to join Toastmasters, she would soon learn to tune into the audience. And giving outside speeches would provide her with additional practice to enable her to present inspiring and informative talks.

8 You'll learn how to promote yourself. If you pursue outside speaking engagements, you must locate clubs and organizations that are seeking speakers, and you'll be required to sell yourself. What do you have to offer as a speaker? Maybe you have a political or spiritual message of interest to a general audience or a particular skill or expertise. Can you talk about disaster preparedness or home office organization, for example? Speakers who

teach aspects of self-improvement are in demand. Perhaps you'd like to share what you know about networking, negotiating or fatherhood. Do you have something to sell? I give speeches to promote my books on local history. And I know someone who speaks about aspects of the publishing business in order to build membership in a writers' networking organization she founded.

Even without a particular cause or expertise, you can get extra practice by taking some of your Toastmasters manual speeches on the road. Polish your best humorous talk. Share stories of your travels with groups of seniors. Volunteer to speak on behalf of your favorite charities.

Stretch and grow by giving outside speeches and you'll not only improve from a personal and business standpoint, you'll equip yourself to participate in district and maybe even national Toastmasters competitions. **T**

Patricia L. Fry, CTM, is a freelance writer and frequent contributor to this magazine. She lives in Ojai, California.

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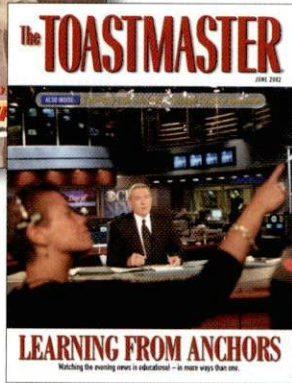
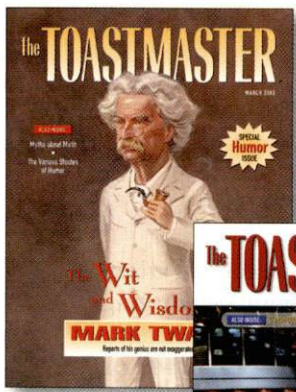
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TI Board Report: Taking Control of Destiny	May/20
TI Financial Report: January – December 2001	May/22
Your 2002-2003 Officer Candidates	June/28
TI Board Report: Destiny Under Control	Nov/24

CLUB MEETINGS

Table Topics: Set to Trap, or Set to Succeed <i>Bryan Shaw, CTM</i>	Jan/5
“Best Speaker” Reconsidered <i>Ann Bloch, ATM-S</i>	Jan/6
Earn Your CTM in 2002 <i>Patricia L. Fry, CTM</i>	Jan/8
When You are the VPE: Overcoming the Challenge of Schedules <i>Linda Adams, CTM</i>	Jan/14
Don't Let a Bad Evaluation Ruin Your Day <i>Angelique H. Caffrey</i>	May/24
A President's Main Job: Show Up! <i>Martha Darling, ATM-B</i>	Aug/5
No Non-Manual Speeches <i>Robert F. Neargarder, DTM</i>	Oct/6
The Ease of Evaluations <i>Sophie Waghorn, CTM</i>	Nov/6
The Collaborative Evaluation <i>Shelia Spencer, DTM</i>	Nov/8
Dealing with a Bad Evaluation <i>Linda Adams, CTM</i>	Nov/12
Build Your Skill <i>Dena Harris, CTM</i>	Nov/14

COMMUNICATION

The Two Inviolable Laws of Public Speaking <i>Paul Evans</i>	Feb/28
The Key to Listening <i>John Igwebuike, CTM, Ph.D.</i>	Apr/6
He Said, She Said <i>John Cadley</i>	Apr/8
Are You a Copyright Criminal? <i>Dave Zielinski</i>	May/8

C'Mon Baby Light Their Fires <i>Paula Syptak Price, ATM</i>	Jun/8
Contain Wild Fires <i>Paula Syptak Price, ATM</i>	Jun/11
Hire Aspirations <i>Charles R. McConnell</i>	July/12
Audience Etiquette <i>Patricia L. Fry, CTM</i>	Nov/18

FAMOUS SPEAKERS

The Wit and Wisdom of Mark Twain <i>Richard Lederer, Ph.D.</i>	Mar/8
Harry Truman: The Plain-Spoken President <i>Christie Scotty</i>	Apr/16
Toastmasters 2002 Golden Gavel Recipient: Dr. Richard Lederer <i>William Hennefrund</i>	May/27
Learning From Anchors <i>William Hennefrund</i>	Jun/16
Elizabeth I, Queen of Speechcraft <i>Caren S. Neile</i>	Jun/24
Fighting Words <i>Eugene Finerman</i>	Jul/16
Napoleon Bonaparte: Legendary Leader <i>Victor Kamenir</i>	Jul/18
The Ropemaster's Points on Props <i>Julie Bawden Davis</i>	Dec/24

A Profession of Martyrs <i>Eugene Finerman</i>	Apr/20
Why People Read the Newspaper <i>John Cadley</i>	Sep/20

LANGUAGE/SPEECH WRITING

Tried and True Topics For an Original Speech <i>Lama Anderson, ATM-S</i>	Mar/22
Pun Your Way to Success <i>Richard Lederer, Ph.D.</i>	May/28
Amaze an Audience <i>Jack McClendon, ATM-G</i>	Jun/23
Confessions of a Wounded Speechwriter, Part I <i>Ken Askew</i>	Jul/8
Ken Askew on Speechwriting <i>Patrick Mott</i>	July/13
Writing a Winning Proposal <i>Chris Bachler</i>	Jul/22
Add Wealth to Your Vocabulary <i>Richard Lederer, Ph.D.</i>	Jul/24
Understanding Teen-Speak <i>Kimberly Porrazzo</i>	Aug/20
Confessions of a Wounded Speechwriter, Part II <i>Ken Askew</i>	Aug/22

Article Index

2002

HUMOR

Want to be Funny? <i>Fran Capo</i>	Jan/27
The Origin of Specious <i>Eugene Finerman</i>	Jan/28
Why Are We Laughing? <i>Ellie Marek, ATM</i>	Mar/5
Stand Up and Make 'Em Laugh <i>Nowell King, CTM</i>	Mar/6
The Light Tough <i>Malcolm Kushner</i>	Mar/12
Speakers Say the Darndest Things! <i>Craig Harrison, DTM</i>	Mar/14
Myths About Mirth <i>Joel Goodman, Ph.D.</i>	Mar/16
From Stand-up to Standout <i>George R. Gilbert and Dori F. Gilbert</i>	Mar/20
The Various Shades of Humor <i>Arthur Kirkby</i>	Mar/24

The Miracle of Language <i>Richard Lederer, Ph.D.</i>	Oct/14
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LEADERSHIP

Mesmerizing Leadership <i>Howard Morgan</i>	Feb/8
Speakers are Leaders <i>Craig Harrison, DTM</i>	Feb/12
8 Ideas to Manage Controversy in Meetings <i>Eli Mina</i>	Feb/29
The Helping Hand <i>Patricia L. Fry, CTM</i>	May/16
Team Building <i>Deborah Flores</i>	Jun/12
Area Governor: The Best Job in Toastmasters <i>Robert Spencer, ATM-G, CL</i>	Aug/6
The Art of Motivation <i>Dave Zielinski</i>	Aug/8

Move 'Em to Action <i>Michelle Kulp, CTM</i>	Aug/14
Becoming a Leader One Step at a Time <i>Ron Zemke, ATM, and Susan Zemke</i>	Sep/8
If You Chase Two Rabbits, One Will Escape <i>Ken Askew</i>	Sep/15
Defusing a Hostile Audience <i>Sandra De Lozier, CTM</i>	Sep/24
The Penguin Test <i>Ken Askew</i>	Nov/17
If It Isn't Special, Don't Say It <i>Ken Askew</i>	Dec/23

MEMBERSHIP BUILDING

Want to Have Better Meetings? <i>Nelson Quintero, ATM-G</i>	Jan/19
I'm Glad I Mentioned It! <i>Camille Crandall, ATM-B</i>	Mar/27
What to do With Your Faithful Few? <i>Jonathan Sprinkles, ATM-G</i>	Jun/22
Are There Only 10 Goals? <i>Lori Spangler, DTM</i>	Jul/6
What's Your Hit Rate? <i>Arthur Cridland, DTM</i>	Jul/7

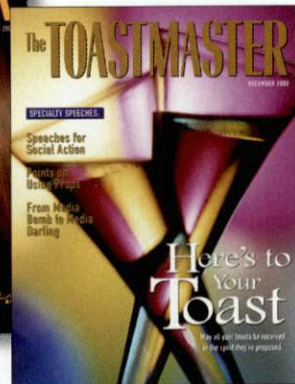
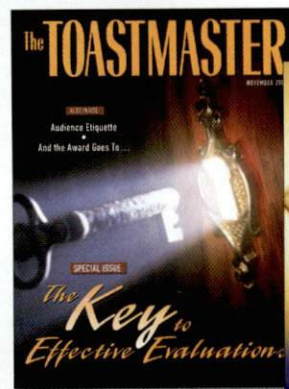
PERSONAL GROWTH

Conquering Procrastination Creatively <i>Jeff Davidson</i>	Jan/11
Turning Milestones into Stepping Stones <i>Craig Harrison, DTM</i>	Jan/12
Restoring Balance to Your Life <i>Deborah W. Flores</i>	Jan/16
Giving Voice to Your Heart <i>Dennis Kessinger</i>	Jan/22
Forgiveness Sets You Free <i>Victor Parachin</i>	Jan/24
Embracing Imperfection <i>Jo Ann Kirby, CTM</i>	Feb/5
Are you a Toastmaster? <i>Jim Carmickle, ATM</i>	Feb/14
I Was Wrong! <i>Kai Rambow, DTM</i>	Apr/12
Expressions of Excellence <i>Craig Harrison, DTM</i>	May/6
Two Heads are Better Than One <i>Jeff Davidson</i>	May/19
From Pain to Purpose <i>Linda Lewis, ATM-B</i>	Jun/5

Valuing Diversity <i>John Kinde, DTM</i>	Jun/6
Why Settle for the Balcony? <i>Marilyn Sherman</i>	Jun/20
The Power of Thoughts <i>Patricia L. Fry, CTM</i>	Aug/16
A Vacation to Remember <i>Susan Kingsbury, ATM-S</i>	Sep/5
A Toastmaster at Ground Zero <i>Daniel Daly, CL</i>	Sep/6
Brush with Disaster Opened My Eyes <i>Janice E. Bushé, CTM</i>	Oct/5
Words That Work Wonders <i>Victor Parachin</i>	Oct/18
Finding Confidence <i>Craig Harrison, DTM</i>	Nov/5
And the Award Goes to... <i>Mike Grady, ATM-S</i>	Nov/20
The Gift of Dad's Eulogy <i>Michael S. Turner</i>	Dec/5
Opening a World <i>Elise Dee Beraru, DTM</i>	Dec/6
Speaking Outside the Club <i>Patricia L. Fry, CTM</i>	Dec/27

PRESENTATION SKILLS

Road Work <i>Wes Andruess, CTM</i>	Feb/6
The Audience Is It! <i>Caren Neile, ATM-S</i>	Feb/24
Take It Outside <i>Kathleen A. Dunn, CTM</i>	May/5
Don't Forget Your Intro! <i>Michael Hart, CTM</i>	Jun/15
Fast-Forward Your Way to Better Presentations <i>Christian D. Hogg, CTM</i>	Jul/5
Discover Your Speaking Image <i>Melissa Newton</i>	Jul/20
Yes, You Can Master the Ceremonies <i>Max D. Isaacson</i>	Jul/28
Only Connect! <i>Christopher Witt</i>	Sep/12
Navigating the Pitfalls of the Q & A Session <i>William H. Stevenson III</i>	Sep/22
Once Upon a Story <i>Julie Bawden Davis</i>	Oct/20
Storytelling for Kids <i>Julie Bawden Davis</i>	Oct/23
Once Upon a Job <i>Craig Harrison, DTM</i>	Oct/24
Speaking for Peace: Speeches for Social Action <i>Caren S. Neile, ATM-S</i>	Dec/8
The Board Calls - Time to Panic - or Prepare? <i>Barney King, ATM-G</i>	Dec/12
From Media Bomb to Media Darling <i>Carmine Gallo</i>	Dec/14
Talking to the Press <i>Jeremy Bagott, ATM</i>	Dec/16
Five Minutes of Fame <i>John Deysher, ATM-G</i>	Dec/17
Here's to Your Toast <i>Natalie MacLean</i>	Dec/18



TECH TOPICS

Panning for Gold on the Internet <i>William Hennefrund</i>	Jan/20
Using Multimedia Without Losing Yourself <i>Ruby Newell-Legner</i>	Feb/16
10 Hot Tips on Presenting with Computer Projection <i>George Torok, CTM</i>	Feb/19
Bringing Technical Presentations to Life <i>Rob Sherman</i>	Feb/20
Leaving Voice Mail Message that Get Returned <i>Karl Walinskas, ATM</i>	Feb/22
E-Wars: Nobody Wins <i>Susan Niven, DTM</i>	Apr/5
Emulate the Greats <i>George Nigro, ATM-S</i>	Apr/15
The Do's and Don'ts of Using Visual Aids <i>Arthur F. Grand</i>	Sep/27

TOPICAL TIPS

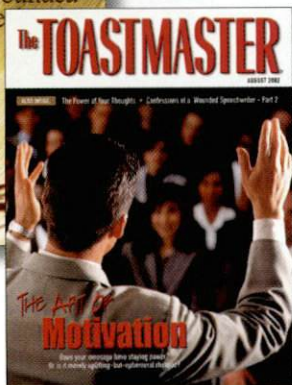
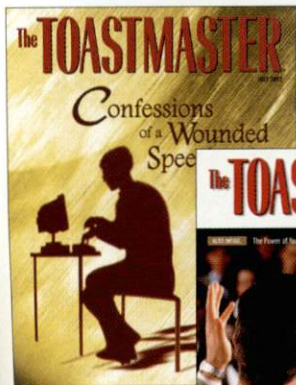
By Mark Majcher, ATM	
We Stand Together	Jan/30
Send It!	Feb/30
Clear the Clutter	May/15
Get Rustproofed	Jul/30
Be Seasonal	Sep/29
Pulling It Together	Oct/26
I'm Innocent, I Didn't Do Anything	Nov/26

TI INFO

San Antonio - A Revolutionary Experience	Apr/22
Toastmasters 2002-2003 District Governors	Aug/26
How to Contact Your District Governor	Aug/30
Meet Gavin Blakey, DTM: Toastmasters 2002-2003 International President	Sep/16
A Revolutionary Experience!	Oct/8
International Hall of Fame	Oct/29
International Speech Contest Rules	Nov/28

SPECIAL ISSUES

Humor	March
Leadership	September
Evaluations	November
Specialty Speeches	December

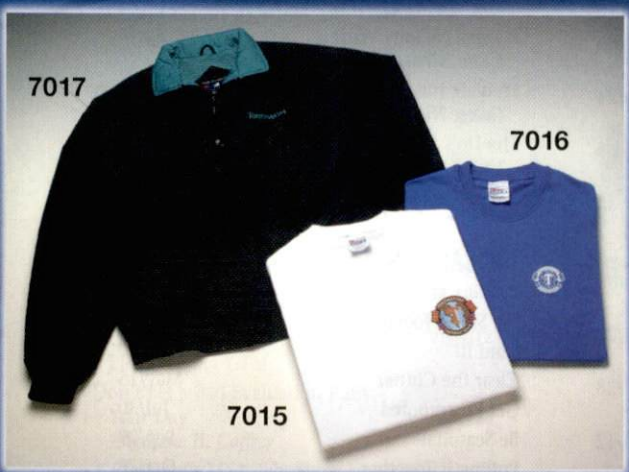


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