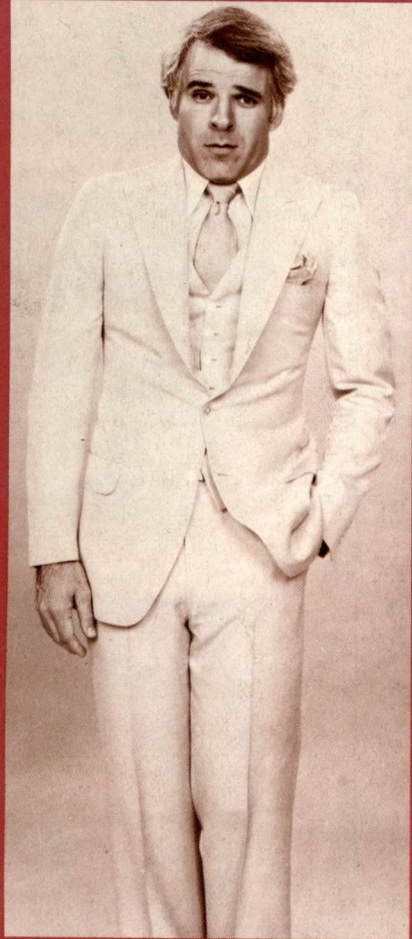
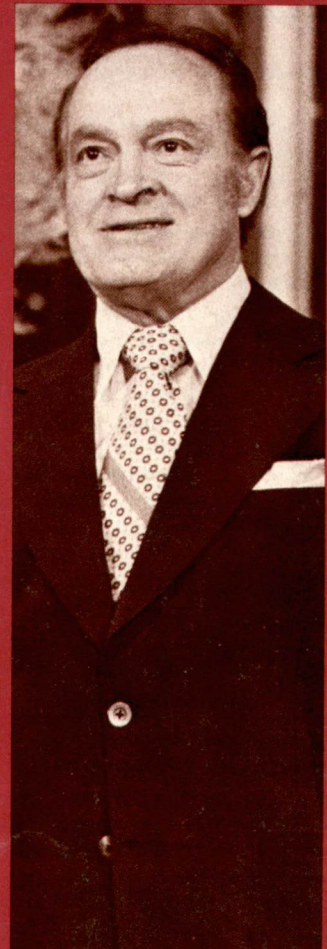


The Toastmaster

MARCH 1983



Special Issue:
**GOING AFTER
LAUGHTER**





Let's Make Learning Fun

"We learn best in moments of enjoyment."

Our organization's founder, Dr. Ralph Smedley, knew what he was talking about when he first said those words decades ago. People DO learn best when they are enjoying themselves — when they are in the company of friends, sharing laughter as well as ideas.

Laughter is important. People today are under a lot of stress. They are busier than ever with their families and careers, and they're faced with new challenges every day. They need to laugh. Laughter releases tension and enables people to put their problems in a different perspective. It lets them share with their companions, to become close in a world that is becoming increasingly impersonal. A sense of humor is a valuable asset. Humor soothes pain and persuades people. I don't know of one successful person who does not have a sense of humor.

Effective speakers recognize the importance of humor, and they have learned to use humor in their speeches. They know that humor is an ideal way to illustrate a point and to make the audience remember what they said. A good joke or anecdote attracts attention and keeps the audience tuned in to the speech. It helps speakers make their message easy

to comprehend. It lightens and brightens serious subjects and creates audience empathy.

I've noticed that many Toastmasters don't use humor in their speeches. Several have told me they are uncomfortable with it. They don't know where to find humorous material, and they don't know how to fit it into their speeches. They're afraid they'll look foolish if their efforts fail. Instead of trying to overcome these obstacles, they choose to stay away from humor.

It IS possible to learn how to add humor to a speech. I know, because I learned myself. It took a while, and I admit I did feel foolish when I would make a joke and nobody laughed or even smiled. But I finally did it. The reward was worth the effort, too! Just hearing those people laugh and knowing I brightened their day made me feel great.

A Toastmasters club is an ideal place to practice putting humor in your speeches. Nowhere will you find a more friendly or supportive audience. They'll coach you until you can create a speech that has the right kind and amount of humor to make your message effective and enjoyable. And they'll laugh with you — not at you — when you make mistakes.

The next time you're preparing a speech for your Toastmasters club, inject a little humor into it. You'll find humorous material in newspapers, magazines and books. Toastmasters' Supply Catalog offers an array of books that tell how to put humor into your speeches. It even has a humor cassette album that contains humor tips from top speakers. You'll find a list of these items on page eight in this magazine.

If you're still nervous about using humor in front of your club, try out your jokes and anecdotes on your family and other friends first. Just think how good you will feel when you finally do hear your audience laugh. You'll realize Dr. Smedley was right — learning CAN be enjoyable, and you can make it so!

William O. Miller

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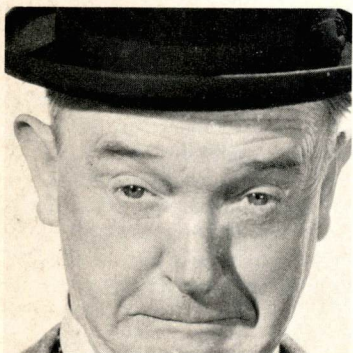
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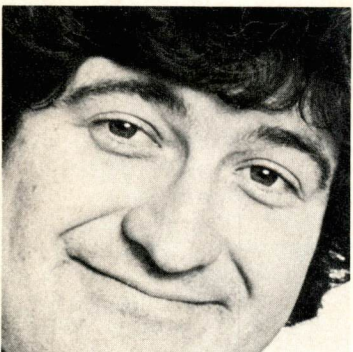
Good speakers know that if they want their audience to listen to them, they must keep them amused. The right amount of humor can turn a dull speech into a lively, entertaining one. Putting humor into a talk is tough, but this issue of **The Toastmaster** can help you acquire the confidence and skill you need to use humor with ease. You'll find articles on the different types of humor, developing your own humorous material, and finding your own style of wit. You'll learn the secrets of a top comedy writer and speaker who uses levity to reinforce his message on a serious subject. You'll also learn what to do when your attempts at humor only create stone-faced stares. In all, this issue will help you wield one of the most powerful communication tools of all — one that is sure to win your audience.



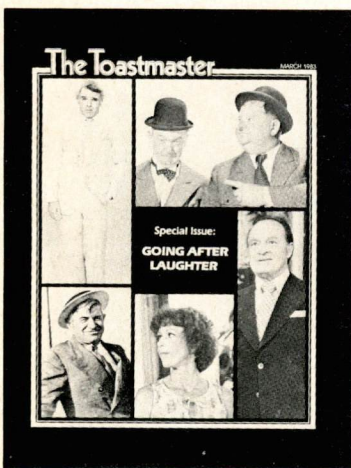
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Should a Toastmaster Repeat a Speech?

I wish to respond to the answer a World Headquarters' staff member gave to a question on redoing a manual speech in the November 1982 "Speakers Forum."

I appreciate the answer and the rationale given about not recommending that a Toastmaster redo a manual speech, but I question whether the entire situation was considered. I have spent 20 years in Toastmasters and have witnessed the request to have a Toastmaster redo a manual speech three times. In each case the Toastmaster thanked the member of the club for making that request.

The policy of each club concerning asking a member to redo a manual speech required that the Educational Committee take the request under advisement and render a decision. If such a decision was positive, the Toastmaster was approached and given a full explanation for the request. In every case the Toastmasters manual was the focal point of the discussion.

The training manuals have evolved over several decades. Their main purpose is to guide the Toastmaster toward developing the skills and self-confidence to be a well-rounded "public speaker." If a Toastmaster fails to properly complete the specified development challenge, sound evaluation techniques necessitate that the person have the failure explained and receive recommendations on improvement. To insure that the Toastmaster has understood this supportive growth process, a request to redo the speech can be made. That is not a decision made by one person, nor is it made lightly.

The Toastmaster's coach is encouraged to assist the Toastmaster in the topic selection and the development of the speech so that the speech challenge objectives are properly met. The Toastmaster is encouraged to select a new topic, instead of just "massaging" the old topic to fit the challenge.

Toastmasters who have been

helped and supported in this manner made it a point to thank all for their total support. They have expressed their appreciation that caring Toastmasters were looking out to help them grow to their potential. The results of all subsequent speeches were immeasurably better, and their ability to present better supportive evaluations to others was very noticeable. I don't know of any case where the recipients of this support did not end up feeling good about themselves.

*George E. Deliduka, DTM
Elk River, Minnesota*

Editor's Note: An evaluator's function is to recommend specific ways a speaker can improve. If he or she believes that repeating a manual assignment is the most effective way a speaker can achieve this improvement, it is appropriate for the evaluator to make such a recommendation. Please keep in mind, however, that the question of speech repetition is left for each club to decide as it sees fit.

Practicing the Principles

Perhaps the smiles on the faces of Toastmasters International's board members (TI Board Report, November issue) might be tempered by the evidence that Toastmasters is growing in bureaucracy at the expense of membership benefits.

Your evidence is right there before your eyes — membership growth of 5.3 percent, club growth of 9.6 percent (398 new clubs, giving a new total of 4532 clubs). In other words, membership per club is *falling*. Ninety-five thousand members spread over 4532 clubs gives an average membership of only 21 members per club — only one more than is required to charter!

Clearly the Toastmasters principle of learning by doing before an audience of sympathetic fellow members who are able to provide guidance and support must be eroded by lack of numbers in many, many clubs. Since the number of new clubs is rising much faster than the number of members, it follows that experienced members are being lost. Hence, the very guidance and support that will encourage new members is being

dissipated.

The growth in numbers of DTMs, Youth Leadership Programs and the like indicate that the principle of personal motivation by individual recognition is succeeding for some. However, such personal recognition may well be running at the expense of the member with a lesser personal ego who merely wishes to practice the principles of "better listening, better thinking, better speaking."

If so, the decline at "grass roots" may be a hidden indicator of a decline in the great mutual-support educational activity so wisely established by Ralph Smedley nearly 60 years ago.

*Don Harden
Auckland, New Zealand*

A Welcome Addition

It has gratified me enormously to note the progress of Carlton Toastmasters Club 4767-74.

Particularly in our business where oral communication skills constitute so important a part of job competence, has the influence of Toastmasters been noteworthy. It has proven to be a welcome addition to our range of developmental programs — and one that has been embraced with enthusiasm by our supervisory and general staff.

Our support for active participation in Toastmasters by our employees has not been limited to financial aid; we have been able to identify skills and talents developed by Toastmasters which are essential for an employee's growth in our company, and therefore are making direct recommendations for employees to join as part of our career counseling.

I am convinced that the communication and leadership skills developed in Toastmasters are valuable assets — to the individual and to our organization.

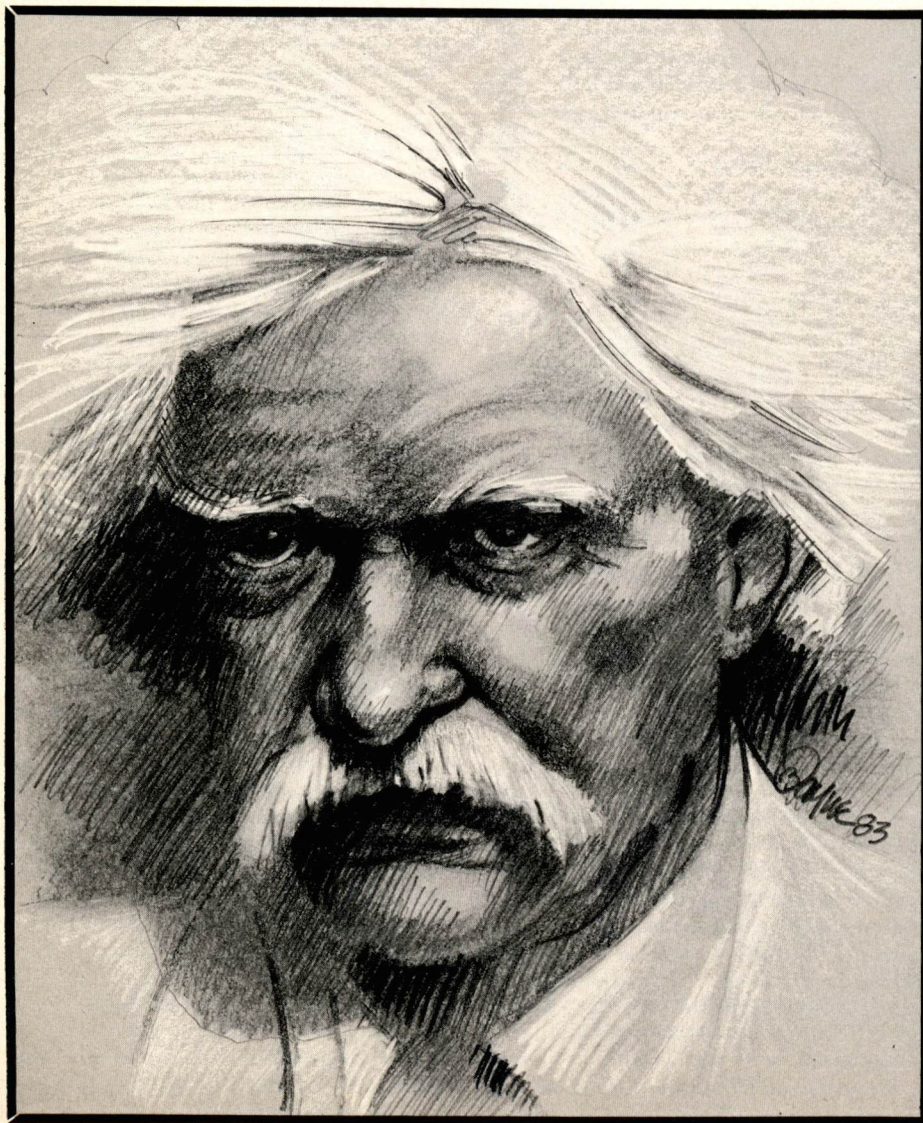
We will continue to monitor with a sense of pleasure and pride the progress of our club.

*J. Pat Burton
General Manager
The Carlton Hotel
Johannesburg, South Africa*

The POWER of HUMOR

by Thomas Montalbo, DTM

How successful speakers establish and maintain good relations with their audiences.



A little levity will save many a speech from sinking," said the English poet Samuel Butler. And he was right. Like the buoyancy of a float that supports a structure on water, the power of humor exerts upward force on a speech and lifts it up when audience attention sags.

Humor can make the difference between an ordinary and a superior speech. What's so remarkable about humor? Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, said, "Joking activity should not, after all, be described as pointless or aimless, since it has the unmistakable aim of evoking pleasure in its hearers."

People like to be amused and are grateful to speakers who make them smile or laugh. Mark Twain observed that the thing nobody will admit not having is a sense of humor.

Humor helps public speakers to establish and maintain good relations with their audiences. Some public speakers use humor mainly for the sake of entertaining audiences. But most speakers use it to interject light touches in an otherwise serious speech to get their message across more effectively. Either way, humor is of tremendous value in public speaking.

Breaking Barriers

To harness the power of humor in your speeches you can apply a variety of devices. Here are some techniques you can use at the beginning of your speech to bring down the wall of formality that may separate you from your audience — to put your audience

at ease from the start and enable you to proceed in a relaxed, natural manner.

- **Comment on the chairman's flattering introduction.**

At a convention of the American Bar Association, the chairman introduced Adlai Stevenson. When Stevenson stood up to give his speech, he said, "I was a little worried as Mr. Craig was giving that wonderful introduction. I began to think he was going to introduce Benjamin Franklin."

- **Belittle your position.**

Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. delivered an after-dinner speech at the Boston Merchants Association. He began his talk as follows:

"It was my intention, when I accepted the public invitation to be with you this evening, to excuse myself from saying a word. I am a professor emeritus, which means pretty nearly the same thing as a tired-out or a worn-out instructor."

- **Poke fun at yourself.**

James K. Wellington, speaking at Arizona State University, said at the beginning of his speech:

"I consider it a privilege and pleasure to have been invited to keynote the 1976 Pi Lambda Theta annual conference. Your theme, 'A Look at the Fundamental Concept,' is of particular interest and concern to me. Others know of my interest, and there have been some truths and untruths springing up. At the outset, I would like to clarify which is which.

"It is true that I did introduce the fundamental school idea to the Scottsdale people while serving on the school board. It is also true that the concept had strong emphasis in the three R's, encouraged discipline and patriotism, and advocated educational standards and measuring student achievement against those standards.

"It is not true that while attending a high school pep rally the band struck up a lively tune, and I marched backward across the football field. Further, it is not true that I have signed a movie contract with 18th Century Fox."

- **Describe a funny happening on the way to the meeting.**

When vaudeville was in its heyday before the advent of talking motion pictures, actors began their act by saying, "A funny thing happened to me on my way to the theater tonight" or "Something happened on my way over here." Likewise, public speakers often start their speeches by telling their audiences about something that happened to them on the way to the meeting.

Sometimes the speaker pulls a switch, that is, tries a variation of this

technique by starting as follows:

"Every time I go to dinner meetings, the speakers get up and start talking about something that happened to them on the way to the meeting. Well, you know, I've been going to dinner meetings for years, and believe me, nothing has ever happened to me on the way..." The speaker pauses, waiting for the laugh. Then he says, "Until tonight..." and proceeds to tell about his humorous happening.

General Douglas MacArthur used this "On my way over" technique in his farewell speech to West Point cadets. MacArthur, who had graduated at the top of his class at West Point and later became its superintendent, began his speech with, "As I was leaving the hotel this morning, a doorman asked me, 'Where are you bound for, General?' And when I replied, 'West Point,' he remarked, 'Beautiful place. Have you ever been there before?'"

With those few opening words, MacArthur, austere in appearance and solemn in manner befitting his five-star general's rank, not only quickly identified himself with the audience and the place of meeting but also showed he wasn't a stuffed shirt.

- **Tell an amusing anecdote about yourself.**

At a dinner given by the alumni of Columbia University, Will Rogers delivered an address on "Education and Wealth," which he began as follows:

"President Butler paid me a compliment a while ago in mentioning my name in his introductory remarks, and he put me ahead of the Columbia graduates. I am glad he did that because I got the worst of it last week. The Prince of Wales last week, in speaking of the sights of America, mentioned the Woolworth Building, the subway, the slaughterhouse, Will Rogers, and the Ford factory. He could at least put me ahead of the hogs."

- **Identify with the audience.**

Mark Twain gave a speech on "New England Weather" at an annual dinner of the New England Society. Here's his opening sentence:

"I reverently believe that the Maker who made us all, makes everything in New England — but the weather."

In a single short sentence Twain started off with a bit of humor that identified himself with the audience while introducing his subject.

- **Say something witty.**

Bishop Fulton Sheen, whose reputation as a speaker spread beyond the Roman Catholic church and made him a public figure, opened one of his talks as follows:

"Applause sums up the highest of Christian virtues. To applaud, as you

just did, at the beginning of the speech, is an act of faith. If you applaud in the middle of my speech, it is an act of hope. And if you applaud at the end of my speech, it is an act of charity."

The Functions of Humor

None of those speech openers may have produced belly laughs, but humor doesn't require audiences to fall in the aisles laughing. Smiles and chuckles are enough to put an audience in a receptive mood and earn goodwill for the speaker. Cheerful and friendly references to the chairman, audience and occasion can provide sufficient humor. Although humor is generally used at the beginning of a speech, it also performs certain functions in the body:

- **Dramatizes a point.**

Mark Twain fulfilled this function in his speech, "Advice to Youth," by narrating a story with a humorous anticlimax:

"Never handle firearms carelessly. The sorrow and suffering that have been caused through the innocent but needless handling of firearms by the young! Only four days ago, right in the next farmhouse to the one where I'm spending the summer, a grandmother, old and gray and sweet, one of the loveliest spirits in the land, was sitting at her work, when her grandson crept in and got down an old, battered, rusty gun which had not been touched for many years and was supposed not to be loaded, and pointed it right at her, laughing and threatening to shoot. In her fright she ran screaming and pleading toward the door on the other side of the room; but as she passed him he placed the gun almost against her very breast and pulled the trigger! He had supposed it was not loaded. And he was right — it wasn't."

In dramatizing his point that the young must not fool around with guns, Twain makes his story sound like a true happening. Starting out with his warning, "Never handle firearms carelessly," he makes the story current by placing the time as recently as "Only four days ago." He says it happened "right in the next farmhouse to the one where I'm spending the summer," which puts him at the scene and explains why he was there. Next he tells what and how it happened, throwing in sufficient details to make the story believable. The end of the story is such a sudden and extreme reversal of the expectancy he aroused as to be absurd enough to cause laughter.

- **Lays the groundwork for a serious point.**

In a speech on teaching, the speaker accomplished this function by using a humorous quotation that served as a

lead-in to his serious point. He said, "W.C. Fields is alleged to have answered the question, 'How do you like children?' with these words: 'Well cooked.' No one, no matter how humane, can stand to be in the presence of adolescents 24 hours a day, but if you propose to be a teacher, it helps to like kids."

• **Advances the central theme.**

Defending himself against attacks by his opponents in a political campaign, William Jennings Bryan advanced his central theme in a speech by narrating this humorous story:

"Some years ago a celebrity returned to his alma mater, a small college in the west. After a speech in the chapel by the visitor, the president of the institution inquired if he would like to visit the room he had occupied while a student. The celebrity said he would be delighted to do so, and the two men crossed the campus to the old dormitory, climbed to the second floor, and knocked at the door of the room.

"Now it happened that the present occupant of that room was digging out his Latin with the help of a fair coed — a violation of the rule that forbade girls to visit the boys' dormitory. The boy, suspecting that his caller might be a faculty member, told the girl to step into a convenient closet, which she promptly did, and the student answered the knock.

"The president presented his distinguished guest and explained the nature of the call. The celebrity looked around the room and smilingly remarked, 'The same old table, the same old chairs'; went to the window, looked out, 'Yes, and the same old tree'; turned about, 'And the same old closet into which I should like to peep,' opened the door, saw the coed and exclaimed, 'And the same old girl.' The student spoke up, 'My sister, sir,' 'And the same old lie,' rejoined the celebrity. Now my Republican friends are at it again, telling the same old lies about me."

Note how Bryan includes in his story the details necessary to create the build-up that leads directly to the punch line, "And the same old lie," which he connects with "the same old lies about me" by his opponents.

• **Illustrates ideas vividly.**

When Adlai Stevenson was governor of Illinois, he drove home his point in a speech with this amusing anecdote:

"There is a lesson for all of us in this rallying of our forces from every corner of Illinois. Perhaps I can best illustrate it with the story of the young man who approached the father of his intended bride to seek his approval of the marriage. The father was skeptical. 'I doubt very much,' he said, 'that you would be able to support my

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daughter — I can hardly do it myself.' To which the young suitor offered the bright suggestion: 'We'll just have to pool our resources.'"

• **Changes the pace.**

Changing the pace with humor relieves listeners from emotional or intellectual tension and gives them a chance to catch a mental breath between heavier, less digestible subject matter. Winston Churchill did this by sprinkling jokes and quips even in his wartime speeches. While Nazi bombers were devastating London he joked, "At the present rate it would take them about ten years to burn down one-half of London's buildings. After that, of course, progress would be much slower." In another speech he quipped, "We are expecting the coming invasion; so are the fishes."

• **Sums up a point.**

John F. Kennedy accomplished this function in a political campaign speech by using a humorous proverb. He was saying that the president talked a lot about problems but took no action. Kennedy then summed up, "Much has been said — but I am reminded of the old Chinese proverb: 'There is a great deal of noise on the stairs but nobody

comes into the room.'"

In closing a speech straight humor doesn't seem to lend itself effectively, unless the purpose of your talk is solely to entertain. "Leave 'em laughing" is, of course, the best way to end a speech to entertain.

But in other types of speeches — to inform, to persuade or to inspire — the audience may be in no mood for sheer fun at the end. In such speeches, the use of humor as a concluding technique tends to work better when it's combined with other elements.

For example, Adlai Stevenson mixed humor with pathos at the end of his concession speech in his first presidential campaign: "Someone asked me, as I came in, down on the street, how I felt, and I was reminded of a story that a fellow townsman of ours used to tell — Abraham Lincoln. They asked him how he felt once after an unsuccessful election. He said he felt like a little boy who had stubbed his toe in the dark. He said that he was too old to cry but it hurt too much to laugh."

John F. Kennedy, then a U.S. senator, delivered a commencement speech at Harvard University urging political parties and universities to recognize

Humor Tools for Toastmasters

Toastmasters International has a variety of manuals, books and cassettes to help you learn how to use humor effectively in your speeches.

- **Humor Handbook (1192)** — Tips on using humor effectively in a speech. \$1.50

- **How to Win Audiences With Humor (B-4)** — By Winston K. Pendleton. How, when, where and why to put humor into your speeches. \$3.95

- **2500 Jokes To Start 'Em Laughing (B-15)** — By Robert Orben. A fresh collection of sure-fire laugh-getters. \$9.95

- **The Encyclopedia of One-liner Comedy (B-17)** — By Robert Orben. More than 2000 selections of humor, arranged by subject. \$12.95

- **The Speaker's Handbook of Humor (B-46)** — By Maxwell Droke. How to select, collect and tell humorous stories, plus 1500 funny stories. \$16.95

- **Humor, Speaking and You (252)** — This cassette album tells how humor works, where to find humorous material, and how to use it. Includes examples by Dr. Charles Jarvis, Will Rogers and Mark Russell, plus many more. \$45 members; \$50 nonmembers.

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the need for more cooperation and understanding between politicians and intellectuals. He concluded as follows:

"Don't teach my boy poetry," an English mother recently wrote the Provost of Harrow. 'Don't teach my boy poetry; he is going to stand for Parliament.' Well, perhaps she was right — but if more politicians knew poetry, and more poets knew politics, I am convinced the world would be a little better place to live on this Commencement Day of 1956."

Although Kennedy was wholly serious in his plea for greater cooperation and understanding between politicians and intellectuals, he avoided a heavy-handed closing that might have sounded unduly severe to his audience of intellectuals. Instead, by using a bit of humor that was to the point, he highlighted his proposition and pleasantly got his message across to the audience.

Misleading Statements

Here are other humorous techniques you can use in any part of a speech:

- **Incongruity.**

In this technique you lead your audience to believe you're going to say something logical, then you say something different or unexpected, as in the following examples from actual speeches:

"I've tried all sorts of things, and that is why I want to try the great position of ruler of a country. I have been in turn reporter, editor, publisher, author, lawyer, burglar." (Mark Twain)

"It is expected that the mayor of New York should have the fluency of Henry Clay, the solidity of Daniel Webster, the firmness of Andrew Jackson, and the digestion of an ostrich." (Chauncey Depew)

Note how "burglar" in the first example and "digestion of an ostrich" in the second are incongruous, inconsistent or illogical with what precedes them. Because the ending word or phrase takes us unawares, it impresses itself forcibly upon us through surprise and amuses us.

- **Exaggeration.**

This technique enables you to strengthen your point with humor by stretching the truth. You might say, for example, "Traffic congestion is so bad that the pedestrian has the right of way only after the ambulance picks him up." To illustrate his three-time loss as candidate for president, William Jennings Bryan used this anecdote: A woman, who was so fat that she was obliged to get off a streetcar backward, had tried three times to leave it but each time to her consternation was helped on again by someone who thought she was entering instead of leaving.

- **Understatement.**

With this technique you deliberately represent something as less than is the case. By stating something with restraint, you achieve greater effect and induce laughter. Here are some examples of the understatement from masters of public speaking.

Mark Twain said, "Water, in moderation, cannot hurt anybody".


Will Rogers said, "One of our pigs swallowed a stick of dynamite. Later he rubbed against a building. This caused an explosion that razed four city blocks. It sure inconvenienced us."

Winston Churchill, in a wartime speech to the U.S. Congress, described the experience as "one of the most moving and thrilling in my life, which is already long and *has not been entirely uneventful.*" Towards the end of the same speech, referring to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he said, "*They have certainly embarked upon a very considerable undertaking.*" Even in the midst of a solemn and dignified atmosphere, Churchill drew laughs with words.

Some humor can save a speech, but excessive use may ruin it.

- **Irony.**

In using this technique you say something that is the opposite of what you actually mean. Notice how this example from Mark Twain contains a contradiction between the literal and intended meaning: "It's very easy to give up smoking. I've done it a thousand times."

Though not absolutely essential to effective public speaking, some humor would improve most speeches. The power of humor can grab and hold the attention of your audience as well as help put your message across. But just as some humor can save a speech, excessive use may ruin it. The British playwright Noel Coward, best known for his witty comedies, offered good advice when he said, "Wit ought to be a glorious treat, like caviar; never spread it about like marmalade." 



Thomas Montalbo, DTM, is currently a member of Sparkling Toastmasters Club 3602-47 in St. Petersburg, Florida. A former financial manager for the U.S. Treasury Department, he is a frequent contributor to *The Toastmaster*.

What Do You Do When Nobody Laughs?

by George Banks

How to save yourself when your jokes fall flat

Jack Benny listened while a man told a long story. But the man spoke so indistinctly and muffed his punch line so badly that the story wasn't funny. However, Jack laughed long and hard. "Why did you laugh?" a friend asked Benny afterward.

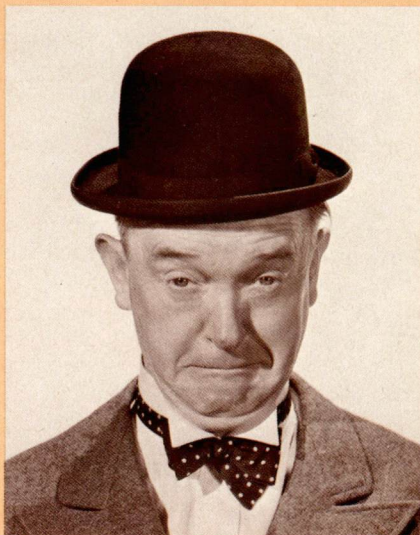
"I always do," the comedian replied. "If you don't laugh, there's danger of their telling it over again."

But what happens if your humor falls flat and the audience doesn't laugh? Apparently, they didn't think the joke funny or you didn't tell it particularly well.

To the inexperienced speaker, this is a major disaster, but it need not be. Since you are not advertised as a professional humorist, you shouldn't let an unsuccessful attempt like that unsettle you, and you cannot allow it to discourage you from further attempts at humor. If it's laughter you're after and nobody laughs, then let me share the following suggestions with you:

Use "Savers"

Professional comedians, like George Burns and Milton Berle, often intentionally put a weak joke in a monologue so they can use a "saver." For example, when Uncle Miltie tells a night club audience such a joke and they don't laugh, he asks them: "Do you folks come in for entertainment or revenge?" Of course, this line gets the laugh.



In fact, several entertainers (including Johnny Carson) have made successful careers out of getting more laughs from their ad libs when the joke bombs, than from the original joke itself. And whenever W.C. Fields told a joke at which nobody laughed, he would say reflectively: "The curious part of that story is that stupid people never see the point of it." Whereupon, of course, everyone laughed enthusiastically.

Use Joke Insurance

Stanley Myron Handelman, a comedian who teaches at UCLA, maintains that being funny in public is very diffi-

cult to achieve because most people aren't natural comedians. Amateurs become self-conscious when they stand up, and self-consciousness is the enemy of comedy.

Therefore, if you are inexperienced in telling jokes in front of an audience of strangers, it's important to have something to fall back on in case your attempts at humor flop. Art Linkletter suggests using two types of joke insurance.

The first involves attributing your one-liners to some well-known humorist. You might say, "This reminds me of Phyllis Diller's favorite line . . . 'Never go to bed mad. Stay up and

fight.'" Then, after putting responsibility for the joke on the famous authority, go ahead and tell it. Your audience may be more receptive to a "big name" joke. But even if you don't get a laugh, you'll at least *share* the blame with the famous person.

The second kind of joke insurance involves telling the funny story *not* just to get a laugh but also to make a serious point that furthers the main argument of your speech. For example, if you're talking about the cost of living, you might say, "Look at the price of food. Nowadays, it's cheaper to eat money." You may get a few chuckles or even a laugh from this remark,

Mastering One-liners

by Brian Dameier

Americans love convenience. We want our hamburgers our way, and we want them now. We love humor, but we want it now. Skip the special sauce, the pickle, and all that other garbage, give me the punch line. Thus, the one-liner is the bread and butter of American comedy. You can tell a long story if you put in a few one-liners to keep me happy until the punch line.

Humor of the one-liner type does have its advantages. It doesn't take you long to learn the joke that only has two or three lines in it. But don't let that deceive you into thinking that you don't have to prepare. You can blow a short joke the same way you blow a long joke. The advantage of the one-liner is that if it dies, you can sweep it off the stage before it starts to smell.

Let's look at a few one-liners:

"I missed a hole-in-one once — by three strokes."

"Don't forget, the best man for the job — may be a woman."

"I was runner-up in the championship — to the kid who came in twenty-seventh."

"I spent a small fortune on my kids' education and another small fortune on their teeth. The only difference is — they still use their teeth."

Each one of those jokes has a definite pause and break before the punch line. Assuming you've memorized the joke and can tell it in your sleep, let's look at the steps in delivering the punch line.

- **The Pause**

This is the timing, the art of setting up for the punch. The audience is listening casually. You pause

right before the punch line. They focus on you to see why you stopped. BAM! You hit them. Make a definite stop in your rhythm. You might mentally count "1, 2, 3" and then say the punch line. Keep your eyes on your audience. They're looking around for the punch line and you're staring at them saying, "I've got it right here."

- **The Pace**

When you're ready to deliver the punch line, slow your rate of speech down. Lay the whole punch line right in their laps. Take the first one-liner, "I missed a hole-in-one once (pause) BY THREE STROKES." Feel that natural rhythm. Try "Don't forget, the best man for the job (pause) (Now to give the punch line even more punch, I would say the next words slowly) MAY BE (and then pow) A WOMAN. Each joke has its own particular rhythm. Some don't have a smooth rhythm. Work on them until they flow with a solid punch.

- **The Pitch**

Raise the level of your voice a notch. You can change it musically up a note and also raise the volume. Some jokes might drop the pitch, but most raise it. This is to make sure the punch line is laid in their laps so that they can enjoy it.

Try these points out in practice first, and after you've caught the melody of the tune, you can easily change the words. Pause and punch them.

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depending on the audience you're speaking to, but even if you get cold silence, you've at least made the serious point that you're concerned about rising food prices.

You're in a much safer position using both types of joke insurance in your speeches than Lily Tomlin and Bob Hope are. They *have* to be funny. Nobody expects you to keep everybody in stitches, and if you can come up with a few light remarks or stories, most of your listeners will probably be pleasantly surprised.

The Statistics

Only one out of every three people actually laughs out loud at a joke. So even though your one-liners may not result in audible guffaws, that doesn't mean you weren't funny. It may just be that you're speaking to a relatively small group with not enough "laughers" present in the audience to express their amusement out loud.

Once Art Buchwald gave these two tips on using humor: First, play it deadpan — don't laugh or even grin at

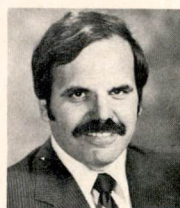
One humorous story does not make or break a speech.

your own jokes — no matter how much the audience laughs . . . or doesn't laugh. And second, mix a measure of humor into your philosophy.

If your first joke fails and you have anecdotes later in your speech, go ahead and use them. You may have just missed on that one joke. After all, one humorous story does not make (or break) a speech.

Whatever you do, don't rush through your next jokes too quickly. That will certainly end in failure. If you're going to tell a joke, you have to go for the laugh aggressively or it's best not to try to tell jokes at all.

In other words, move smoothly up to the funny surprise in your story and with a pause, deliver your punch line, then give your audience time to laugh. Or as Stanley Myron Handelman suggests: "When an audience doesn't laugh, give them more time, torture them. They deserve it." 🎤



George Banks loves to laugh, speak, write and conduct humor workshops — but not necessarily in that order. His articles and light verse have appeared in newspapers and magazines, including

The Wall Street Journal, Medical Economics, and the New England Journal of Medicine.

The secret to delivering comedy is to
develop a personal style.

How To Make a Joke Your Own

by Gene Perret

I make my living from comedy. I first got into comedy because I desperately wanted to be able to do something better than my wife does. My wife is bright, a gifted musician, a masterful cook.....although she does have her faults. To cite an example, when she went to the hospital to deliver our fourth child, I stayed home and cared for the other three. She didn't plan ahead. She knew she would be gone five or six days, but she only left enough clean dishes to last four.

I could have washed them. I'm not lazy or anything like that. It's just that I don't know where she keeps the sink.

When she was due to come home, the house was in a shambles. I knew she would be upset, so I devised a clever plan to help cheer her up. I had the kids paint a sign that said, "Welcome Home, Mommy," and we hung it where the dining room used to be.

I'm really not much of a handyman nor much help with the kids. Often when we're going out, I'll offer to help, but my wife will say, "No, I'm in too much of a hurry to have you help."

That can get frustrating, and one day I put my foot down. We were going visiting, and I insisted that I aid in getting the children ready. I took my daughter up to give her a bath and get her dressed. I made a game of it. I said, "Daddy's going to get your bath ready, then we're going to get you washed and dressed faster than ever." She loved it. I ran the water, tested it, and said, "Okay, let's go." She put her little arms up in the air. I took off her dress, took off her little slip, pulled her panties off, lifted her up, sat her in the tub and said, "Now, did Mommy ever do it any faster than that?" She said, "No, but Mommy generally takes off my shoes and socks first."

I not only didn't help out much, but I had to pay for a new pair of shoes.

This story is a part of my lecture circuit speech, and I opened this article with it because it illustrates all of the points I want to make on speech humor that sounds spontaneous.

The punch line for that story came
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from a book on humor. It was only about a paragraph long, but it struck me as a story that could well have happened to me. There was a little bit of me in that story. So I made it mine.

That's very important. For humor to appear spontaneous and not forced, it has to be our own humor. Many of the speakers that I've talked to over the years say, "I can't do comedy." There's regret in their voices as they say it because they do recognize the importance of humor in speaking. They often do not ask for help or suggestions, since they've already surrendered to their curse of being unfunny on the platform.

What these people are really saying is that they can't do *other people's* comedy. They have probably heard other performers get laughs with certain lines, tried them and failed with them. Hence, they've now sentenced themselves to a career of "not doing comedy."

Comedic Character

Let's suppose for a second, though, that you and I were going out for an evening of entertainment. Just to pick a few names, let's say we're going to see Steve Martin in concert, and then to a show featuring Joan Rivers. (Actually, we could select any two performers. The names aren't really that

important.) These are both excellent humorists who have funny material. We're in for an evening of laughs.

However, before we go, someone takes Steve Martin's material and delivers it to Joan Rivers, saying, "Joan, you do Steve's act tonight." Then Joan's material is handed to Steve Martin with the same agreement. They are still superb performers. The material hasn't changed one bit. You and I will have the most boring evening imaginable. Why? Because Joan Rivers has a certain comedic character and her material is consistent with that. Martin's routines mesh with the Martin image. To be funny, the comedy has to be their own.

Is this a contradiction to claim that comedy must be personalized and then to admit that my opening example came from a book? Not really. Speakers can't always write their own material, nor can they often afford to have special material written for them. So the bulk of the punch lines has to be researched from books or records or stories one hears from other people. But then they must be tailored to fit the individual speaker's style and character.

Good comedy has a rhythm that allows us to do this. It moves in peaks and valleys. Johnny Carson always kids about this when his monologue is not going well, but it is a fact of comedy.

I once produced a variety show, and after our premier performance a network executive approached me with a criticism. "One problem with this show," he sagely noted, "is that some parts are funnier than others." I feigned a shocked expression and replied, "I don't know how that happened. I told the writers to make them all exactly the same."

Certainly some parts were funnier than others. When you watch Bob Hope, Phyllis Diller or any comic, some jokes are funnier than others. They have to be. The humor has to build.

I liken a comedy presentation to spectators watching a fireworks display. They watch as a speck of light

floats skyward, then bursts into an explosion of light and sound. Then they watch the embers drift back to earth. A good joke is similar. There is a buildup, then the solid punch line, then the "afterglow." The speaker can take advantage of this phenomenon to tai-

lor a solid punch line to his or her own speech.

The speaker doesn't have to be a great writer because the heart of the humor — the strong punch line — has been researched. It is proven. The specialized writing can be done in the

buildup and the afterglow because in these areas, the comedy needn't be as powerful. It exists here only to get some chuckles and to personalize the material.

If you reread my illustration at the beginning of the article, you'll note

Of Jokes and Jokebooks

by Adrian D. Smith

I recently had a conversation with a girl in her late teens. We were talking about humor. She had, she felt, a problem in connection with it. She is a freshman in college and was entering a speech class.

"I have no more than the normal fear of standing before a class and giving a speech," she explained. "But sooner or later, I'll be required to give a humorous talk — and I simply can't do it."

"What's the problem?" I asked.

"I simply cannot tell a joke," she said. "I hear lots of them but I don't remember them. And if I did remember one, it wouldn't be funny when I told it."

Now, I know this girl rather well. She is charged with high spirits, vibrant with curiosity, and quick to laugh. Yet she told the truth when she said she couldn't tell a joke.

A week previously, however, she had entertained me with an account of some conversations she had had with boys on the dance floor. She had started by explaining that in the boy-girl relationship what to talk about can be a problem of overwhelming proportions. The problem can be even more acute on the dance floor when the talk must be an adjunct to an already absorbing activity.

She had given me in detail some of the conversations she had had under these trying conditions. All in all, I found her account very amusing.

I reminded my teenage acquaintance of our conversation and suggested that here, possibly, was material for a humorous talk. She agreed, and when I left her she was plunking away at her portable typewriter, gathering her thoughts and getting them on paper while they were still fresh.

The dilemma of the girl is not unusual; it plagues many Toastmasters. I have seen several quail at the suggestion that they try a humorous talk. Generally, like the girl, they think of the humorous talk as the telling of jokes. Like the girl, they are frequently overlooking

profitable areas of humor.

Now, I don't know what humor is. I can't define it. In my reading on the subject, I have found much that was cogent and much that was instructive. Nowhere have I found an all-embracing definition.

Look to Experience

This I do know: The joke is only one type of humor. And this follows: If you are skeptical of your prowess with jokes, look to your own experience for humorous speech material. The chances are that what you find will have more freshness and greater vitality than anything you find in the joke book.

The joke book, of course, shouldn't be scorned. It can be a helpful tool. However, I believe very few know how to use it.

I once attended a Toastmasters meeting at which a proposal was made to purchase a well-known book of jokes for the club's library. A veteran member objected.

"I have been looking at joke books recently," he explained, "and I have never found anything drearier. I found nothing to smile at, let alone anything to laugh at. They're all terrible!"

In one sense, I suppose, the veteran member was on firm ground. Viewed strictly as reading material, the joke book is a dud. Compared with it, the World Almanac is a marvel of sprightliness.

The point is, however, that neither the almanac nor the joke book is to be regarded as entertaining. I have spent an occasional pleasurable half-hour rummaging through the facts and statistics in the almanac. To read it as one would read a novel is unthinkable.

Similarly, one does not read a joke book. One goes to it for help — or, in some cases, for inspiration.

The joke book must be approached with imagination. Its gems are not bright and shining and ready for mounting. It contains only the raw material of humor; the humorous speaker must do the cutting, the polishing and the mounting. And this calls for imagination.

Here, for example, is an item typical of those found in joke books:

Wife: It's an hour past midnight! You're late.

Husband: I know. I'd have been here sooner but someone stepped on my hand as I came around the corner.

Funny? Laughable? Hardly, you'll say. Yet out of this innocent item, George Gobel, the television comic, conjured a segment of monologue that was as hilarious as anything I have ever heard.

He did it with imagination, by changing the material and fitting a framework about it. He put it into context. It emerged not as a byplay between husband and wife, but as a ludicrous adventure of a lonely inebriate.

A Thought Starter

When approached with imagination, the joke book can serve another function. In my own experience, while reshaping a story to a particular theme or pattern, I have on occasion been led completely away from the story at hand into something completely — for me — original. It required the item in the joke book to get me started, but my own imagination provided the material finally used. The joke book functioned as a thought starter.

The joke book, then, can be a useful tool to Toastmasters essaying a humorous talk. They should, I believe, look first to their own experience for their material. If, however, this source fails to supply all they need or if the well of inspiration runs dry, a joke book may be a worthy ally.

Adrian D. Smith is a past president of the Capitol City Toastmasters Club 639-62 in Lansing, Michigan. When this article originally appeared in the July 1962 issue of The Toastmaster, Mr. Smith was employed as an assistant standards engineer, Oldsmobile Division, for General Motors in Lansing.

that the big laugh is "Mommy generally takes off my shoes and socks first." What goes before that are simply small joke lines that add the spontaneity.....they make the story mine. The line after it accomplishes that, too, but it also keeps the big laugh going a little bit longer.

Making It Yours

I'll now offer three ways of tailoring a punch line that you've researched so that it feels spontaneous, it sounds totally like your story, and will enable you to add some humor to your presentation.

- **Surround your story with truth:** All of the preamble to my opening punch line is true. I'm not a handyman and not too useful around the house in general. Why is that important? Because when I tell that story, I believe it and consequently tell it better.

I had the pleasure of working with Jack Benny shortly before he died. I had written a piece of material that Jack was to do on the Carol Burnett Show. Jack had a problem with some of the comedy because he didn't believe it. His manager said, "Jack, it's only a small bit. Why can't you just do it as written?" Jack Benny said, "Because if I'm doing a joke about my Stradivarius, I have to be holding my Stradivarius." In other words, he had to believe what he was saying in order to do it well.

- **Introduce your story with easy, personable one-liners:**

Some of your tales will obviously be untrue. For instance, if your story begins, "This guy was out playing golf with a gorilla..." Well, it's hard to make that sound like it actually happened. However, you can sneak them in on an audience. I sometimes kid about my problems with airlines when I travel:

"I travel because I love airline food. I also enjoy root canal work.

"Airline food.....the food that answers the question, 'What do the airlines do with their old tires?'"

"And I enjoy that game the airlines play....hide the luggage.

"I traveled over 50,000 miles last year, which is not much when you consider my luggage traveled over 100,000."

After that light preamble, I can safely tell a story about a friend who was afraid to travel. When he was forced to travel by air to London, he called the airline and said, "What are the chances of a bomb being on the plane?" They said, "About 10 million to one." He didn't like those odds. He called back and asked, "What are the chances of two bombs being on the same plane?" They said, "About 200 trillion to one." That made him feel better. So now he'll travel anywhere, but he always carries one bomb with

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him.

No audience believes that story, but by the time they realize the craziness of it, they're too much into the fun of it to care.

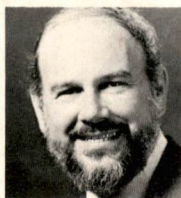
- **Localize your story:** Make your joke refer to your audience or your locality. After I tell my opening story, I will sometimes introduce the audience to my daughter. It doesn't matter which of my three daughters is there, I still introduce her as the star of that story. The audience likes to share in her embarrassment.

If my daughter is not there, I tell them that I usually introduce her because she usually travels with me, then add: "I have three daughters and they're all about the same age. They are 21, 22 and 23. One's a blonde; one's a brunette and one's a redhead. And they're all built like showgirls. So if you ever see me with anyone like that, it's my daughter, OK?"

You can localize by asking questions about the group you're addressing. Find out which people are well-known by the audience and which ones would fit into your stories. I sometimes kid one of their own by saying, "Your president, (then give his name), called me three times to do this show. I finally told the operator I would accept the charges."

You can localize your material by having it refer to the location you're in, provided your audience is familiar with your references. If you're telling a joke about a bad restaurant, find out which places in town are noted for their bad food. Find out the name of the local lover's lane. Audiences love to be recognized and to be made a part of your act.

The secret of delivering comedy is to create an atmosphere of fun. You'll notice any time families or good friends get together, there is plenty of comedy and laughter. In order to add humor to your presentation and to keep it natural, just treat each audience as a bunch of old friends and you'll have it made. 🗣️



Gene Perret is a comedy writer based in San Marino, California. He has written for Bob Hope and Phyllis Diller, and he and his associates won three Emmy awards for their work on The Carol Burnett Show.

Now pursuing a speaking career, he has joined the National Speakers Association and will be speaking at Toastmasters' International Convention in San Diego, California, August 17-20. He will also be writing a bi-monthly humor column, "Just For Laughs," especially for THE TOASTMASTER. The column will debut in the April issue of the magazine.

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Finding Their Funny Bone

by Toni Gardner

You have to learn to make the punch line score
before you can become a successful wit.

To tickle an audience's funny bone, you first need to heed the advice of con man Harold Hill to fellow traveling salesmen in "The Music Man": "You gotta know the territory."

Study your territory. Analyze audience icons, taboos, heroes and special interests, then tie your humor to the topical such as the news, the location or the group's particular concerns. What is funny today may not be funny tomorrow; what plays well in New York can die in Chicago; what one political party finds hilarious may alienate the other; surfing stories are out of place in Colorado; and jokes about golf score best at the country club. Remember that people laugh at other people, not at jokes, so pick an appropriate target.

Appropriate is the key word. Aim at carefully chosen bull's eyes. Use such obvious fiction and exaggeration that your listeners realize beyond a doubt that you are kidding.

Here are some DON'TS to remember:

Don't ridicule an organization or its speaking arrangements; don't undertake a spoof unless you are certain the audience will grasp the point; don't debunk the group heroes unless you wish to make enemies; don't tell dirty jokes unless you are sure of their reception; don't use ethnic humor unless you are a treasured member of that ethnic group. Bury the trite and the cliché, and, instead, unearth something new and original. Stale language seldom engenders fresh laughter. DO make the punishment fit the crime and be natural, not artificial. Take Shakespeare's counsel:

A jest's prosperity lies in the ear

*of him that hears it, never in the tongue
of him that makes it.*

With that in mind, write your speech. If it doesn't read funny, it seldom sounds funny to the ear. Planned humor is more important than the improvised. Although Robert Benchley believed that analyzing and defining humor is the pastime of the humorless, most speakers can develop a strong sense of joke construction and learn to tailor pirated or edited humor to a custom audience or event.

The Name of the Game

Well-known humorists use a mix of original jokes, those borrowed "as is," and those remodeled to fit the occasion. File and classify both the original quips that flit through your mind, and the jokes and comic tidbits you read or hear from other sources. You can then pull these out to illustrate a point or to weave around the central theme of your speech. However, make sure you don't borrow a joke that is in current vogue.

Comedy is a trap for the unwary; few humorous speakers act funny on stage.

As you compose your speech, remember that wit is the name of the game. Unless you have a faithful following as a stand-up comic or are positive you can consistently and rapidly ad lib as you go along, arm your arsenal with wit, not comedy. Comedy is a

trap for the unwary; few outstandingly humorous speakers such as Richard Armour, Art Buchwald, Erma Bombeck, or Will Rogers in days past, act funny on stage. They usually follow Lee Trevino's advice that the best way to tell a funny joke is . . . seriously. Dialogue, dialect, funny gestures and comic faces flash warning signals that you are on the brink of comedy.

What makes something funny? Form, says James Thurber, is the heart of humor just as brevity is the soul of wit. And form depends upon knowing the anatomy of a joke and what constitutes the underlying, fundamentally funny idea.

Some humorists are drab and dull while some others may be cross and crusty when encountered offstage, so don't rely upon a likeable or even a sparkling personality. Finely-honed public speaking skills are useless unless you have learned the basic components of humor. You need the ability to grasp the point of a joke to be funny, but that is not the secret to being witty and amusing.

What is the secret of humor? Bob Bassindale in his book *How Speakers Make People Laugh*, published in 1976, says that the secret of humor lies in the combining of profound insights into universal truths with magic tricks. A joke, he says, is a magic trick with punch, and nothing is funny without that sting of surprise. You have to learn to make the punch line score before you can become a successful wit.

This magic trick is built one stage at a time. Forget the snappy opening, the effective first sentence, and start with a smooth lead-in. Launch into your

discourse in mock-serious language as if you want to engage your audience in an earnest discussion about family, foreign affairs, politics, history, sports, the vagaries of life, or areas of special interest. You want to set-up your listeners to mislead them in order to prepare them for the essential surprise of the payoff. Forget the standard lead-ins to jokes such as, "That reminds me of a story," "Did I tell you the one about. . .?" or "Have you heard this one?" Don't drop clues so that your audience knows you are really trying to make it laugh lest it resist the lure of your bait. Witness how Art Buchwald leads into a satirical story that sets up the audience for a punch line about his wife:

"There is a great deal of publicity these days about the advent of the home computer.

"Futurists are predicting that in a few years there will be a computer in everyone's home which will store all sorts of anniversaries, bank balances and inventories of household effects."

If you understand what Bassindale calls the BFI (basic funny idea) of original and borrowed humor, you can then remodel the joke in order to switch the punch to fit the occasion. The BFI is really a universal truth about human nature. In the Buchwald computer story the BFI is the eternal battle of the sexes.

Playing With Words

There are many different types of humor with which to mold a BFI into speech: the incongruous, which relates two unrelated ideas, leading to the humor of the absurd; hyperbole, which uses exaggeration and forms the central element in tall tales; satire, which ridicules human vice and folly; irony, which contrasts the real meaning of what you say with an opposite, implied meaning, such as commenting about the beautiful weather on a cold and stormy day; epigrams, which are witty, pointed, or ingenious sayings tersely expressed, as in Willard Espy's "Blest are the poor. I never guessed/I'd be elected to the blest."; parodies, which are humorous imitations of other compositions, as in "Mary had a little

slam/For everyone, and so/The leaves of her engagement book/Were always white as snow."; and anecdotes, which are original, short narratives about a particular incident of an amusing nature — these make up the major portion of the wit of humorists like Erma Bombeck.

The secret of humor lies in combining insights into truths with magic tricks.

There are also the many words at play. Some are: spoonerisms, the exchange of sounds in two or more words, as in 'It is kistomery to cuss the bride'; malapropisms, the misuse of words, as in 'relapse and enjoy it'; comic definitions, sometimes called daffynitions, as in 'a camel is a horse designed by a committee'; tongue twisters such as Newman Levy's from Prohibition days, "If you stick a stock of liquor in your locker,/It is slick to stick a lock upon your stock,/Or some joker who is slicker's going to trick you of your liquor. . ./If you fail to lock your liquor with a lock." — but be sure you don't stumble over your own pronunciation. Then there are many forms of puns and play on words. Types of humor such as farce, slapstick, buffoonery, mimicry and stereotyping roles can edge into comedy, but they cease to be funny when overdone.

However, the types and forms of humor are only a means to an end. Seven senses of humor contribute to laughter, according to Bassindale: the sense of irreverence which reminds listeners that nobody is perfect and punctures pomposity; the sense of aggression that aims insults at a selected target; the sense of fun or play; the sense of discretion that ensures that this target is appropriate and doesn't give rise to audience defensiveness; the sense of divergence, or upside down humor; the sense of

deception that adds the spice of surprise; and the sense of communication which conveys insights and truths clearly and eloquently through laughter.

Next, after writing a speech that reads funny, you must learn how to make your payoffs pay off by mastering the difficult art of timing through the use of pace, pause and word inflection, Bassindale continues.

Pace yourself to an effective speed. Tell a story too fast, and the audience fails to get the point; spin a yarn too slowly, and the audience loses the thread of your thought. Not pausing after critically important words is a basic mistake in timing.

Word inflection entails emphasis; the most common defect in delivery of humorous material is the failure to emphasize only the most important words. Lean into a microphone to stress these words. Highlighting non-essential words reduces the accent on the key words, so practice emphasis and timing until your rhythm is right. Like music, humor must have beat and stress to succeed.

So, to deliver a humorous speech that reaches and tweaks an audience's funny bone, you first have to learn the basic components of humor, develop a strong sense of joke construction, keep and classify a humor file to serve as ammunition as you prepare your speech.

Next, study the biases of the audience you are addressing, tailor your humor to a theme and to the listeners' special interests, design a smooth lead-in to introduce your remarks, make your payoffs pay off by setting up the audience with misdirection, then add the surprise punch. Practice. Practice your pace, pauses and word inflections until you have mastered the comic timing, then deliver your speech very seriously. Above all, remember Stephen Leacock's words — the essence of humor is human kindness. 🗣️

Toni Gardner is a writer based in Laguna Niguel, California.

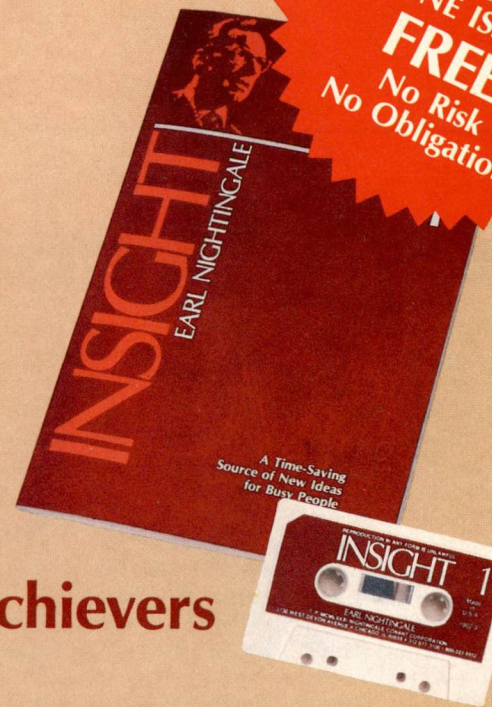
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Comedienne Credits Toastmasters For Career

Before Mary Jo Crowley joined Toastmasters in 1981, she could barely introduce herself to anyone.

Today she's an entertainer, performing stand-up comedy routines at hotels in Las Vegas and comedy clubs in Southern California.

"I used to be a quiet publications director for a research firm, writing comedy on the side," Miss Crowley says. "At that time, I was mortified at the idea of standing up and saying my name. Instead, I sold my material to others who had the courage required for public speaking."

Then she joined Toastmasters.

Shortly thereafter, she, too, had the self-confidence to face an audience. The turning point was the night she went to see a humorous program which she had "ghostwritten" from start to finish for a group of home builders.

The master of ceremonies and the speakers used her material verbatim, and it brought the house down. As Miss Crowley sat in the back of the room, silently watching, she thought, "I could do that myself."

First Venture

A fellow Toastmaster suggested she try out for amateur night at The Comedy Store in La Jolla, California, a local nightclub and launching spot for comedians. Anyone can stand up in front of the microphone for five minutes. The big challenge is to be asked to return for another performance.

Miss Crowley decided to make herself vulnerable, even though she was more than just a bit frightened. She constantly wondered, What if they don't laugh? But, she says, "Toastmasters gave me the confidence to say instead, 'What if they do?'"

Her Toastmasters club, North Coast 4356-5, in Del Mar, California, packed the audience that night, true to the supportive nature of the group. The performance surprised everyone, including Miss Crowley. She was asked to return two nights a week!

Other performers tell her, "You don't look like a comedienne." That, says Miss Crowley, is her gimmick.

"I'm a business woman," she explains. "I look like a bank examiner. I always wear conservative clothes; sometimes doing a show while dressed in a skirted suit with a gold stickpin in the lapel, or a feminine version of a tuxedo outfit."



Miss Crowley finds the Comedy Store a great forum. On some nights, the audience can be difficult, complete with hecklers who range from mild to hostile. But Table Topics prepared her for her first heckler. "I paused briefly, put my hands on my hips and, ever the business woman, I slowly said, 'I could audit you from here.' Everyone fell apart."

Following the Philosophy

"Many aspiring comedians think they have to be obscene to be noticed," says Miss Crowley. "I believe one of the reasons for my success is that I subscribe to the basic Toastmasters philosophy: no bedroom, bathroom or barroom humor. My routines consist of genuine or exaggerated situations. I joke about dating, business, conversations with my family or topical items in the news. Granted, some of the lines are 'double entendre,' but everything is left to the imagination. It's much easier to get bookings at qual-

ity restaurants and nice hotels when the material is clean."

One performance begets another. A magician who saw Miss Crowley emcee a show asked if she would open and close his act at Camp Pendleton, the U.S. Marine Corps base just north of San Diego. The 20-minute opening is prepared, but the closing 20 minutes are always impromptu. She chatted with the men in the first few rows, asking questions and giving quick one-liners and bits of material to their responses.

Soon she was playing the servicemen's clubs at the U.S. Naval base and Naval Air Station in San Diego. Just recently she performed at a hotel in Las Vegas.

"I credit Toastmasters with my ability to present humor," Miss Crowley smiles. "I'm told I am the only comedienne who can do a 20-minute set without saying 'Uh.' It costs me 10 cents, now that I'm a CTM!"

You Can Make Them Laugh!

Humor is how you say it, not just what you say! Trying to learn how to say it by reading joke books is like trying to learn how to fly by reading travel brochures. Here's a sample of a joke I found in a joke book:

"A politician is someone who can talk for 2 hours on anything, and 4 hours if he knows what he's talking about."

When I first read this joke, I chuckled. I put it on an index card and labeled it "Talkers". That's the theme of the joke, the politician is the subject and one good example of a talker. While preparing for a Toastmaster District Conference talk, I started looking through my file and pulled out the joke. I could have easily substituted "Toastmaster" for "Politician," but knowing a few basic principles of humor, I rewrote the joke. Here is how the joke was told,

"I joined Toastmasters four years ago and one of the members in my club is Kermit Ekegren (the current district governor). Kermit lives right by my house and we often ride together to meetings. One morning I asked him, 'What's that ATM and DTM?' He says, 'Well

an ATM is an Able Toastmaster. An ATM can speak for two hours on anything.' I asked, 'What's a DTM?' 'That's a Distinguished Toastmaster, they can speak for four hours on anything — and not even know what they're talking about.' (Laughter)

Humor is first **what you say**, but more importantly, it is **how you say it**. The key to making this joke a winner is using a principle of humor called "Building The Tension." The tension in this joke is built through believability and personalizing the joke. But more importantly, let's look at how you say it. In this joke the key is to stretch out the words "**two hours (pause) on anything**" and then "**four hours on anything (long pause) and not even know (slow down pace, raise volume) what they're talking about.**"

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Making the Most of



A good sense of humor is a valuable speaking asset.
Here's how you can refine yours.

Your Sense of Humor

by William J. Tobin

"If you would rule the world quietly, you must keep it amused." — Emerson

As a business man, with a variety of products and services to sell every day, I can appreciate Emerson's perceptive observation! I want to "rule the world quietly" with soft persuasion, with humor, and in a way that makes for a long, happy business relationship with my prospects, customers, business acquaintances.

English novelist Thackeray put it more personally: "Good humor may be said to be one of the very best articles of dress one can wear in society." When it is skillfully employed, good humor puts a good face on everything you do.

It's a valuable social and personal asset, more especially when it is employed to amuse, persuade or win small and large groups of people to your viewpoint, opinions or ideas. The use of humor, you may be pleased to learn, is a skill greatly valued and widely employed by some of the very best people.

Leonardo da Vinci, I learn by way of humorist Robert Orben, for a brief period of his life "was a stand-up comic who wrote and performed his own material. Leonardo played the lute, sang and recited satires and jests at the court of Lodovico Sforza in Milan." He was equipped with the props and the humorous material he needed to make a profitable living, which led to still larger rewards later in his brilliant career as a distinguished painter. His talkmanship was of a high order and entertained a wide community of listeners.

President Reagan, the best of a dozen famous current practitioners, is an acknowledged master speechmaker and humorist (however much he is helped by that talented team of speechwriters he employs!). A

memorable recent example: "Recession is when your neighbor loses his job. Depression is when you lose yours. And recovery is when Jimmy Carter loses his." Reagan's a crowd pleaser and humorist with a product to sell: himself, and a second term in the White House. His humor has made him a man of the people and top-notch motivator of groups in every state in the Union.

Humor should be timed to relax and refresh your listeners.

Prince Andrew is a young newcomer humorist from the ranks of royalty. Example: The brother of Britain's Prince Charles, he recently made his debut as a public speaker while attending a rugby match dinner at Oxford University. His small bit of humor was a story about a father and son cannibal team. The son, more than the father, looked longingly at an attractive girl. Said the son: "Look at her, father, why don't we take her home for dinner?" The father promptly suggested an alternative: "I have a better idea. We will take her home — and eat your mother!"

The powerful and the famous are not above using humor for putting on their "very best articles of dress," of winning your favor, of getting your vote, of selling their point of view.

Thomas Edison, believe it or not, filled many of his notebooks (used for recording the results of his experiments) with dozens of laughter-producing jokes. And he used them to maintain morale and "as a shot of

comic adrenalin for his overworked staff" (an historian's biographical note).

Allen Funt, now teaching in a California college and famous as the creator, producer, director and editor of the Candid Camera television show, used a hidden camera to record a mountain of happy, humorous events. He, not too surprisingly, is another gifted humorist who seconds Emerson's observation about quietly mastering the world: "When people are smiling they are most receptive to almost anything you want to teach them." And he goes on to make the point for the business, club, PTA and community speaker, adding: "I think this can be applied industrially, academically, technically, and in almost every other way."

The point is well made; humor is a valuable social, governmental, educational and business asset or skill. But, there are two key questions that need answering: (1) What is humor and (2) What are the characteristics of good humor — humor that wins friends and influences enemies, humor that is on target, humor that is effective with groups of people whatever their size, mixture, composition?

Humor's Attributes

Start with the simple definition: Humor is anything — joke, jest, satire, quotable quote, startling fact or note — that makes people laugh OR inspires them to react with a warm, knowing smile of appreciation. Humor, to repeat, produces laughter, happy looks and pleasant feelings. "Humor," as a good publishing friend recently observed (when I suggested he put more humor items in his prestigious business publication), "is a serious business. It is also in the eye of the beholder. (But) humor to our audience of businessmen is letting the employees pay for the privilege of

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coming to work."

I didn't make that sale!

But I did make you smile, just then, didn't I?

Humor makes people, friends, neighbors and civic, social, community groups laugh and/or smile knowingly, appreciatively.

The best kind of humor has these attributes:

- **It is meaningful:** It is specifically directed to the audience's interests. It is in good taste (bad taste, bad humor, never won any audience). It is well intentioned.

- **It is occupationally oriented.**

Good humor speaks the listener's language and ties into his or her personal, family, social or business interests.

- **It is message oriented.** It is tied to the aims and objectives of the speaker's presentation. It adds strength to your message, it excites and enlivens your audience, and it inspires believability and action (when you use it most effectively).

- **Good humor is funny.** Enjoyable. Warm. Friendly. Productive of laughter and happy feelings. Most importantly...

- **Good humor is timed to please.** It is timed to relax, to refresh, to reinvigorate and to reawaken your audience's interest in what you have to say when you say it, or, further on, to the points you will make in the rest of your talk. And it does it at these critically important times:

At the beginning. President Reagan provides another good example. In his opening remarks to a large group of midwesterners, he observed how it was a "great pleasure" for him to get out of the nation's capital. "Whoever said the worst place to get a perspective on America is Washington, D.C., was absolutely right. You don't have to spend much time in Washington to appreciate the prophetic vision of the man who designed all the streets; they go in

circles!" Much of the crowd laughed a small laugh, most of them smiled knowingly.

In the middle. At just the point where his audience of sophisticated community leaders was about to suppress a yawn, Jim Sites, special assistant to the secretary of the treasury, sparked a somewhat dry business talk with, "The more learned economists might tell you that a slowing up of the slowdown is not as good as an upturn in the down-curve. But even this is a good deal better than either a speed-up of the slowdown or a deepening of the down-curve. And it does suggest that the climate is just about right for an adjustment to the readjustment. All of which indicates that there may be a letting up of the letdown. Of course, if the slowdown should speed up, the decrease in the rate of increase should turn an increase in the rate of decrease. In other words, the rate of deceleration would be accelerated." Every member of the audience had to be wide awake, smiling when he finished!

At the end. Famous supply-side economist Arthur Laffer gives information-packed talks throughout the United States, and to hundreds of thousands of viewers of his Public Broadcasting System television presentations. He invariably ends each talk with a wingdinger of a humorous tale. An example: A few weeks ago he told a story about our legendary hero, Robin Hood. Robin Hood, Laffer guessed in his concluding remarks, could well claim to be the first practicing economist. Just think how he did it — he would purchase ewes (lambs) at a local farm, have them properly prepared, and then have one of his foresters sell the meat in the town's marketplace as venison. According to Laffer, Robin Hood was a top flight economist because "He bought cheap and sold dear!" I don't know about his million other viewers, but I laughed heartily!

Implementing Comedy

The how-to of being humorous is a twofold proposition: You must make people laugh or smile. And you must time your humor so that it works when you need it most. It may be at the beginning, in the middle, at the end. Timing is a special skill in itself, but you can get some guidance from a renowned humorist, Mark Twain (a small example: "I get all the exercise I need from jumping to conclusions!"). Twain, according to Robert L. Montgomery in his book *How to Sell in the 1980s*, reports:

"In addition to his many other talents, Mark Twain was a noted raconteur who used a version of the stack-and-link idea (for constructing a talk). He could get up in front of audiences night after night, and talk for an hour or two without any notes. He used to walk through a park, in the town he was visiting, before showtime, and he would attach ideas for his speech to items in the park — such as a bench here or a tree there, or a flower bed or water fountain or bandstand along his path. Then, when he appeared on stage for his speech, he would mentally walk through the park, linking key items in his talk to what he had seen during his stroll. The associations would just flow out quite naturally. Try it. Walk through the park with Mark Twain, link what you see with what you want to remember."

It's excellent advice, the brain child of a consummate humorist.

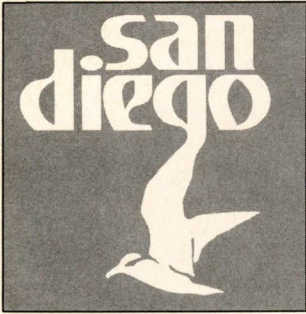
And an excellent way to work timely bits of humor into a talk. 🗣️



William J. Tobin is a columnist, writer, editor, and sales and market analyst. His articles have appeared in such publications as Sales Management Magazine, The

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Michael Pritchard's Gift of Laughter

by Sandra Hansen



How one speaker uses humor to lighten — and get sympathy for — a serious subject.

There are those who claim that the chief reason audiences tend to listen so intently to Michael Pritchard is the fact that he is six feet six inches tall, weighs 250 pounds, and when he chooses, has a voice that can rattle dishes.

However, Pritchard explains in his surprisingly cheery midwestern twang: "I receive the most attention when I speak most softly. I told a story in a child's whisper to a crowd of 6,000 people, and you could have heard a pin drop."

Although his huge shoulders and frequently belligerent expression bring to mind a night club bouncer (one of his former vocations), he happens to be a stand-up comedian, and a very successful one.

Since winning the San Francisco Stand-Up Comedy Competition in

"The ability to relax leaves us open to share those moments that touch us."

1980, his child voices, imitations and rubber face have enabled him to "yuck" his way through night club appearances, independent films and a multifigured contract with NBC.

But Pritchard, a former juvenile counselor, professes to derive the most satisfaction from another side of his career, that of a speaker campaigning against what he terms the public's "flabbergasting" indifference to the plight of juvenile offenders.

He calls this his crusade, and he wages it before criminal justice professionals, club members and, frequently, his night club audiences, by employing what he terms "the greatest of all communication tools...humor."

"Most people see social workers as the garbagemen of society," he says. "They're paid less than zookeepers. I want to teach people that counseling is valuable, rewarding work. And the common denominator for America... that magic formula we can all understand...is laughter."

Brightening a Bleak Topic

Pritchard has wielded his weapon of wit at over 200 benefits in the past 18 months, one of which covered the cost of color television sets and new floors at San Francisco's Juvenile Hall. His lectures are chiefly based upon reminiscences about his days as a "zoo-keeper," punctuated with voices, faces and a cast of characters you definitely wouldn't want to bring home to mother.

He says that humor is the best device of all to create audience sympathy for what is essentially a bleak topic.

"I discovered that when I worked as a juvenile counselor," Pritchard recalls. "I'd see a kid getting chewed out by some guy, and I'd stand behind him making faces, and the kid would be on the floor...and we'd be friends. I've found that those moments in life when people can laugh together...tend to stay with them a little longer."

Although Pritchard's humor addresses such unlikely topics as crime, violence and incarceration, he claims that if he didn't use this device, audiences might not want to address them at all.

"Nobody wants to hear that there's a john-john out there who will blow them away and not feel the teeniest bit of remorse," he says. "If I stood up on my soapbox and tried to preach about some of his problems, the audience would probably resent the hell out of me."

"But a light story that transforms john-john from a faceless monster into a human being is different. The audience realizes that he's a *person*, and they'll be more open to hearing about how he's been beaten, abused and malnourished, and is eating cereal three times a day. He may be violent, but he's needed to be violent in order to survive."

Pritchard cites another recent monologue as an example of this technique.

"I was outraged to discover that a plainclothes cop had shot a kid without identifying himself. *Of course* the kid ran away from him. But nobody would have believed it if I had just presented it like a newspaper account. They would have thought, 'Ho-hum, another lying hood.'

"So I told the story from the kid's

point of view. In a sense I *became* the kid, wildly describing what it was like to have some guy he'd never seen before pointing a gun at him and saying, 'Guess who?'

"It's a funny story. But because the kid had become a recognizable person, the audience sympathy turned to him. They laughed, but also said to themselves, 'Aha, cops are not always the good guys!' That story reveals so much to people, because of its humor."

Pritchard says that this sort of anecdotal approach is the best of all audience grabbers.

"People love stories," he says. "I think that the greatest speaker of all time was Jesus Christ. He told parables, and the things he said had such unique meaning and humor and simplicity. Simple humor always captures people's attention."

"If a humorous story reflects your true feelings, proper delivery will follow."

In one of his most popular stories, Pritchard exemplifies this "simple humor." He tells of riding a public bus when three young toughs began to harass a gay gentleman seated in the back.

"I could have busted them," he says. "But I decided to do something different. I made myself look as big and mean as I could, and roared at them, 'Hey, you're picking on my *boyfriend!*'"

"The kids backed right off. 'That's okay, big dude, any boyfriend of yours is a boyfriend of ours.' I sat down next to the gay guy and put my arm around him. He gaped at me and said, 'Mister, I don't know who you are, but you certainly appear to be the Lone Ranger to me.'"

Pritchard laughs his rumbling laugh. "Now, that's a terrifying situation. Gays *are* victimized. There *is* too much urban crime. But that touch of humor humanized everyone involved. Despite the punch line, there are no heroes and no villains in the story. The main point

is clear — that the most important thing in the world is how we treat each other."

Pritchard believes that the lack of this sort of focus is the main fault of most potentially powerful speeches.

"Speakers can write the most wonderful verbage," he says, "and people leave and say, 'Sure, but what was the bottom line?' I think that any speaker who wants to make a point should figure out what he or she is trying to say before ever sitting down to write the speech."

"Once that's been established, humor is a great way to take 'em where you're going, and leave 'em feeling good about the ride. You're almost sure to win the audience by beginning with humor, making your case, and ending with humor. Lincoln was great with that."

Sources

Besides his real-life adventures, Pritchard cites Lincoln, Aesop and such varied sources as *Reader's Digest* and cartoon strips as the bases for his most inspirational material.

"One of the stories I use most often came from a 'Dennis the Menace' cartoon. Margaret says to Dennis, 'Money doesn't buy happiness, you know.' And Dennis replies, 'I know. But money buys me cheeseburgers, and cheeseburgers make me happy.'"

Of course, he adds, not everyone can feel comfortable delivering such homilies. "But if a humorous story reflects your true feelings, chances are you won't have to worry about the proper delivery. It will just follow."

He believes that this element of sincerity is one of the greatest tools for successful speaking. "With the rising crime rate, some people just don't want to hear about the human side of juvenile delinquents. But when I give a talk, I don't alter my feelings to fit my audience. I say, 'This is the way things are. Don't ask me to feel guilty because I love these kids.'"

He grins. "Sometimes I'm accused by other speakers of sounding too much like a goody-goody. But the difference is, they're saying things for dramatic effect. I say them because they're *me*."

Of course, some of the antics that Pritchard also considers to be "*me*," like imitating frogs and turtles, or stuffing live black snakes down his

Word Wisdom

by David Rottman

We often hear high-powered words used with dramatic effect by successful speakers. Most of us know what those words mean in context, but we're hard put to use them ourselves. Here are four such elusive words, with hints on how to master their meaning once and for all.

1. **adumbrate** — to foreshadow, to outline or to sketch in.
This word has two meanings, both derived from the Latin roots *ad* and *umbra*, meaning "to shadow over." An adumbration can be an omen or portent: something which predicts or foretells the future by catching the "shadow" of future events as if they had already happened. On the other hand, an adumbration can be a sketch or outline of a plan or idea which is just "shaded in." To remember this word, make sure you see the root word *umbra* in the middle. Then picture an "umbrella" (from the same root) which casts a "shadow" to keep you in the "shade."
2. **dilatory** — procrastinating, delaying, dawdling.
You can remember this word by seeing the word *late* in *dilatory*, because dilatory people are often tardy, or by noting that "till a story" is done, its ending is dilatory.
3. **egregious** — outstandingly bad.
The Latin root for *herd* or *flock* is *grex* or *gregis*, as in
aggregate — to gather the flock together in a sum.
congregate — to assemble the flock.
gregarious — someone who likes to move with the flock.
segregate — to separate from the flock.
An egregious error is not only a bad error, it is also an error which sticks out from the flock and is blatant.

Quiz on Quiddities

Here are questions designed to separate the sesquipedalian from the pedestrian. The answers are given below.

1. Fill in the blanks, using each of the choices once:
Choices: cosher, kosher, cozen, cosset, coven.
A member of the witches _____ was able to _____ her cousin into the cabal. She would _____ and _____ that all was strictly _____.
2. Can you name the word with all of the following meanings?
Sigmund Freud was born with one. His mother saved it because she believed the old legend that it presaged a great future for the infant.
The ancient gods were said to put one on when they assumed human form and walked on the earth.
On small aircraft it is the removable covering on the engine; cars once sported a similar mechanism.
Monks often wear them, and in some cases donning one is part of the initiation process into the order.
3. If you can use each of the following choices once, in its proper location, you are a true word "maven."
Choices: turbid, torpid, turgid.
The once _____ (dormant) stream was now _____ (swollen) to its banks with _____ (muddy) storm waters.

Answers:

1. The sentence should read: A member of the witches coven was able to cozen her cousin into the cabal. She would cosher and cosset (or cosset and cosher) that all was strictly kosher.
2. The word is *cowl*.
3. *Torpid* means dormant or hibernating. This word also means lethargic, inactive, benumbed. *Turgid* means swollen or bloated. *Turgid* also means grandiloquent or overblown in style. *Turbid* means muddy or filled with sediment. *Turbid* also means in turmoil.

David Rottman is the publisher of the *How To Improve Your Vocabulary Newsletter*. For information on subscriptions to the newsletter, write to *Vocabulary Newsletter*, 23 Marble Terrace, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY 10706. Mr. Rottman's column, "Word Wisdom," will be appearing bi-monthly in *The Toastmaster*.

pants, are somewhat beyond the scope of the average speaker. He laughingly insists that he doesn't advocate that others practice his somewhat unorthodox attention-grabbers, but adds:

"I recently spoke at a 'Humor as a Healing Force' conference with an anthropologist who believes that the key to longevity is to remain childlike and playful throughout your life. That's how I've always been, but it's hard for some people. We're told to grow up before we're really ready. But the ability to relax and stop being afraid to appear foolish leaves us open to share those moments that touch us...moments that reach our souls. And I think that a good speaker has an obligation to share them with an audience."


Of course, not all speakers practice their theories to the extent that little children ask if they can come out and play (as Pritchard claims in his act). But he further disarms his audiences by telling them a fable that one of his nieces came across in a story book.

"A frog once let a scorpion hitch a ride on his back to get across a stream. But somewhere along the way, the scorpion stung the frog. He cried, 'Why did you do that? Now we'll both drown!' And the scorpion replied, 'I don't know. I guess it's just my nature!'"

Although Pritchard's nature is currently earning him quite a bit of money, he plans to continue to bring the same message he gives to the local Kiwanis Club to the likes of Merv, Mike and Johnny — usually while they're laughing too hard to realize he is doing so.

"I once counseled a kid who kept beating up on old ladies," he told a recent legal aid conference. "But not for the big bucks — for 20 to 30 cents a throw. I asked him, 'What can you possibly get out of it?' He said, 'What are you talking about, man? Twenty cents here...30 cents there. That stuff adds up!'"

Pritchard recalls: "The audience laughed. Now, that's the type of violent act that shocks people. It alienates them. But through the use of humor, they listened...and were ready for me to interject that while we live in a society where we spend \$500,000 on a cat food commercial, there are children starving in the streets.

"If you develop your sense of humor," the suddenly less dangerous-looking comic says, "and use it to reach people, you can have it all. You can give people the gift of laughter and, at the same time, teach them that the heart is bigger than the pocketbook." 

Sandra Hansen is a San Francisco-based writer.

Humor, Joy, Comic Spirit, Laughter, Comedy, Wit

by Susan D'Antuono

An executive search firm, in a study it conducted two years ago, discovered that younger executives (under 35) had a lesser sense of humor than their more mature counterparts. Why was this? The researchers suggested that people have become more serious since the euphoric '60s. Watergate, recession, international tensions and other modern-day horrors have produced a cynicism that is reflected in the way we look at our lives and our roles.

The study revealed, too, that as executives grew older and more mature in their attitudes, they gained confidence and perspective, along with a little humor. The researchers concluded their study with the notion that young executives who show no humor on the job are missing an important lesson: Success in any profession depends on influencing others, and a sparkling wit is still one of the best tools for doing so.

A jovial outlook helps you attain security in the midst of chaos.

All types of businesses, from the most complex multinational corporation to the mom-and-pop storefront, place a high value on humor. Top corporate executives rely on their sense of humor in order to control their image and how the public views them and their organizations. A company's image is especially at stake when it is embroiled in a crisis, and the executive

can make or break the company with the way he or she handles the crises. When Chrysler chairman Lee Iacocca was faced with his company's financial troubles, he voluntarily reduced his own salary to one dollar a year. One of his shareholders asked him to comment on this, and Iacocca replied, "Oh, don't worry, I spend it very carefully."

Perspective

Iacocca was able to find humor in his situation because he could consider the question posed to him from a different point of view. By focusing a new perspective on a troubled, embarrassing or discouraging situation, you help redirect your thinking to new ways of dealing with the problem. This momentary refocus removes you from the situation temporarily and by doing so, you see the problem in a more complete light. Taken in this larger context, crises don't seem so terrible, so permanent. Keeping a jovial outlook helps you in your attempt to attain some measure of security in the midst of chaos. A well-aimed humorous remark is a hundred times more effective than throwing up one's hands and trying to escape the situation.

A change of perspective can make you more effective in relationships with your coworkers as well. Try mentally detaching yourself from a situation in which you are interacting with familiar people. Stand back and watch your surroundings as if you were viewing a play. At once, roles of the people you observe come into focus and appear in a completely new light.

Taking risks is part of any worthwhile enterprise and in our professions, the ability to know when to take certain risks can become important. Keeping a sense of humor when considering risks can be useful in two ways.

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So don't hesitate . . . Get Into Action! Tell a friend about the benefits of Toastmasters, then invite him or her to your club's next meeting.

First, when you do try something risky and it fails, your sense of humor can save you from further insult or damage. Secondly, demonstrating humor in tense situations is itself risky, but you can use it to your advantage to show your associates that you are indeed human and sometimes make dopey mistakes. When we take the initiative in admitting error, people tend to be less critical. Revealing our faults and mistakes leads to our own self-knowledge, which in turn leads to self-confidence and improved performance. An active sense of humor is a trait many company chiefs look for in their executives. It's an indication that the executive has an active, flexible mind, doesn't take himself or herself too seriously and is capable of making better decisions.

A sense of humor shows an executive has an active, flexible mind.

While the beneficial effects of humor in tense business or social situations relieve the psychological stress we may suffer, humor has positive physical effects for us, too.

In 1976, publisher Norman Cousins wrote about laughing himself to recovery from a degenerative spinal condition. Doctors told him his illness may have been brought on by adrenal exhaustion, an endocrine imbalance that can be caused by negative emotions like tension, frustration or suppressed rage. Cousins had read of the role of the endocrine system in fighting disease, and he wondered, If negative emotions can damage the human system, could positive emotions have a therapeutic value? Was it possible for joyfulness, hilarity, mirth, to restore the chemical balance and help his system repair itself?

Physicians gave Cousins a one in 500 chance of survival, but Cousins wasn't ready to accept this decision and chose to take matters into his own hands. He checked out of his hospital room into a hotel and ordered several tapes of the Candid Camera television show. With other humorous films and books, Cousins managed to provide himself with a program of belly laughter that worked as surely as an anesthetic for relieving some of his pain. Within a few years, Cousins recovered fully and now lectures all over the world about his "laugh therapy."

While some doctors disparaged his remarks, saying that he would have recovered anyway, others began seriously looking into the biology of laughter. Some new discoveries in modern biochemical research and in the mental health field have given the old saw "Laughter is the best medicine" a brand new meaning.

First, in the broadest sense, laughter is just plain good exercise. A good belly laugh gives the diaphragm, thorax, abdomen, heart, lungs (and some researchers think, even the liver) a good workout. A hearty chuckle produces well-documented physical effects, many of them akin to modern exercise. Muscles in the abdomen, chest, shoulders and elsewhere contract, the heart rate and blood pressure increase. The pulse can double from 60 to 120, giving us the effects, as it were, of a "stationary jogging."

Second, laughter can relieve some of the state-of-mind discomforts: boredom, tension, guilt, depression, headaches and backaches. It also stimulates the brain to produce certain hormones that trigger the release of endorphins, natural opiates the brain itself produces, that can reduce pain or discomfort. Laughter literally "breaks us up" when it releases tensions or surplus energy.

Emerging Wisdom

It seems, then, there is a good deal of evidence that the person with a healthy sense of humor has better healing qualities as well as better effectiveness on the job. But how does humor make us, as individuals, more human?

Humanistic psychologists, rejecting the idea that "human" necessarily means infallible and limited, regard the humor-making aspect of human beings as a means of "actualizing" the self while coping with life's ups and downs. Humor prevents you from becoming "stuck" in annoying situations, because it helps you distance yourself from the difficulty. You become more than the person who can't find a parking space or who just blew the Jones account. You can say to yourself "This situation is absurd, but I'm not."

We can measure our growth as we observe our use of humor in our everyday life. Humor seems to grow out of an emerging wisdom. The power of humor recognizes this humanness, and with it we can achieve a level of success as we laugh with and at ourselves. And as we encourage others to laugh with us, all of us benefit as we share our humanity. 🗣️

Susan D'Antuono is a writer based in Santa Ana, California.

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Easy Risers 109-56, Houston, TX

Carl W. Treleven

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John B. Maes

San Leandro 452-57, San Leandro, CA

New Clubs

5029-F Word Processors

Costa Mesa, CA — Tues., 7 a.m., Kaplans Restaurant, South Coast Plaza (840-1563).

2515-3 Mayerson Memorial Toastmasters of Westward Ho

Phoenix, AZ — Mon., 8 p.m., Westward Ho Ballroom, 618 N. Central Ave. (256-9183, 252-3159).

5027-3 Chirp 'n' Choke

Phoenix, AZ — Wed., 6 p.m., Sambo's Restaurant, 2720 W. Camelback (273-6729).

5015-4 Applied Materials

Santa Clara, CA — Tues., noon, Applied Materials, 2727 Augustine Dr. (748-5146).

5021-4 Heads-up

San Jose, CA — Wed., noon, Kaiser Electronics, 2701 Orchard Parkway.

5026-5 Sundowners

San Diego, CA — Thurs., 4:45 p.m., Garfield Learning Center, 4487 Oregon St. (234-8103).

5017-6 Metro Masters

Bloomington, MN — Tues., 7:30 a.m., Digital Equipment (Conference Room) 2901 Metro Dr., 5th fl. (854-4633).

5035-6 Northfield Area

Northfield, MN — 1st & 3rd Wed., 6 p.m., Biagio's Delicatessen, 13 Bridge Square (645-5615).

5022-9 Bon Mots

Spokane, WA — Wed., 6:30 p.m., The Bon Marche Building, Main and Wall (536-5050, x 3071).

5016-11 Butterfly-Squadron

South Bend, IN — Fri., 11:30 a.m., Memorial Hospital, 615 N. Michigan St.

1177-17 Chief Joseph

Laurel, MT — Mon., 7 p.m., Depot Cafe, 423 W. Main St. (628-8972).

5034-20 Velva Area

Velva, ND — Thurs., 7 a.m., Velva Public School, 101 W. 4th (338-2075).

2191-26 Peak Trailblazers

Colorado Springs, CO — Tues., 6:45 a.m., Denny's Restaurant, Flintridge at Academy (598-9532).

5018-26 Apple Polishers

Lakewood, CO — Wed., noon, Jefferson County Public Schools, 1209 Quay St. (231-2446).

5019-26 Tishman

Lakewood, CO — Tues., noon Tishman Building, 7201 W. Mansfield (978-8066).

5020-30 Triad

Chicago, IL — 2nd & 4th Thurs., 6:30 p.m., Beverly Church of Religious Science, 8800 S. Stonly Island Ave.

1970-33 Up Your Attitude

Las Vegas, NV — Tues., 5:45, Puggy's in the Atrium, 333 N. Rancho Dr. (648-4558).

5030-35 Tri-City

Marinette, WI — 1st & 3rd Wed., 7 p.m., Stephenson National Bank and Trust, 1820 Hall Ave. (732-1732).

4838-37 Burlington Shops

Burlington, NC — 1st & 3rd Tues., noon, Western Electric, Inc., Pioneer Room, 204 Graham-Hopedale Rd.

5031-37 Westinghouse Toastmasters

Winston-Salem, NC — 2nd & 4th Mon., 4:05 p.m., Westinghouse Turbine Components Plant.

5014-39 Early Risers

Grass Valley, CA — Mon., 6:30 a.m., Rax Roast Beef, 11801 Nevada City Hwy. (265-6573).

5024-42 University

Edmonton Alta., Can — Wed., 12:05, University of Alberta, Personnel Services & Staff Relations Training Room (432-3339).

5033-47 Brandon

Brandon, FL — Wed., 6:30 p.m., Golden Coral Steakhouse Rt. 60 (685-9050).

3963-48 Hi-Noon

Huntsville, AL — Tues., noon, Barclay South Motor Inn, 3312 S. Memorial Parkway (534-2764).

5025-48 The Hercules

Bessemer, AL — Wed., 12:45 p.m., Hercules Incorporated, Powder Plant Rd. (428-2391).

5023-53 Connecticut Natural Gas House Gang

Hartford, CT — Wed., noon, Connecticut Natural Gas Corp., 100 Columbus Blvd. (727-3123).

1118-57 Newark

Newark, CA — Tues., 7 a.m., Newark Library Community Room, 37101 Newark Blvd. (796-3562).

518-58 Sumter

Sumter, SC — 1st & 3rd Mon., 7 p.m., General Telephone Building, 400 S. Pike Rd. West (775-8404).

5032-64 Emcee

Minnedosa, Man., Can — Mon., 7 p.m., Minnedosa Schools, 90 Center Ave. W. (867-2733).

5028-73 Hawthorn

Hawthorn, Vic., Aust — 1st & 3rd Wed., 6:30 p.m., Elgin Hotel, Burwood Rd. (859-1888).

5012-U Roosevelt Roads

Ceiba, Puerto Rico — 2nd & 4th Tues., 11:55 a.m., Chief Petty Officer's Club, Roosevelt Roads (865-5225).

5013-U Ceci

Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China — Mon., bi-weekly, 5:30 p.m., China Engineering Consultants, Inc. 7th Fl., 280 Chung Hsiao E. Rd., Sec. 4 (781-4151, x 263).

Anniversaries

50 Years

Pomona 12-F, Pomona, CA
Gavel 11-1, Long Beach, CA

45 Years

Down Town 110-F, Pomona, CA
Prescott 104-3, Prescott AZ

35 Years

Cascade 566-7, Eugene, OR
Tower 578-11, South Bend, IN
Magic City 585-20, Minot, ND
Colorado Springs 555-26,
Colorado Springs, CO
Northeastern 573-28, Detroit, MI
Stevens Point 570-35, Stevens Point, WI
Wascana 577-42, Regina, Sask., Can
Syracuse 580-65, Syracuse, NY

30 Years

Blue Monday 1242-4, San Francisco, CA
Cable Car 1243-4, San Francisco, CA
Fightin 49ers 1244-4, San Francisco, CA
Mallory 1170-11, Indianapolis, IN
Russell 1258-22, Russell, Can
Hobbs 537-23, Hobbs, NM
Earlybird 1268-26, Durango, CO
Wausau 782-35, Wausau, IN
Rockwell 214-40, Columbus, OH
Northern Lights 489-42,
Edmonton, Alta., Can
Hi-Noon 1021-62, Port Huron, MI
Rome 1271-65, Rome, NY
Goldenheart 1240-U, Fairbanks, AK

25 Years

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20 Years

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Madison County Farmers 2936-24,
Battle Creek, NE
Blue Cross-Blue Shield 1232-31,
Boston, MA
Greater Williamsport 2960-38,
Williamsport, PA
L.A. Civic Center 3567-52,
Los Angeles, CA
Sharpstown 2243-56, Houston, TX
Hellfire 3599-71, Dublin, Ireland

15 Years

Sunrisers 2140-6, Crystal, MN
Northwinds 3564-26, Denver, CO
The Gabby AAAs 1701-28, Detroit, MI

Argonne 128-30, Argonne, IL
Rockcliffe Raconteurs 808-61,
Ottawa, Ont., Can
Le Club TM Lemoyne 1261-61,
Montreal, Que., Can
Xerox 1044-65, Webster, NY
Fluor Nederland 3833-U,
Haarlem, The Netherlands

10 Years

Top O The Mornin 3777-17, Butte, MT
Amana Refrigeration 1824-19, Amana, IA
Cranbrook 3532-21, Cranbrook, B.C., Can
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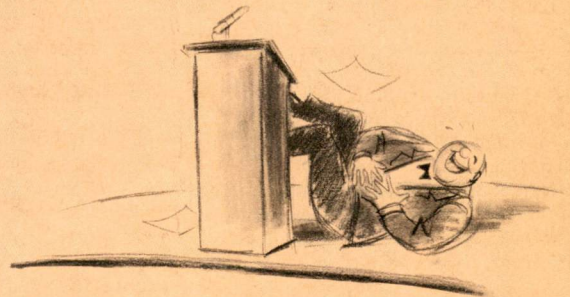
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