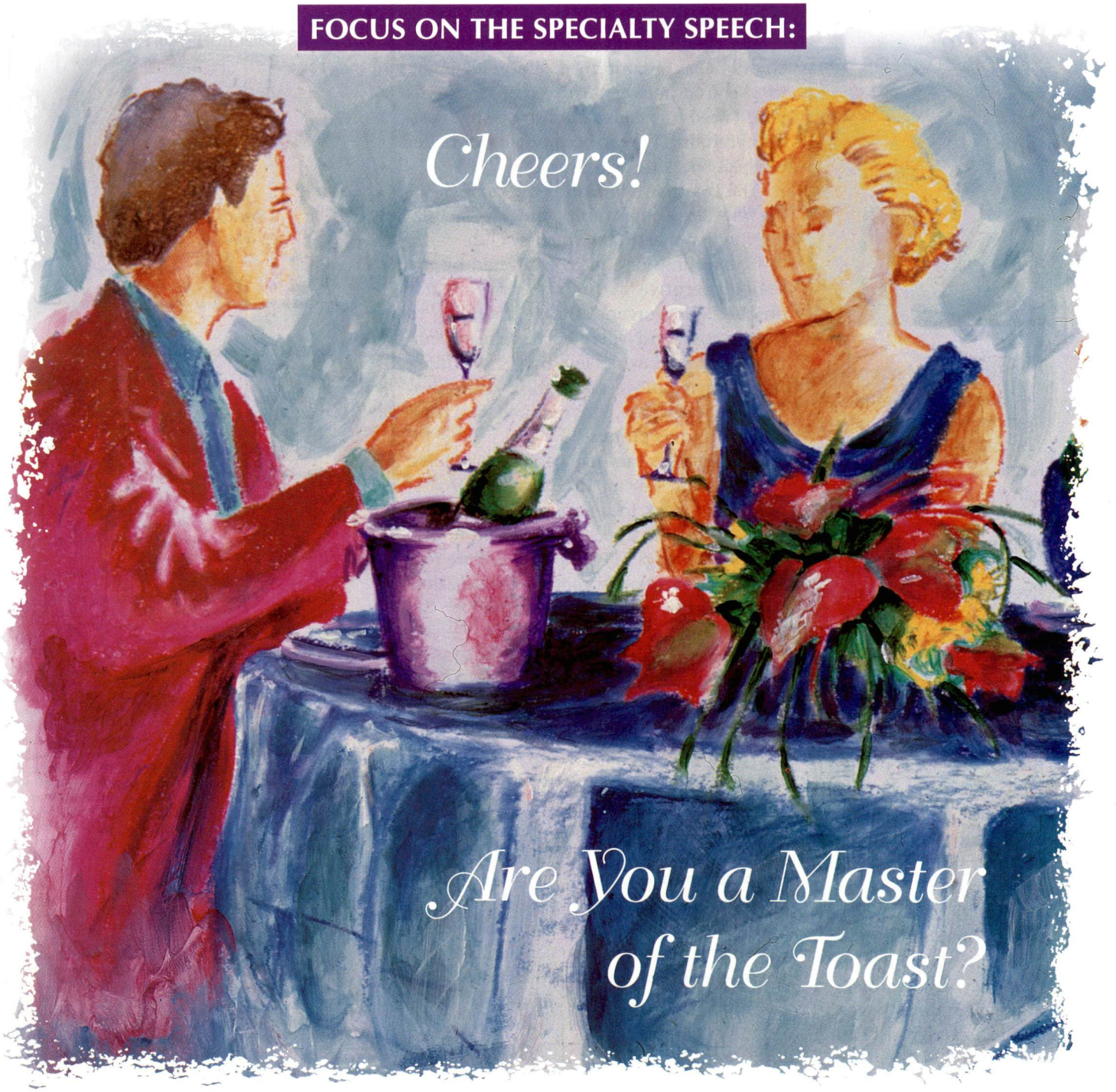
the Toastmaster

july 1994

FOCUS ON THE SPECIALTY SPEECH:



OPEN TO INTERPRETATION
Speaking to international audiences

INSPIRE YOUR AUDIENCE WITH THE MAGIC OF A STORY

viewpoint

The Miracle of a Corporate Club

This spring I attended a powerful Toastmasters demonstration meeting. The purpose was to sell a large international company and its employees on starting an "in-house" Toastmasters club.

The moment of truth arrived when the Toastmaster asked for a show of hands from those interested in helping to form a club. The presenters had done their job well, as more than 20 hands went up among the 35 employees present.

A company executive, who had remained silent until that time, rose from his chair in the back of the room to speak."I encourage all of you to take advantage of this wonderful program," he said. "Our president recently commented that our company has valuable technology just sitting on shelves — technology that could have saved the jobs of many of your coworkers and resulted in a much better bottom line than we have today.

"If more people in our company had belonged to Toastmasters, I believe those new ideas could have been sold to our top management."

His eyes filled up and his voice became emotional as he continued, "I urge all of you to join Toastmasters. This company needs you; it needs the skills demonstrated by Toastmasters today. We can become a much better company because of Toastmasters."

The Toastmasters hosting the demo meeting seized the opportunity, quickly organizing the first meeting of the new club.

The feelings and ideas expressed by the senior executive at this meeting are not unique: Many organizations, in striving to remain competitive, are putting greater emphasis on teamwork. But they are finding that many employees lack the communication and leadership skills required for a team to live up to its promise.

Toastmasters can help corporations solve this problem. But for the miracle of Toastmasters to work in a corporate setting, we must ensure that upper management understands two things: (1) In-house clubs are cost effective and (2) a corporate Toastmasters club does not add to the workload of the training and human resources staff.

As you might imagine, it is cheaper (and produces better results!) for a company to pay the total annual cost of a club, including charter and membership fees for 20 members, than to send one person away to a two-day training course or to pay for a guest speaker.

And each club is self-contained: Club members help and teach each other and elected officers take care of club operations. Support is provided by the district through a sponsor, mentor and area governor.

In a short time, companies will discover that their Toastmasters members are more confident employees, well qualified to lead and communicate their way to corporate success.

Corporations around the world need the miracle of the corporate Toastmasters club. If you have not already done so, set up a special corporate demonstration team. You will be proud of what you accomplish!

Neil Wilkinson, DTM
International President

the Toastmaster

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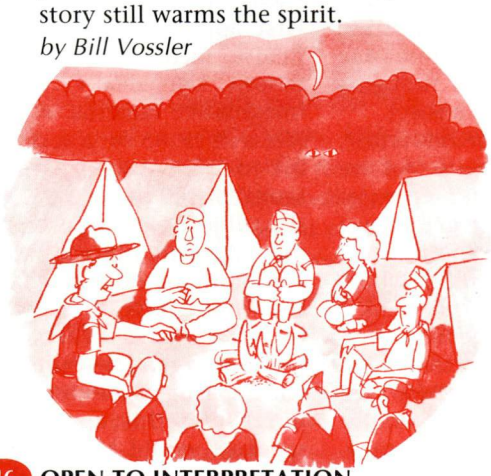

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Letters

LET'S LIGHTEN UP

I was interested in Ede Ferrari-D'Angelo's article (January 1994) dealing with the bad effects of telling sexist, ethnic or religious jokes. I agree that cruel, off-color or crude jokes have no place in Toastmasters; however, let's not carry the issue too far. At my club I am often the brunt of jokes involving my age or my tightfisted approach to spending money. Yet, I don't feel insulted or threaten to quit the club – I just return the comments in kind and tease the lawyers, bankers, accountants or salespeople in our club.

Don't get me wrong, we don't exchange crude comments at our meetings, but we do have lots of good-natured ribbing. All of our club roasts have been great fun and the members who enjoyed them the most were those being roasted.

Let's not become the victims of political correctness to the point that we avoid the good-natured give and take that make our meetings more fun.

Lighten up Toastmasters of all genders, ethnic backgrounds and political persuasions. Remember: laugh and the world laughs with you, cry and you cry alone!

Howard Brandt, DTM
South County Club 1957-8
St. Louis, Missouri

THINK OF US AS DESSERT

Thank you for doing a great job with *The Toastmaster* magazine; I look forward to receiving it every month. The articles are well-written and the information is useful to both me and my club. I have only been a Toastmaster for six months and find it exciting, challenging and well worth the effort. Your magazine helps complete the Toastmasters experience.

Tracy Scoggin
Daybreak Club 1033-44
Lubbock, Texas

TABLE THOSE TOPICS

I read the two articles on Table Topics in the May issue with great interest. It seems to me that Mr. Boyles and Mr. Barshop don't understand the purpose of Table Topics training: learning to think quickly "on your feet."

Mr. Boyles states: "Rise from your chair and walk to the front of the room." The concept behind this is that it gives you time to think.

Suppose you meet a friend on the street. He asks you a pertinent question about local politics. Now, ask him to stand there for a minute while you walk ten feet away to marshall your thoughts and give him an answer.

Then, in the second article, Mr. Barshop suggests: "Ask five volunteers to come center stage. Pass a soft ball to one of them." I have seen this activity in an elementary school classroom and I don't think it contributes to the mastery of basic Toastmasters skills.

By following these two examples, we will do nothing but waste meeting time. These authors seem to assume that Toastmasters are not intelligent enough to respond to challenging questions.

Since joining Toastmasters in 1954 and participating in hundreds of meetings, I have listened to thousands of Table Topic responses. I know what does and what does not work with mature, intelligent Toastmasters.

Robert Duphorne, CTM
Coronado Club 475-23
Albuquerque, New Mexico

CONSIDER TOPIC DIFFICULTY

I couldn't agree more with Annalore Wagner's comments in your May issue, lamenting the lack of substance in international speech contest presentations. As the level of competition increases, the difficulty and variety of the subject matters seem to decrease correspondingly. In the end, we are left with a collection of speeches that play on some variation of the well-worn theme of "you can if you think you can."

I have two suggestions for injecting variety and substance into contest speeches. First, apply a "degree of difficulty" factor to all presentations. Safe, relatively unimaginative material would rate a .8 to .85 on a scale of 0.1 to 1.0, reducing a "raw score" of 100 to 80 or 85. As the subject matter becomes more difficult, innovative or complex, the difficulty factor would increase accordingly, with a .95 – 1.0 being awarded to genuinely unique and challenging subject matter. Under this approach, speakers would be actively encouraged to attempt the difficult or unusual rather than shy away from it.

An alternative would be to have a designated theme each year. For instance, in 1994 the speech contest theme could be a recognizable social issue or concern. Subsequent years might have themes such as drama and literature, science and technology, maybe even politics.

With this approach, we would get a variety of interesting and challenging subject matter that would level the field for speakers whose forte is something other than motivation and self-improvement.

Classen Gramm, ATM
Courthouse Club 1886-5
San Diego, California

COPYRIGHT EYE-OPENER

I greatly enjoyed the informative and well written article "Copyright Primer" by Ellen M. Kozak (April). The key points were communicated clearly and concisely and the quiz was a great opener. Thank you.

Ursula E. Jost-Carraro, CTM
Grosvenor Square Club 4141-71
London, England

NINE AND COUNTING

I have one more idea for Judith E. Pearson (May), a ninth easy rule for becoming an unsuccessful Toastmaster:

9. Be unreliable. When scheduled for a role, don't show up and don't find a substitute for yourself. Leave the Toastmaster or contest chairperson to scramble at the last minute – surely someone else will jump into the breach. Soon nobody will ask you to do anything. Then you can even volunteer for roles without fear of being accepted!

Sheila Moore
Tandem Club 4658-4
Cupertino, California

Politically Incorrect: Taking the Defensive on Offensive.

by Joanne Sherman

I'm OK, You're PC

■ I DON'T THINK I'VE BEEN TO A GATHERing lately, either for business or pleasure, where a discussion about what's "politically correct" has not surfaced. The stampede toward political correctness has generated more debate and confusion than back in the recent "good old days" when all we had to argue over was what constitutes sexual harassment.

The concern over being labeled "politically incorrect" is a serious one, especially for public speakers, and writers, because we have the potential of offending not just one or two people at a time, but dozens, hundreds, or even thousands.

Recently, I experienced my first entanglement with the "politically correct" syndrome. I had written a short story for a woman's magazine. In this story, one of the characters, during a moment of shock, gasps, "Holy smoke!" An editor from the magazine called me. "I have a little problem with 'Holy smoke!'" she said, explaining her worry that the term might offend religious groups. Since that certainly was not my intention, I came up with an appropriate substitute. Two hours later she called again, "You know, in one place the main character's best friend is described as being plump. Is there a different word you can use, I mean instead of plump?"

"Definitely not!" I said, because the best friend *was* plump, and her "plumpness" was an integral part of the story.

"Okay, that's fine," the editor said, backing down quickly on that issue, but while she had me on the phone, there was just one other teensy problem. My main character's husband was bald. Could I come up with something to replace the word "bald," so as not to offend bald people, and as long as I was doing that...

Out of patience, I suggested the overzealous editor make whatever changes she felt necessary to keep from offending the sensibilities of plump, bald, and/or religious readers.

"Oh my, I couldn't do that," she said, "This is *your* story, we want it to be *your* words."

"Politically correct" or PC as it is more familiarly known, is a movement that we will identify with the '90s as an era of creative inventiveness. And inventiveness is the operative word here. A multi-page directive currently circulating via fax, computer and verbal grapevine offers guidelines to assist those of us who may be politically incorrect. An example: The person who can't read without glasses does not have bad eyesight, that person is visually impaired. My husband is deaf in one ear, but according to the PC Police, I shouldn't tell you that. I should say he's hearing deficient. Oh, and that person who just broke the window of an appliance store and ran off with a television under his (or her) arm is not a looter. No, that person is a noncompensating shopper. (Why, I can't help but wonder, are we worried about offending a looter?) Short people are "vertically challenged," tall people are "height enhanced," physically unattractive people are "appearance deficient" and dead people are "life deficient." And the very long list goes on...

This scramble to exchange one word for a prettier one, and to constantly redefine what is "correct," is a never ending process. Those of us who are public speakers, or who write for publications, have *always* been keenly aware of the need to be sensitive and concerned about the feelings of others. But we've never thought of it as being politically correct, we just called it good manners and common sense.

If the confusing term "politically incorrect" could be boiled down, we would end up with two simple and universally understood words: be nice. T

Joanne Sherman is a freelance writer and columnist living in Shelter Island, New York.

for the novice

FASCINATE With a Folk

If you follow the principles of the folktale, all your stories will touch your audiences.

■ IT HAPPENS TO EVEN THE BEST SPEAKERS. Speeches lose their sparkle. Jokes lose their punch. When your speeches sound dull, even to yourself, try something different. Storytelling is a great way to break the cycle because it forces you to put aside the mundane in favor of the dramatic.

The allure of a good story is as old as storytelling itself (the oldest, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, is thought to originate in the third millennium B.C.), and remains strong today. It is no mistake that the first assignment in the Toastmasters Storytelling manual is a folktale. Every culture has tales that have been told for generations. It seems strange that tales written long ago still have power to move people raised on *Star Wars* and *Jurassic Park*, yet they do. It is not surprising, then, that folktales have in common all the necessary elements of a good story.

Folktales are simple stories with few characters. The characters live simply and are often peasants or farmers, as many folktales have their origins in our agrarian roots. Still, we can recognize the characters in folktales because their struggles are our struggles. In all folktales, the main character learns something or overcomes an obstacle. They have a moral, often teaching lessons about life. The earliest stories in Native American cultures explain why things are the way they are, such as the Maushop creation stories of the Wampanoag Indians in New England.

Sources of folktales are everywhere. Professional storytellers keep a shiny, well-oiled selection in their repertoire and often sell audio-cassettes of recorded tales. If you don't know how to find your local storytellers, go to the library – you may find an anthology of tales by local storytellers. You will also find an endless supply of folktales published as children's picture books. Fairy tales are particularly good because they have withstood the test of time.

Stories need not be folktales to be good. However, they should contain the same elements. Master the folktale first, study it, and use it as a model for original and contemporary stories. If you follow the principles of the folktale, all your stories will touch your audiences.

In order to tell a story well, you must first be able to "see" it. In his book *Awakening the Hidden Storyteller*, Robin Moore suggests visualizing a story first, as if you were seeing it on a movie screen. If you fail to do the internal work first, your stories will seem flat and one dimensional. Read your story several times, until you know it well. Close your eyes and "see" the story unfold like a movie, then describe what you see.

Storytelling is not like other presentations – it requires the active participation of the audience. Most people are visually oriented – they need to "see" your story too. Use key details to create your movie on your listeners' mental screens. Listen to other storytellers, or carefully read several stories to see how this is done. Pick details that either give clues to understanding your characters or that move the story along. Use vivid details to paint word pictures your audience can "see," but leave out details that don't add to your audience's understanding of your story.

Now you are ready to practice telling your story. Forget everything you ever learned about public speaking and do whatever seems appropriate. If the story entails a lot of action, you need to act out some of the action. Be dramatic and have fun! Just be careful that your actions enhance the story and help people picture it: You don't

by Kathy Khoury, CTM

tale

want your gestures and "special effects" to detract from your story.

If there is little action, or if your story is scary, sit on a chair in front of your audience. If your club's set-up permits, and it won't interfere with other speakers, arrange the chairs in a semi-circle around you. This creates the feeling of campfire intimacy and allows you to drop your voice to a whisper and still be heard.

Avoid standing behind the lectern; this creates a barrier between you and the audience that a storyteller can't afford. Also, when telling a story, don't use notes. The idea is to look natural and spontaneous as if you were having a conversation with your audience.

Practice your story out loud in front of a mirror. Your biggest assets as a storyteller are your face and your voice. Use these to distinguish your characters so that your audience knows who is speaking at all times. Experiment with accent and dialect, if appropriate. Find a different voice for each character, then practice until you are able to summon each character easily.

Use facial expressions and gestures to reinforce the differences between your characters. For example, if you are telling the Russian folktale *The Wise Little Girl*, a story about a little girl who outwits the Czar, open your eyes wide with innocence and clasp your hands together when you are the little girl. Your voice for this character will be soft and sweet. As the Czar, raise one eyebrow and adopt a husky voice and coarse laugh. In contrast to the clasped hands of the little girl, as Czar, put one hand on each knee and lean forward questioning your audience as if it were the little girl.

Once you have "seen" your story, decided how to tell it and practiced your characters, give it one last look. Will any special effects add to your story? If your character is in a boat, how about a paddle? Does your character tell a monologue? How about a hat? If your story is scary, try dimming the lights and use a desk lamp as a "spotlight" for a more dramatic effect.

Small effects add to your story, but don't overdo it. Props should not take center stage. If your prop is too large or too fascinating, your audience will be marveling at it and not listening to you. Never use more than one or two props – if you do, you will spend more time changing props than telling the story. Your most valuable prop is the movie you are creating in your audience's collective mind. Don't use props as a substitute for a well-told tale.

Storytelling is similar to other types of public speaking, but it has special challenges. If you take the time to learn the art of storytelling, you will be surprised by the rewards. Storytelling is fun, challenging and rewarding in itself, but it can also have a number of unexpected results. You might be surprised to find a side of yourself that you never knew was there. You might be surprised to find that your characters slip into your speeches on occasion, or that a floppy fishing hat adds the perfect touch to an otherwise conventional speech. Storytelling gives you a new way of looking at things. It frees you to walk across that boundary of "acceptable," just enough to keep things interesting. Your characters will become more colorful. Other Toastmasters will notice that your speeches are better. By discovering your inner storyteller, you may open doors to your creativity that you didn't know were there. T

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"Never use more than one or two props. If you do, you will spend more time changing props than telling the story."

Once Upon

People love stories. They love to tell them and they love to hear them. A really good story makes a camp fire worth lighting, a cocktail party worth attending and a reunion worth holding. A story can evoke tears and laughter. A good story can touch something familiar in each of us and yet show us something new about our lives, our world and ourselves.

Stories are also powerful tools for growth and learning. They can reach resistant learners in ways that even well-delivered lectures may not. Unlike conventional lectures, stories have a way of circumventing the mind's logic to capture the imagination.

Crafting a Tale

Speakers can use stories to entertain, inspire, instruct – or do all three. Most stories are either crafted or chosen. The crafted ones are "baked from scratch"; the chosen ones are "recrafted" – in other words, tailored to fit the storyteller, audience and learning objective. The objective is paramount. Stories without purpose obviously lack relevance, but they also tend to lack charm.

Whether a speaker chooses to craft or recraft a story, several key steps are involved. The first step is to clarify the story's purpose. Here's a checklist of questions to ask yourself:

- What key point do I hope to convey with a story?
- By using a story, am I indulging in irrelevant fantasy? Is the point best communicated by analogy?
- Does the point warrant the time that's required to tell a story? Or do I need to make the point quickly and move on?
- Are listeners likely to appreciate the point if it's conveyed by a story? Or are they likely to be literal-minded and view stories as "much ado about nothing"?
- Do I know how to tell a story?

Most people can learn to tell stories well, but some may find storytelling so challenging that they prefer to use other approaches. If you decide to incorporate a story into a presentation, you may find it helpful to structure your story around the following elements: the context, the challenge and the climax.

The context

The story's context establishes the setting or scene. It's the "once upon a time" part that invites listeners into the story and lets them share the visions of the storyteller.

The first step in creating the context is to write the story so you can critique it and measure the time it takes to tell it. A story should start with a transition that uses words or cues – such as a long pause – to signify that a story is beginning. Listeners shouldn't wonder why you are telling them what you're telling them, and they shouldn't be asking themselves, "Where does this fit in?"

After the transition, it's important to create a realistic back-drop. Often, a story takes more time to relate than it takes to happen, so you should allow enough time to set the scene. Even well-told stories often violate grammatical rules and commonly shift between the past tense and the

Everyone loves to hear a good story. But stories do

A Time. . .

by Chip R. Bell

present. The past tense describes what happened; the present tense is acted out.

When creating the context of your story, ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I want listeners to feel?
- How can I build a sense of adventure, mystery, suspense, joy or invitation?

- Will listeners be able to visualize the scene I have in my mind?
- Will listeners be able to identify with or relate to the story and the picture I painted?

The challenge

A good story should contain a challenge, which can also be described as "dissonance." To communicate dissonance, it's important to create a dilemma that listeners can identify with.

The following questions can help you create dissonance:

- What do I want listeners to feel?
- How can I build a sense of concern, conflict or suspense?
- Will listeners be able to visualize the challenge or challenges the same way I do?
- Will the dilemma create enough dissonance so that listeners will desire a resolution?

The climax

The story's climax is essentially a punch line with a lesson. Of course, the lesson is usually longer than the typical punch line of a joke.

The climax is more than just an ending – it's a resolution that can be used as a tool for helping listeners learn. The storyteller instructs through resolution, and the listeners allow their need for resolution to lead them into learning. As the story is told, it educates all who hear it. However, the climax must clearly fit the challenge and also carry listeners in new and somewhat unexpected directions. A surprise twist is often what most affects an audience.

If a story were mapped out, the climax would reside on the other side of the gaps created by the challenge. If listeners leap over the gaps, thus eliminating the dissonance, they experience insight and learning. But the climax must be truly inviting, realistic and relevant. If the climax or resolution is too routine or far-fetched, there is no insight. Listeners must be able to relate to and identify with how the story ends.

When creating the climax, ask yourself the following questions:

- Will the story's ending result in insight and achieve my goals? Is a story the best way to accomplish that objective with this particular audience?
- Will the ending surprise, amuse, challenge or amaze the listeners?
- Will listeners view the ending as realistic and relevant?
- Will listeners be able to envision several possible endings before the climax is revealed?
- Will listeners gain insight and develop new attitudes, understanding or skills from the resolution?

n't just entertain; they also can inspire and instruct.

> *"Unlike conventional lectures, stories have a way of circumventing the mind's logic to capture the imagination."*

At the story's end, listeners should say, "I wouldn't have thought of that" or "I wasn't expecting that." They should also feel, upon reflection, that the story makes perfect sense.

Telling the Story

Even a well-crafted story can fail to achieve its objective if it isn't told well. Here are a few techniques and tips for effectively delivering a story.

Dramatize. Don't be afraid to ham it up a bit. Remember, you're trying to paint a picture. As you speak, focus on the scene in your mind and try to become part of it. Relive the story as you tell it.

Describe. Use a lot of details in the beginning of the story and then faze them out. Listeners need to hear more details while you're creating the context.

A good rule of thumb is to start by using more details than you think the story needs. Your goal is to draw listeners into the scene. Once you establish the context and move on to the challenge and climax, fewer details are needed.

Shift. While telling the story, you sometimes act as a guide. Other times, you're part of the action. In other words, you step in and out of the scene. These dual functions make it acceptable for the storyteller to shift between the past and present tense.

Pause. Timing is key to good storytelling. So-called "pregnant pauses" can entice listeners and imbue a story with drama and suspense. Practice your presentation by recording your story on audiotape and listening for places where pauses might add punch. Then tell your story at a pace that is slow, but not too slow.,

Gesture. Use different gestures, varied facial expressions and dramatic body movements. Such techniques can help turn a written story into a living demonstration.

The proverbial admonition to "stick by the story" is good advice. The storyteller who goes off on tangents loses momentum and ultimately frustrates the listeners. Don't introduce secondary issues or new words and concepts. And don't ask questions during the story. Questions can be effective learning tools, but they tend to break the thread of the narrative.

Avoid biting sarcasm and satire. Even sad stories should have an element of joy. If a story is too acerbic, listeners tend to resist. The same goes for exaggeration. Most storytellers tend to embellish stories and tailor them to fit their needs and goals. That's expected, but too much poetic license can actually undermine the authenticity and realism that make a story powerful. If the audience members don't buy your story, then they won't buy your learning point either.

Good story tellers, like master vintners with a full-bodied wine, know that a good story mellows and improves with age. Above all, a good story is simple, stylish and straightforward.

Storytellers tend to have their own favorite recipes for stories, but these are a good general guide:

- When choosing a story, "shop around" for the one that best meets your goals.
- Keep the blend simple. A good story has the right mixture of ingredients to make it clear, crisp and palatable.
- Add spice, but don't overseason.
- Give your story a distinctive flavor. Make it uniquely your own, even if it's a borrowed one.
- Practice makes perfect.

Where and When?

Speakers who have decided to use stories often don't know where and when to fit them into their programs.

Stories fit just about anywhere. For example, they can work as introductions or as conclusions. As an introduction, a story can announce and organize the main points of the program to follow. As a conclusion, a story can reiterate the core principles, ideas and concepts of the presentation. Using a story to wrap up a program can cut through any confusion that may have built up along the way.

Stories also act as breathers. They can provide welcome respites when topics are complex or abstract, and they can alleviate emotionally charged discussions.

Furthermore, stories can clarify vague or easily misinterpreted points by adding specific, concrete details. They can help listeners make reasonable deductions from disparate elements and, thus, better understand the speech as a whole.

Stories can be very effective when concepts are tricky – that is, when hard-to-communicate nuances are critical to understanding the presentation. Stories can engage learners emotionally and show them the consequences of taking or omitting certain actions.

Clearly, stories can enliven training or provide an attractive alternative to traditional lectures. But it isn't enough simply to "make up a story." As with most worthwhile endeavors, effective storytelling requires thorough planning. Make sure your stories pack a punch and that you have a socko delivery. T

Chip R. Bell is a partner with Performance Research Associates in Charlotte, North Carolina.

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When a speaker tells a story, listeners are exposed to symbols and images that invite them to rethink old information.

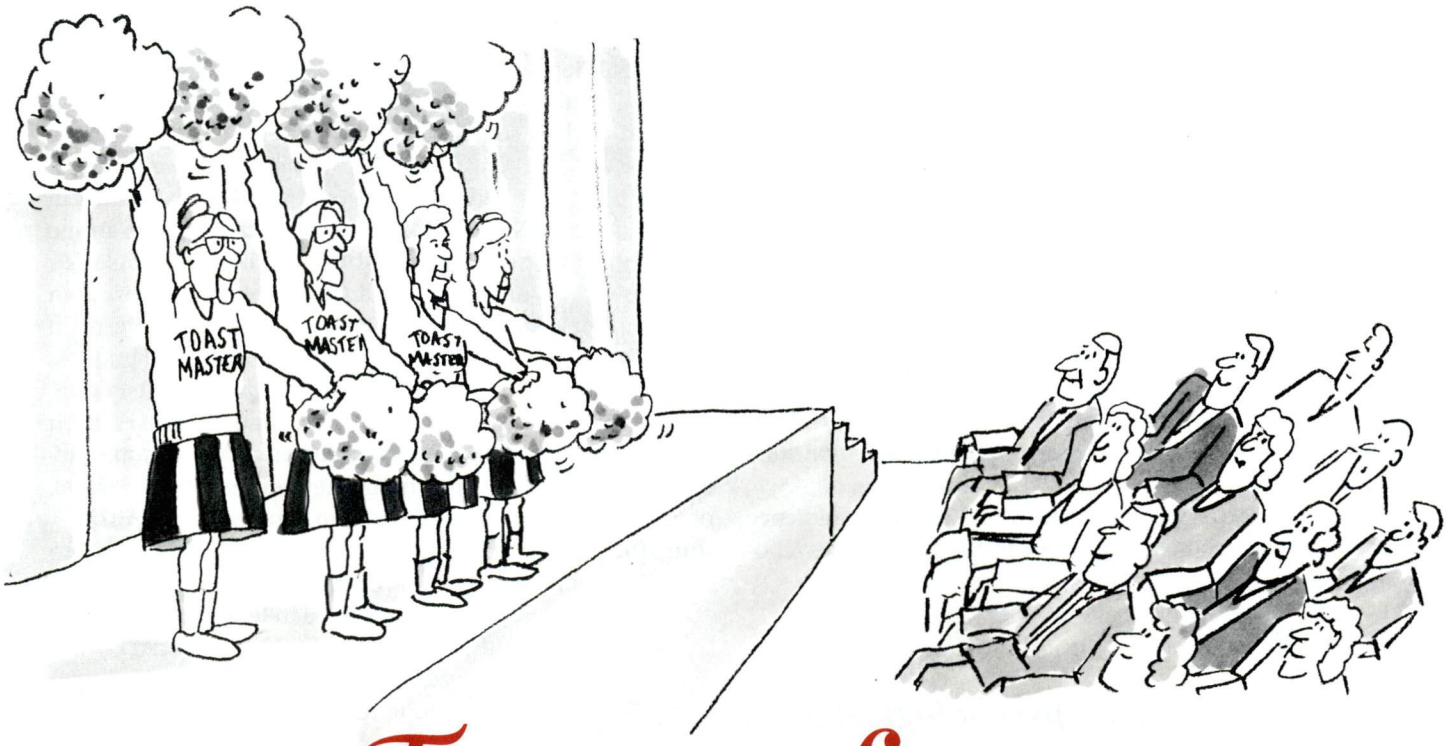


ILLUSTRATION: ANDREW TOOS

Trance-form Your Audiences with the Magic of a Story

by Grady Jim Robinson, CSP

I was sitting at a round table near the stage in the banquet room of the Hyatt Hotel in Dallas, entering my "zone" – that state of concentrated energy and anticipation that a speaker should enter just before the introduction. Suddenly the meeting planner leaned toward me and whispered, "Relax, Grady Jim, you're not on yet. I've got a little surprise for the troops."

I don't like surprises just before my introduction.

The 500 salesmen were restless and demanding more wine. I'm convinced the toughest audience in the world is an all-male audience after dinner and drinks. Before I could inquire about the nature of the surprise there was a sudden explosion of sound and onto the stage burst a tidal wave of blond hair, long legs, teeth and pompons like a Picasso suddenly coming to life and jumping off the canvas. It was the Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders prancing, dancing and gyrating to the beat of a megadecibel sound system.

They strutted (danced?), contorted and whipped their hips wildly while flashing all those white teeth through all that blond hair and, naturally, whipped the troops into a frenzy.

Now, I do like football. I even like the Cowboys. And I appreciate the dedication, hard work and commitment of these fine young aerobics artists – but please, God, not before I speak!

During the 25-minute program, I carefully watched the audience and reorganized my mind for my opening remarks. They behaved in the fashion you might expect in response to such a program: hoots and howls and a variety of the immature yelps we normally associate with teenagers at a Madonna concert. Finally, the dedicated dancers exited from the stage. The meeting planner then jumped to the platform amidst the uproar and, as the mob chanted, "We want more!" yelled into the microphone: "And now, our speaker for the evening."

I walked to the platform while the audience continued to shout, throw napkins in the air and slap high-fives. The room was a madhouse. I pulled the microphone out of the holder and stared at all these husbands, grandfathers, fathers and sons who were behaving like a lust-filled horde. I did not speak for several seconds.

Is it possible to make a speech after such a program? What means, method, technique, trick of the trade or power from above can a speaker call upon to capture the attention of such an audience?

Let the record show that within approximately 40 seconds, every one of those men were totally and eerily silent, transformed, transfixed and listening in a trance-like state to my story.

I attribute the miraculous transformation of the audience not to my skill as a storyteller, but to the mystical, psychological power of story – quite possibly the most important art form available for the shaping of human lives.

"The mystical, psychological power of story is quite possibly the most important art form available for the shaping of human lives."

THE POWER OF STORY AS SYMBOL

The story I chose to open with on that occasion was about my mother, who worked her way through college by washing dishes in the school cafeteria. As I walked slowly across the stage, the room began to settle down. I allowed them to look at me and fix their gaze upon the speaker. Through my body language, I displayed a certain amount of disdain for the audience, a subtle but obvious reproach for their sexist behavior. It was a challenging stance, and risky, but I knew that I had the moral high ground for an unspoken challenge.

At precisely the right second, I began to speak in a low but very clear voice, careful to use a rhythmic pattern that provided an auditory fixation point: "She was tall, gorgeous...her dream was to be a schoolteacher, but she didn't have one single dollar to go to college (pause). Her father died when she was 2. So she washed dishes in the school cafeteria (pause) twice a day, every day, and earned her way through Center Baptist College to become a schoolteacher. She was my mother."

The audience was immediately engaged, fixed and entranced by the story. This particular story was in stark contrast to their self-absorbed state mere seconds earlier, a slight shock to their emotional system. They were seized, challenged, mystified and shocked by the dramatic shift in thoughts, images and symbols and forced to re-examine their behavior and feelings of the past 25 minutes. As their minds shifted from scantily clad dancers to a lone woman working her way through a Baptist college, there was an immediate transformation in their minds from sex-goddess archetype to mother archetype. They subconsciously connected with their own mothers, sisters and daughters. Each man then entered into an instant search process and accepted the fact that the women he had just viewed as sex objects were symbolically his own daughter or mother – thus, the tomb-like silence. I then moved immediately to humor, allowing comic relief and subconscious release of guilt feelings for their being seduced by the dancing girls into unseemly thoughts and actions.

As I stepped onto the stage that night in Dallas, I was not fully aware of just how or why my story would instantly kick off a series of mental processes whereby the listeners were invited into new ways of thinking and being. At that time, I was an experienced storyteller who on many occasions had relied on the power of story to connect with a tough audience.

In her book, *Women Who Run With Wolves*, author Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Ph.D., writes: "Story is far older than the art and science of phychology, and will always be the elder in the equation no matter how much time passes. One of the oldest ways of telling, which intrigues me greatly, is the passionate trance state, wherein the teller 'senses' the audience... and then enters a state in the world between worlds... This is the storyteller furthering soul-making."

A storyteller does not have to know exactly why a story works in order for it to work, just as a golfer does not necessarily have to know how a golf swing works to be a good golfer. However, if you want to be a real pro and master the art, you must not only know *what* works, but *why* and *how* it works.

Grady Jim Robinson, CSP, is a professional speaker living in St. Louis, Missouri. He was the keynote speaker at Toastmasters' 1992 International Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

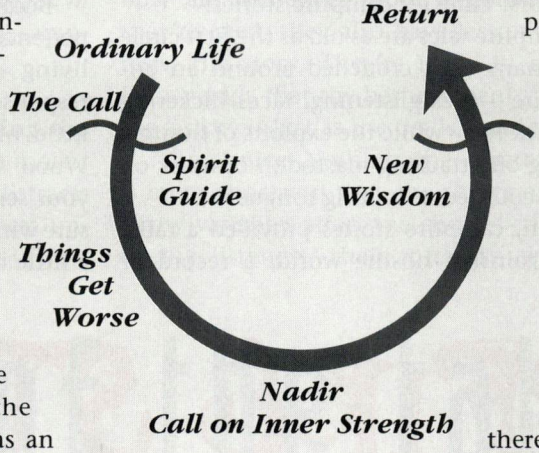
THE POWER OF THE HERO'S JOURNEY

by Frederick Gilbert, Ph.D

■ LUKE SKYWALKER is hurtling toward the nuclear reactor of the dreaded Death Star in *Star Wars*. Empire fighters are in hot pursuit. At the last moment, Luke hears Obi-Wan Kenobi say, "Trust the Force," and Luke turns off his guidance computer. He evades his pursuers and blows up the Death Star.

In *The Wizard of Oz,* Dorothy is held prisoner in the castle of the Wicked Witch. An hour-glass measures the minutes she has to live. All hope is gone. Suddenly the image of Auntie Em appears in the crystal ball. Dorothy sobs, "Oh Auntie Em, I'm scared." Back in Kansas, she tells everyone of her adventure, and the lesson she learned: "There's no place like home."

Both *Star Wars* and *The Wizard of Oz* follow story lines often seen in the best Hollywood films: that of the "ordinary" hero. Mythologist Joseph Campbell describes the appeal of such stories in *Hero With A Thousand Faces*. Stories of mythic proportions involve life's basic lessons. Typically, the story's main character starts out as an ordinary person who gets a "call to adventure" – either by choice or by circumstance.



The protagonist leaves the comforts of home and family to begin the journey. Along the way there are life-threatening challenges.

Things get worse. Finally, it looks like the end – there's no hope. Then, at the point of greatest despair, the hero finds some inner strength to triumph over the odds. This inner strength is usually the message, or moral, of the story: "Trust the Force;" "There's no place like home."

The hero prevails over evil. He or she returns to ordinary life, but with new wisdom. This wisdom is then communicated to the rest of society for everyone's benefit. The above diagram illustrates the key points in the journey.

Campbell's model helps us understand the value of heroic stories like those of Luke Skywalker and Dorothy. These types of stories tap into universal human themes. They are used to communicate the basic truths and values we hold dear.

Of what value is this to speakers in business or public life? As you craft stories to use in your speeches, consider the theme of the hero's journey. Topics as wide-ranging in content as altruism for the United Way to quality improvement in industry can fit this pattern. For example, tell how the main character took a risk, struggled against opposition, got in touch with fundamental values (e.g., long-term customer relationships over short-term profits) and helped the company prevail.

By using this storytelling approach, you will tap into a powerful, unconscious reservoir in your audience: the shared experience of overcoming life's hurdles, of striving to excel. And when your stories touch this, your audience will not only hear your message, they will *remember* it – as with the lessons we learn form the best loved stories.

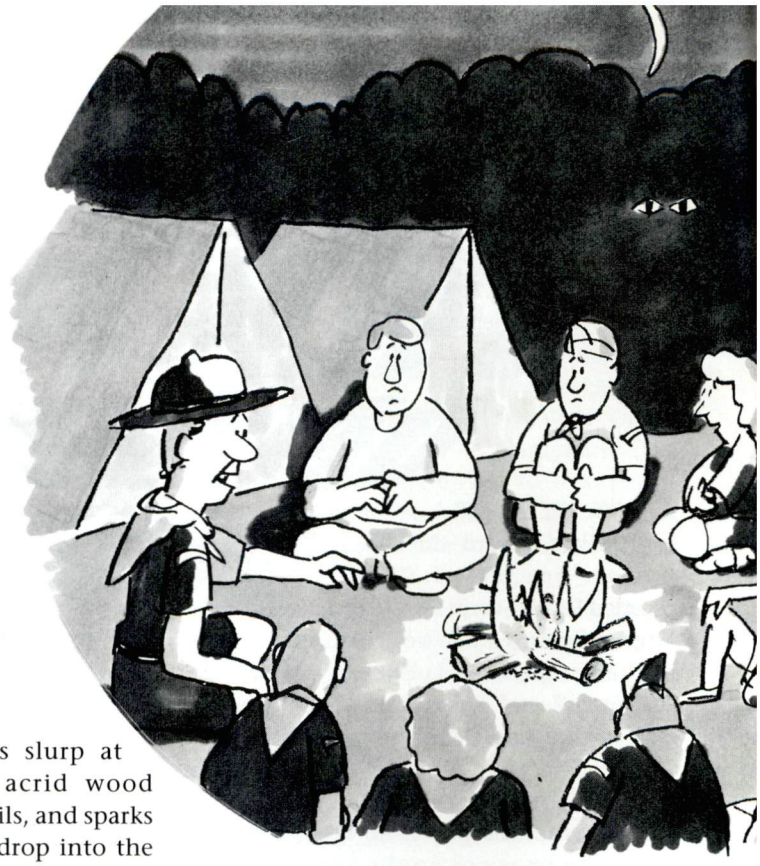
Click, click, click... "Oh, Auntie Em, there's no place like home." T

Frederick Gilbert, Ph.D., is president of Frederick Gilbert Associates, Inc., a training and consulting firm in Redwood City, California.

Reprinted from *PowerSpeaking*, Winter Quarter, 1990.

Publishers Note: Wouldn't you like to incorporate the power of storytelling in your speeches?

The Toastmasters International Advanced Communication and Leadership manual, Storytelling (Catalog No. 226-K), can help you learn storytelling skills. By completing the five projects you will learn to create a variety of your own stories and how to use vivid imagery and voice to enhance the story and arouse emotions in your audience. Cost is only $2.50 (U.S.) plus postage.



Once a record of bravery and a way to pass on tribal culture, the campfire story still warms the spirit.

CAMPFIRE STORIES:

by Bill Vossler

Squadrons of mosquitoes slurp at your neck and arms, acrid wood smoke seeps up your nostrils, and sparks pop onto your socks as stars drop into the blackening sky – ahh, summer! The Great Outdoors! Time for campfire stories!

Campfire tales are as old as the first circle of humans who crouched around an ancient fire – eyes glistening, faces flickering red-black-red – while the exploits of hunters fending off attacking mastodon or musk ox were recounted in halting tongues.

Then, campfire stories provided a talisman against a hostile world, a record of bravery, and a way to pass on the culture of the tribe. Now, campfire stories are told for the sheer pleasure of setting aside the mundane and engaging the imagination as the night nuzzles uncomfortably close.

WHAT MAKES CAMPFIRE STORIES SPECIAL?

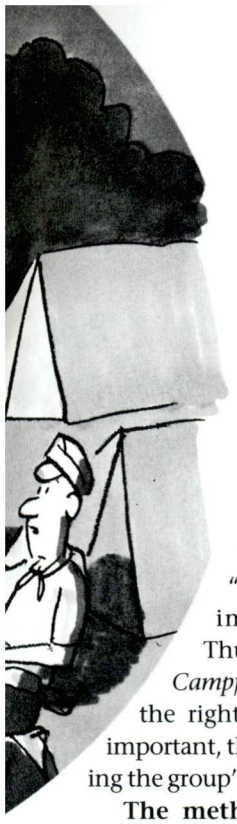
One reason is the campfire itself. "Human beings have always been fascinated by campfires," says Doug Wood, a storyteller, guide and author from Sartell, Minnesota. "Everyone will be around the campfire, putting little twigs in it, arranging the logs, staring into it. The campfire is a magnet. It's the center of human activity."

Because it's different from the usual experience of driving in a car or sitting in a living room, a campfire evokes unusual responses and emotions. "Most people feel a little bit vulnerable around a campfire," Wood says. "As night is dropping down, your senses are heightened. You're not too sure what the sounds are in the night. You're a little bit worried about, say, bears. People are ready to hear stories, and to use their imaginations to participate in them. So you take that atmosphere and it enables you to create some magic with campfire stories."

As a result of that created magic, the type of story told around a campfire is different from a story told at a party or workshop. The environment creates a sense of the mysterious and the mystical, so stories told around campfires also tend to be mysterious and mystical.

Types of campfire stories run the gamut from ghost stories, fables, tall tales and legends or myths, to nature stories, Native American lore, even personal experiences.

ILLUSTRATION: ANDREW TOOS



the art of the tale

"My favorites," Doug Wood says, "have to do with the earth, the environment, natural history, because I'm always trying to educate while I entertain. I especially like Native American stories, about the moon or stars."

TELLING CAMPFIRE STORIES

"The method of telling a story is important," says LaRue A. Thurston in the *Complete Book of Campfire Programs*. "While choosing the right moment of telling a story is important, the most important factor in holding the group's attention is the choice of story."

The method: How a story is told can make the difference between a memorable tale and a ho-hum narrative. William Forgey, in *Campfire Stories – Things That Go Bump In The Night,* offers these tips for telling campfire stories:

1. **The storyteller must enjoy telling the story.** Ham it up, he says. Make a fool of yourself. Being stiff or formal distracts from the story and makes listeners uncomfortable.
2. **Be in close physical contact.** The closer the better. Eye contact is an absolute must.
3. **Set a quiet mood.**
4. **Scream when it's time to scream.** Use different inflections in your voice to add moments of fear or excitement to the story.

Wood, who also teaches storytelling workshops, says, "The basic principles of telling a good story are pacing, timing and memory, as well as use of words, gestures, hands, eyes and face. But the crucial element is the ending: It's irritating and disappointing to lead your listeners to the punchline of a story and then not be able to remember it.

"The key," he says, "is to forget the rest of the story. Make it up as you go. Use your imagination, embellish, change the names, it doesn't matter. All that matters is that you remember where you're going. Try to make the story your own. If you plot along trying to remember it word for word, you'll forget. It won't make sense any more. It's like a canoe trip: You look in the distance to see where you're going, and then you figure out how to get there."

The moment: As with all storytelling, timing is everything. A story will have a different effect on people if it's told at noon under a blazing sun or at midnight in moonlight before the dying embers of a fire. The weather, the season, and the events of the day can also affect the moment of the story.

"Set a quiet mood," Forgey advises. "I find that tired audiences are the best." Not only are audiences more receptive when they're tired, they also have less energy to resist the story. They're ready to believe! Forgey adds that the best moment for telling a story is just as the fire is burning out.

The choice: Nothing, the experts agree, is more important than the choice of story. Many variables affect the choice – the ages of the listeners, their interests, whether they're close relatives or not. ("Oh, you've already heard that one? Ten times?")

Ted Trueblood, a noted nature writer, said a campfire warms the spirit as well as the body. He might have added that campfire stories do the same thing.

Sometimes adding just the right kindling turns a tiny flame of a story into a conflagration that will hold the nipping little everyday cares away for a while, out there in the darkness beyond the circle of light. T

Bill Vossler is a freelance writer in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

"It's like a canoe trip: You look in the distance to see where you're going, and then you figure out how to get there."


Don't get caught with your foot in your mouth
ASHER

when speaking to an international audience.

OPEN TO INTERPRETATION

by Robert Cockburn, ATM

Working with NATO in Luxembourg for the past 10 years has provided me with a fantastic opportunity to be a part of the "international audience" and get some insight into different cultures. I share office space with five employees of five different nationalities and five different mother tongues. My supervisor is from a sixth country and our office manager a seventh.

There is a downside to the situation: working in an international environment presents unlimited opportunities to put one's foot in the mouth. Hardly a day goes by without someone doing or saying something that raises an eyebrow and – fortunately – causes a chuckle. Because of language barriers, I have been understood to have said some rather off-the-wall remarks, such as:

To my secretary: "Do you like sex?"

To my boss: "Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn." (Actually, what I said was ruder.)

To my boss' wife: "No he can't come to the phone. He's at his office in his secretary at the moment." (My boss' wife laughed; he didn't).

To a co-worker: "I'll be happy to work the weekend for you."

As you might imagine, working in an international environment is fraught with difficulties caused by miscommunication. Had it not been for the kind understanding of my co-workers and the fact that they make similar linguistic and cultural mistakes just as often, war would have been declared years ago.

In Toastmasters, as in the business world, it is likely that most people will have the opportunity to deal with an international audience at some point. How can we avoid making mistakes when communicating with people of different nationalities? There is no surefire way; but that's not going to stop us, is it? Fortunately, there are several things we can do to minimize the risk of offending others.

ILLUSTRATION: NEAL ASHER

Selecting a Topic

Surprisingly, selecting a topic is often easier when speaking to a foreign audience. The main two reasons for this are: 1) they probably haven't heard you speak before so you can reuse an old topic that worked, and 2) you have been asked to speak precisely because of your expertise on a particular subject. Another often overlooked possibility is to ask the person who has arranged the speaking engagement to provide a list of ideas. Better still, give your contact person a list of your favorite topics – those with which you know you can shine – and have him or her select one that will most appeal to the audience.

One word of warning regarding asking your contact person or another "local" for advice: In many cultures it is unforgivable to criticize. So when asking if you can do something you may be told "yes", regardless of what the effects will be. Instead, ask specific questions such as: What would they do in order to achieve the desired result? Or what does a certain word or phrase mean to them? One excellent source of unbiased information is your embassy in their country or their embassy in yours. Trade or tourist offices are also useful and quite willing to help.

> *"Many European audiences don't appreciate the old American standby, the motivational 'How I became a better person and you can too' personal development type of speech."*

What's the Purpose?

Whether you want to inform, persuade, entertain or sell, your speech purpose must be clear or you may as well not bother. The purpose of a speech goes hand in hand with the topic, though it bears special attention when speaking to an unfamiliar audience composed of people from different cultures. For example, different nations have different styles of persuasion. Try to do it your way and you may not succeed. In North America, commercials are short – often 30 seconds or less. A friend of mine was hired to make a soap commercial for an Arab country. It had no music, no happy people dancing around in green meadows, just a man talking about how good the soap was – for a couple of hours!

And many European audiences don't appreciate the old American standby, the motivational "How I became a better person and you can too" personal development type of speech. I have been told by European Toastmasters that these speeches seem artificial, pretentious, and that the audience can't relate to them.

When speaking, I try to entertain audiences by using personal experiences to demonstrate how I learned something that the audience already knows. Avoid telling your audience how things are done "back home," even in comparison with their better way. The normal reaction is akin to two bumper stickers I saw in Florida: "I don't care how you do it up north" and "If it's so much better up north, I'll help you pack."

Humor

Toastmasters' 1990 International Speech Contest winner David Brooks said, "When we laugh we relax, and when we relax we learn." Humor, though useful in any speech, is the trickiest speaking skill to master. It is based on so many different factors, most of which are learned from our environment. If the subject and material are familiar to us, we are more likely to laugh. Try to find out what kind of jokes are typical for the people you will be speaking to; not all topics are universal. Jokes about famous people – politicians, for example – work at home because everybody knows these people's fatal flaws, and it is customary to poke fun at them. This does not necessarily hold true for an audience you are addressing in a foreign country, however. Even reusing a joke told to you by a local may not work. While visiting one country, I was shown a new and old piece of money. The face on the older bill looked older and the person appeared to be scowling. The scowl was explained to be a sign of concern over the country's economic crisis. The first time I heard this anecdote, everybody laughed. It was a totally different story when I repeated the joke. They had heard it before, but it was their country's problem and who was I to tell them how to run their country? (Remember the bumper sticker...)

It is safe to make fun of yourself, but only sparingly. Since you are supposed to be an expert, the audience doesn't want to laugh at you too much. Let the audience know when you are going to tell a joke, prepare them for it. Try explaining the punch line, or at least the idea of the joke, as you tell it or even before. If the joke is good, this will not hurt and it lets the audience know they are supposed to laugh. Often when people don't understand a joke they assume it was about them, and then they definitely don't laugh.

Content

In writing the body of a speech, each fact or supporting idea is chosen based on its supposed effect on the audience. This will not change because the audience does. As you select your points, think about what you want each

point to accomplish and consider whether it will do so with your particular audience and why you expect it to have that effect. If in doubt, check it out with your contact person.

If you prefer to quote famous people, make sure the audience knows who they are and hold them in the same regard as you do. Again, remember the bumper stickers. A rule of thumb is that you can use a quote if it is good enough to stand on its own, without needing the support of the identity of whomever is being quoted.

Word usage is another trap speakers often fall into. Avoid jargon, slang or unfamiliar use of a word. Always use the dictionary's meaning, and not the fourth or fifth meaning either. Also, if talking to a group who speaks or is learning British as opposed to American English, use a dictionary that provides those different definitions as well.

Delivery

As with any speech or presentation, the delivery can make or break what you are trying to accomplish. In every culture there are standard methods of delivery which are used to achieve different goals. If possible, try to observe some speeches by a local politician. Even if you don't understand the language, a lot can be learned from the delivery style. Try to absorb some of the styles; it will help the audience understand what you are trying to say. Remember, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. If their President stands tall and doesn't move while speaking, then you would be well advised not to run around on the stage.

Be careful with dramatic presentations or big changes in vocal tone. Regardless of how clearly you speak, every time you change your voice, i.e. get excited or display passion, it can take the audience a while to get used to your new voice. This is distracting and may cause them to miss an important point. It is best to take it slowly, pausing a little more frequently. Above all, don't shout. There are too many jokes about people who talk loudly so foreigners can understand them. And be sure to check with your contact regarding specific hand gestures. In some countries showing the audience the back of your hand during a gesture can be more insulting than slapping them with it. And by all means, use visual aids. If the audience is not comfortable with the language you are speaking, view graphs will allow them to read and understand what you are saying.

"Remember, when in Rome, do as the Romans do. If their President stands tall and doesn't move while speaking, then you would be well advised not to run around on the stage."

Using the Local Language

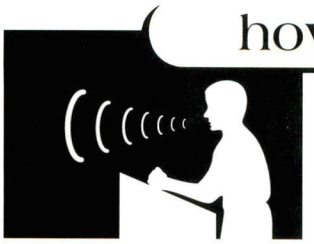
When speaking to a group that usually speaks a language different from your own, there is always a temptation to say a few words in the home language. Fight the temptation! The dangers are numerous and far outweigh any possible benefit. You may get it wrong and be laughed at, or even be offensive. People who disagree with this view often cite John F. Kennedy's "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech as an example of the benefits of trying this. There are mixed opinions on this speech. What occurred was not a simple grammatical error such as using "I is" instead of "I am." Rather, the President of the United States told the world "I am a cream-filled doughnut." Several Germans have told me, "If Kennedy had wanted to say it correctly he should have asked." Look at this type of mistake from another point of view. What would have happened if Khrushchev had said, "I want to have piece *of* you" instead of "I want to have peace *with* you." One little change in the wording. Would the results have been positive?

Another danger is that you can be misunderstood even if you say the foreign phrase correctly. I speak French and once used a French expression in a speech delivered in English that was intended as a joke. This totally confused the audience. The French, who made up about 80 percent of the audience, didn't believe I really meant what I had said and missed much of my speech trying to figure out what I really meant. The rest, who couldn't speak French, didn't understand it at all!

One friend of mine summed up the dilemma of using the local language rather succinctly: "I have been invited to speak in a certain language; they know what that entails better than I." If you were from Texas and had been asked to speak to a group in New England or Scotland, would you try to imitate their accent? Probably not. The principle is the same: Be yourself. It is you the audience came to hear.

There are few things in this world as thrilling or as satisfying as the warm ovation one gets after delivering a good speech. Toastmasters know this well. With the world getting smaller, the chance of our being invited to speak outside our ethnic environment is increasing every day. As Toastmasters, we have already developed the skills necessary to speak to any audience. When the opportunity abroad arises, seize it! The applause will be more gratifying than you could have imagined.

Robert Cockburn, ATM, is a member of Bossuet Gaveliers Club 2175-U in Capellen, Luxembourg.



Simple ways to catch 'em by the tale.

Reel In Those TALL TALE Awards!

ILLUSTRATION: ANDREW TOOS

■ HAVE YOU EVER TOLD A TALL TALE TO an audience who looked back at you with the glassy-eyed stare associated with a school of dead fish? Well, try these tips for making your tall tales become so alive, your listeners will swallow them whole – hook, line and sinker.

1. ***THE LURE: A Colorful, Catchy Title.*** Tickle the audience's fancy by using titles that lend themselves to a good story. You can do this by using words like "How" or "Why" in your title. How it was invented, how it got its name, why something happens, why something is true – these are all good story starters. Lure the audience from the beginning, when you are introduced, so they want to hear more. Here are some examples:

- How the Great Rift Valley Got Its Name
- How Bumblebees Got Their Stripes
- How Nils Olson Became a Legend
- How the West Was Won, and Why I Had to Give It Back
- Why Grits Caused the Confederacy to Fall
- Why Santa Never Flies Commercial
- The *Real* Reason Birds Fly South for the Winter

A catchy title captures the audience's curiosity. By assuming that they, like you, are curious to learn "the truth" behind your speech topic, all you have to do is answer the "how" or "why" to pull them into the story.

2. ***THE BAIT: Tasty Exaggeration.*** To make the audience bite, you must think bigger than life. Figure out what is reasonable, then go beyond that to stretch your small tale into a tall one. Here are some examples:

- If the Great Rift Valley was created by a tribe digging a grave, line up the gravediggers 'til they stretch for 200 miles. Then go one step further and picture them *still* digging today.
- Don't ask people to take your word for it. Invent facts and sources to substantiate or verify what you say. Tell them your tale was handed down from the Begats, generation from generation, 'til it was told by your grandfather to your father,

by Jorja Derby Kelley, ATM

and your father passed it down to you. Invent your own credibility.

- Don't keep anything its normal size; pretend you're from Texas and make it bigger and fiercer and grander. Describe adjectives in detail, by using ridiculous pictures: "It was *so* hot, two trees were fighting over a dog;" "It was *so* windy, the cows were plastered up against the barn until the wind changed;" or "The buffalo chips were *so* big, and the Kansas wind *so* strong, that when the gusts caught them, they blew around the world. Hence the phrase, "When the chips hit the fan." And *"That's* why all the UFO sightings were reported a hundred years later!"

3. *THE HOOK: A Plot That's Easy to Swallow.* Catch them by surprise. Reword the well-known moral of a story (*Aesop's Fables)* or famous quotation (*Poor Richard's Almanac* by Benjamin Franklin) until it *resembles* the original, but means something entirely different. One way is to change or transpose the first letters. For example:

- "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones" becomes "People who live in glass houses shouldn't stow thrones."
- "Never look a gift horse in the mouth" becomes "Never hook a miffed horse in the mouth."

Another way is to just make the quote sound similar. For example:

- "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise" becomes "Surly to bed and surly to rise, makes a man stealthy, Elsie surmised."

Once you have the new, distorted moral or quotation, go back and write a new story that fits it. This will become your plot.

4. *THE NET: Scoop Them With a Memorable Last Line.* You can do this two ways:

- Save your moral for the very last line as a "gotchya." For instance, consider concluding with "And the moral of the story is..."
- Repeat your "how" or "why" title: "And *that's* how the Great Rift Valley got its name."

So if you are fishing for compliments, remember to use your lure, bait, hook and net properly. And *that's* how to reel in those tall tale awards – hook, line and sinker. T

Jorja Derby Kelley, ATM is a member of the Playground Club 1797-29 in Fort Walton Beach, Florida.

"Invent facts and sources to substantiate or verify what you say. Invent your own credibility."

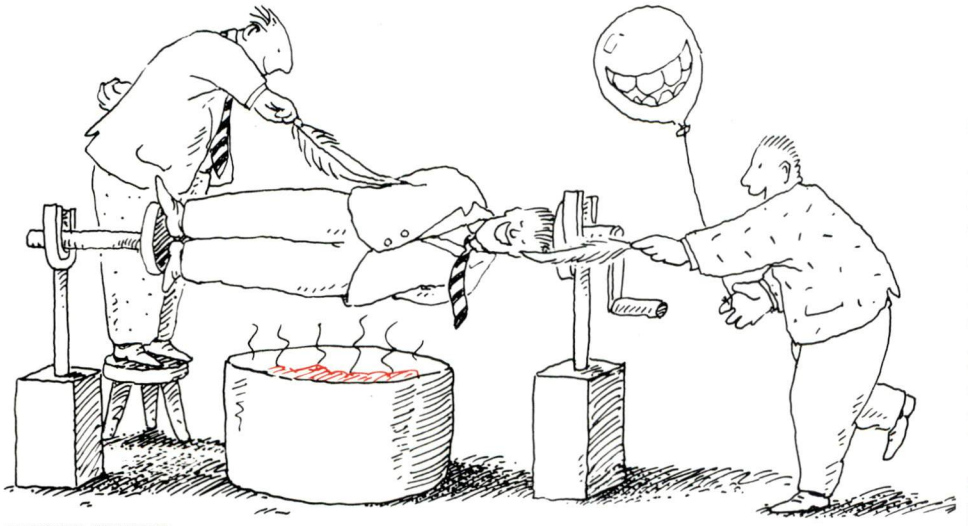


ILLUSTRATION: DIRK HAGNER

DON'T LET THEM ROAST THE HOST:

How to prepare as Master of Ceremonies

As host for the evening, you are the mortar that will hold the show together.

by Karen Robertson

If anyone knows you are a Toastmaster, chances are you sooner or later will be invited to act as master of ceremonies at a retirement, reunion or award banquet. Often, these affairs are enjoyed by the person being honored, but are just a matter of fulfilling obligations for those who attend. However, with the help of proper planning and some basic Toastmasters skills, you can turn a ho-hum presentation into a great program that's fun for everyone involved. Here are a few pointers to get you started:

■ **Be prepared**. Don't even think about "winging it." People attending this affair expect to be entertained. And even if they don't know what to expect, no one wants to be bored. The program requires planning and coordination, so start early to gather information, choose speakers and develop a theme.

■ **Choose good speakers.** You'll undoubtedly be approached by volunteers who value their stories of the past and insist on sharing them. You can only hope they are great storytellers. By sticking to a limited number of speakers, you'll have a way out by saying, "We'd love to hear you speak, but the program is already full."

Then there are those who should be asked to speak as a matter of protocol. They may not have anything interesting to say, but their position warrants the invitation. By talking to all presenters ahead of time, you'll get a general idea of what each presenter plans to do and you can hope to ward off embarrassing comments at showtime. Find out who will present gifts, recite poetry, tell jokes or share a story. Encourage all presenters to write out what they have to say and practice their delivery. Unfortunately, not everyone has had Toastmasters training and you may need to offer some pointers.

■ **Set time limits.** Give each speaker a time limit and make sure they understand the need to stay on schedule. Never trust a presenter's "good judgment" – encourage them to time their speech to make sure it fits the limit. Explain the timing signals and reach an agreement on how to warn speakers when their time is almost up. Flashing colored lights obviously is too conspicuous. A popular method is for the emcee to walk toward the front of the room a few minutes before the speaker needs to wrap up. This looks professional and shows the audience that you are in control and everything is carefully planned.

A more drastic alternative is to walk toward the podium, wait for a good ending and then quickly start the applause. This is tricky and must be done without embarrassing the speaker or making it look like he or she was cut off. However, this won't be necessary if the ground rules are clear from the start.

■ **Check your bag of tricks.** As host for the evening, you are the mortar that will hold the show together. Even if every speaker lacks pizzazz, the burden is on you to make the show enjoyable.

Consider using as much program variety as possible. Use props, slides or video equipment; music or other sound effects; and add sparkle to your comments by incorporating

quotes, poetry and humor. Make sure any presentation of plaques, gifts or awards is done efficiently. Collect every possible scrap of information about the honoree and look for unique ways of presenting the information. Remember, you can always eliminate extra material, but be armed with a bag full of tricks, just in case you'll need them.

■ **Allow the audience to participate.** Plan an activity that includes the audience – it may be as simple as asking people to stand and be recognized according to the location from which they traveled or how many years they've known the honoree. Depending on the nature of the program, there may be cheering or chanting and the audience may even be asked to create other sound effects for added excitement.

■ **Use notecards to plan your program.** Write every story, joke, activity and idea on individual file cards. As the planning progresses, all these cards will become fillers, transitions and energizers. Spread out the fun; take everything you have and put it together so that there is variety and energy throughout the program. If you fear a few less than thrilling program events, compensate by making other activities stand out. Don't include yourself on the program as a speaker but rather put all your material to use in energizing, making transitions and cementing the other parts together.

■ **Schedule time for the unexpected.** If slides will be shown, if there will be discussion, singing or a question-and-answer segment, make sure to allow enough time and stick to that schedule. You don't want a great program cut short by activities running overtime.

■ **Listen for appropriate transitions.** As the program progresses, listen carefully to each speaker for cues that will help you with smooth transitions. Use something the previous speaker said or did to segue into your next portion, if possible.

■ **Give them all you've got.** Take the stage with gusto and flair. Treat the event as if it were the grandest of occasions, regardless of the event's importance or the number of people in attendance. Never apologize or show concern that the audience is small. Let them know you have prepared a great show just for them.

■ **Be generous with praise.** Lavish your appreciation on each presenter and the audience. Be animated in leading the clapping for each speaker, so that there are no "dead" spots. Give brief, lively introductions to encourage the upcoming speaker to keep up the pace.

■ **Dress up.** If no request was made for formal attire, try to dress a cut above the audience. After all, you are the master of ceremonies and should look like someone special.

■ **Send them away hungry.** Like a hostess serving a fine meal, the master of ceremonies plans carefully, serves the portions evenly and caters to a variety of tastes. The audience will be satisfied, or even wishing for more. You don't want them to leave miserably stuffed, but rather pleasantly filled. Better to send them away wishing there were just one more course than to see them twisting uncomfortably in their seats, counting the minutes to the end.

■ **Enjoy the compliments.** You have the power to turn a potentially long, boring presentation into a fun and festive event. If you succeed, many people will stay to thank you and ask you to do it again. All you have to do is accept their compliments and have your business cards ready! T

Karen Robertson is a freelance writer and coordinator for the Murrieta Valley Unified School District in California. She travels regularly, speaking on behalf of the Christian Women's Club.

"Like a hostess serving a fine meal, the master of ceremonies plans carefully, serves the portions evenly and caters to a variety of tastes."

As a speaker, you must perform many different roles. Sometimes you're a lecturer, moderator or presenter and other times an advocate or teacher. Then there are those special occasions when you are called upon to make a toast. Each of these roles calls for a different appearance, attitude, approach and delivery. You must wear different hats for different occasions in order to control your audience, your message and yourself.

Now, Let's Lift Our G

Former U.S. Vice President Adlai Stevenson was once advised that "the best audience is one that is intelligent, well-educated and a little drunk." That's a situation you can't always count on, so prepare your toast as though the listeners were cold sober, judgmental and even a bit antagonistic.

Some wit once quipped, "To be a good toastmaster, you must be clever, be brief and be seated." But this is not necessarily true. A good toast should not only be warm, intimate, substantial and satisfying, but personal, special and sensitive. A tall order!

The word "toast" suggests something warm, satisfying, comforting and friendly. It comes from the Roman tradition of toasting bread by the open fireplace, a ritual that conjures up pleasant and heartwarming feelings. Clichés, platitudes and casual comments are empty as bubbles and as unsatisfying as a dry champagne glass. So you must spend time, thought and care when preparing a toast – regardless of how long or short it will be.

Some toast-makers are like the man in the British House of Commons whom Sir Winston Churchill described as

British Prime Minister William Gladstone kept five desks in his house: one for use in serving in his role as Prime Minister, one as head of the Liberal Party, one as an author, one for personal correspondence and one for business affairs. He assumed a different role at each desk, adjusting his mind to meet the demands of the various jobs.

As a Toastmaster, people expect you to be a confident and poised speaker prepared for any occasion and in control of every situation. So don't be surprised when a friend or family member calls and asks you to make a toast at a dinner, wedding reception, anniversary, graduation, christening or other occasion. This is an honor and should be treated accordingly. A toast is not some off-the-cuff presentation prepared on a cocktail napkin and delivered while you rise from your chair. A successful and memorable toast requires careful thought and preparation. Here's how to go about it:

1. ***Analyze the situation.*** Ask yourself: "What is the occasion? How many people will be present? What time of day is the affair? Who's in the audience – what's their mix of age, gender, professional, ethnic and religious backgrounds? How long should my toast last? Is the occasion formal or informal?

ILLUSTRATION: FRED SHERMAN

"One of those who, before they get up, do not know what they are going to say; when they are speaking, do not know what they are saying; and when they have sat down, do not know what they have said."

2. *Successful toasts.* Almost any toast will be appreciated if it fits the occasion and the person being toasted.

Some of the most eloquent toasts fail to hit the target and some of the simplest hit the bull's eye. An emotional father made a heart-tugging toast at his daughter's wedding when he smiled through his tears and said, "I am not losing my lovely daughter tonight. I am gaining a new son." Simple? Sensitive? Sincere? Yes.

People love being privy to secrets, intimate facts about friends, new insights into someone's life and little-known acts of kindness. You don't always have to be witty, funny or hilarious. If you are a naturally clever person, then be clever. But if you're not, leave the jokes alone and stay true to your own sincere, genuine self.

Comedians who have mastered the art of convulsing audiences follow columnist Art Buchwald's two-part advice: (1) Play it straight; and (2) treat light things seriously and serious things lightly. Never laugh even if your audience is falling in the aisles.

A few heartfelt words of praise, humor or celebration go a long way in setting a festive, convivial tone for any occasion.

3. *Appropriate toasts.* Before you even begin to prepare your toast, think about the occasion. Will it be a formal, dignified affair? Is the occasion a family get-together with close friends?

Formal situations where dignitaries are honored, ethnic or religious traditions are being observed and guests are dressed in formal wear call for toasts that are elegant and stylish even

lasses High

by Vivian Buchan

if humorous and clever. These are not "roast toasts" where inside jokes, sly innuendoes or insults are acceptable. Anyone insensitive enough to deliver such a toast at a formal affair is not only a boor, but an insufferable fool.

Even if you are a teetotaler, at a formal affair you should accompany your toast with wine or a non-alcoholic equivalent – not water, vodka, gin or whiskey. In 1914, then-U. S. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan (who was known for his abstinence from alcohol) was asked to make a toast at a Japanese Embassy party in honor of the 10th anniversary of Japan's defeat of the Russian navy. As he stood up and held up his water glass, he realized he was committing an unforgivable faux pas. Quickly regaining his poise, he smiled and said, "Since the Imperial Japanese Navy won a great victory on water, I will toast in water; when they win on wine, I will toast in wine."

"Any toast must be well-mannered, gentle, genuine and sincere as well as personal and adapted to the ages and relationships of the guests."

Never forget that "the tongue is the heart's pen and the mind's messenger." Words are like medicine; an overdose or a wrong choice can do more harm than good. The right dose of the right words can soothe, comfort and cure a hurting soul.

Examples of more informal affairs are usually weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, award presentations, reunions, etc. These occasions are usually not as much dignified and solemn as they are happy and uplifting celebrations where sly jokes, references to past escapades and school or college frivolities are received with enjoyment. When everyone knows everyone else, your toast can be as clever, silly, teasing or sentimental as you wish. At the same time, however, any toast must be well-mannered, gentle, genuine and sincere as well as personal and adapted to the ages and relationships of the guests.

4. *Types of toasts.* Although most toasts are prose, many successful ones take the form of rhymes, limericks, doggerel, etc. Even if you're not a poet, you can put together simple lines with ordinary rhymes that go skipping and jingling along. I recently wrote one to honor a writer friend who remarried her former husband. It went on for 24 lines, with the first few lines setting the tone and mood:

Here's to someone with class and style,
A lady with a radiant smile,
Who's witty, clever and great fun,
A writer who is Number One.

A simple meter and rhyme scheme of couplets make up a simple verse that is not too difficult to compose and easy to recite or read.

If your toast isn't too long or too detailed, you should know it well enough to give it without reading from notes. A toast requires the same attention and care (even when it's only a few sentences or short paragraphs) as a full-length speech. Sometimes the shortest things are the hardest to prepare. A novelist once quipped, "I didn't have time to write a short story so I did a novel instead."

It's a thoughtful and appreciated gesture to give both the honoree and the host a copy of your toast. Most occasions that call for a toast bear special significance for the honoree, so that person will treasure this memento of their day.

Whatever the occasion, your toast should be carefully prepared, intimate, complimentary, sensitive, personal, kind and sincere. It can be hilarious or serious; it can be sentimental or pragmatic; it can be formal or informal. But above all, it must be appropriate to the occasion and the person receiving it. If you use these suggestions as guidelines, those privileged to hear your toast will agree with Shakespeare's words in *Much Ado About Nothing*: "His words are a very fantastical banquet."

Being asked to make a toast is an honor and a distinction not to be taken lightly. It is not only an opportunity to pay homage to someone who deserves it, but another chance to display your eloquence and effectiveness as a poised and confident communicator. T

Vivian Buchan has taught writing, speaking and literature at the University of Iowa.

Sample Toasts

BIRTHDAYS

To your birthday, glass held high,
Glad it's you that's older – not I.

May you live forever
And may the last voice you hear
Be mine. – *MARK TWAIN*

You're not as young as you used to be
But you're not as old as you're going to be
So watch it!

May every day be happier than the last!

WEDDINGS

May your love be like good wine –
May it grow stronger as it grows older.

Keep thy eyes wide open before marriage,
and half shut afterwards. – *BEN FRANKLIN*

May your marriage be a lovely field of roses
and not a battlefield.

As you embark on the sea of matrimony
You may find some story weather.
Please remember that stormy weather
Makes good sailors
And the journey even more pleasant and exciting.

Down the hatch, to a striking match!

May "for better or worse" be far better than worse.

Here's to Love; a thing so divine,
Description makes it but the less.
'Tis what we feel, but cannot define –
'Tis what we know but cannot express.

Here's to love, the only fire against which
there is no insurance.

ANNIVERSARIES

Let anniversaries come and let anniversaries go –
but may your happiness continue on forever.

May the warmth of your affections
survive the frosts of age.

Here's to love, that begins with a fever
and ends with a yawn.

Let's drink to love,
Which is nothing –
Unless it's divided by two.

RETIREMENT

Here's to holidays –
all three hundred sixty-five of them!

Here's to your health! You make Age curious,
Time furious, and all of us envious!

NEW YEARS

In the New Year,
may your right hand always be
stretched out in friendship,
but never in want. – *TRADITIONAL IRISH TOAST*

May the best of this year be the worst of next.

Be at war with your voices,
at peace with your neighbors,
and let every new year
find you a better man. – *BEN FRANKLIN*

International Toasts

AMERICAN:
Cheers!

FRENCH:
A Votre Sante!

GERMAN:
Prosit!

GREEK:
Eis Igian!

INDONESIAN:
Selamat!

JAPANESE:
Kampai!

MALAYSIAN:
Slamat minum!

NEW ZEALAND:
Kia ora!

PHILIPPINE:
Mabuhay!

RUSSIAN:
Na zdorovia!

SPANISH:
Salud!

SWEDISH:
Skal!

THAI:
Sawasdi!

5 steps for SIMPLIFYING TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS

■ SOME TIME AGO I HAD AN opportunity to spend a few months working on a corporate task force to help create a work redesign for that company. Several weeks into the project, the committee was asked to give a 45-minute progress report to the executive staff. Suddenly, all the creative energy of the group gridlocked – the task of condensing thousands of hours of collective research and complex technical information into a few minutes seemed overwhelming. The task required the skill of simplifying the complicated, of presenting technical information to a nontechnical audience.

Although simplifying complex technical information may not sound like an easy task, I would like to share five basic steps I have developed from my own experience as a teacher and presenter which should be helpful to presenters in any field. Those steps involve: presenting the concept, using analogies, encouraging interaction, providing essential details and answering questions.

Stick to the basics and never assume the audience knows much about your topic.

by Paula Blunck

1 Presenting the Concept – Begin your presentation on the conceptual level. Convey the basic concept in a few jargon-free sentences. Keep in mind that this is supposed to provide only an outline of your presentation, a bare-bones skeleton on which your audience will hang detailed information presented by you later in the presentation.

2 Using Analogies – By comparing the concept you presented with something familiar to your audience, you will help them form a mental picture of your subject matter.

I once was asked to explain the function of a technical variance matrix to a group of executives – a concept they were unfamiliar with. However, these executives were familiar with the general functions of restaurant operations. By comparing the functions of a technical variance matrix to the functions of a restaurant operation, my audience was more easily able to make a conceptual transfer.

Remember to keep your comparisons simple; your analogy is not your focus – it is just an example.

3 Encouraging Interaction – Before fleshing out your presentation with details, you can test the listeners' levels of understanding by asking them to provide more similarities between your concept and the analogy you used. Your audience might also be able to provide some additional analogies. With proper facilitation, this type of interaction helps ensure that a common framework exists on which to hang the details or the "meat" of your presentation.

4 Providing Essential Details – Too often, speakers feel compelled to tell everything they know about a subject. Cramming all the information you have learned about a subject during the past several years into a one-hour presentation inevitably will result in audience overload. The key is to deliver the muscle without the fat. Simple charts and overheads can be used to support and outline the basics as you begin to cover *essential* details. More complex details, charts, statistics and information can be provided after your presentation by using handouts.

5 Answering Questions – Leaving time for questions at the end of your presentation will give you a feel for the audience's level of understanding and will allow you to clarify and provide additional details. If your audience seems hesitant to speak up, help them by anticipating their questions and phrasing them rhetorically. This is often a very effective way to "prime the pump" and generate some good interaction.

Whenever you present complex information to others, the degree to which your audience is able to understand your material depends largely on how well you communicate what you know.

Using these five steps will enable you to clearly communicate basic concepts, provide essential details in your presentations, and allow you to clarify your material through questions and interaction.

Paula Blunck is a teacher and writer living in Fairview, Oregon.

Who else but a Toastmaster?

When You're Asked to Give a *Eulogy*

by Edward C. Mathews, ATM

Your words are a tribute to the departed and a gift to the living.

■ WHEN TIMES OF GRIEF CALL FOR WORDS of comfort, who better to deliver the eulogy than a Toastmaster? This is only logical. After all, if you have a tax problem, you seek an accountant; if you have legal trouble, you seek an attorney – and if you need to give a difficult speech, you seek an expert on speaking: a Toastmaster.

This concept recently rang true for me when my best friend died of cancer. As soon as I received the distressing news, I called and asked his mother if I could say a few words at the memorial service. A short time later, his daughter called without having talked to her grandmother and asked if I would like to speak at the service, adding that since I was a Toastmaster, I was doubly qualified to give her father's eulogy.

So I began my normal process of developing a speech and, of course, that's also the first step in creating a eulogy. As Toastmasters, we are trained to develop our speeches toward an objective. For a eulogy, that objective is to prepare, rehearse and deliver an 8 to 10 minute speech in honor of a recently deceased person.

But what should those 8 to 10 minutes include? To begin with, pay tribute to the person's life by citing his or her valuable qualities. Then show how these qualities contributed to the lives of others. Your focus should be on the person's personality – not on cold facts such as his or her various degrees, honors and accomplishments.

Don't go overboard in expressing your own religious opinions and don't try to offer reasons to justify the person's death. Speak slowly and clearly with vocal variety, voice control and good body language. Be mindful that you will probably project heightened emotions, so be sure to control them. Remember that you want to keep the audience focused on your material rather than on you.

Since this may be an extra challenge, here are a few hints to help you control your intensity and emotions:

1 **Speak as you always speak.** If you normally use a microphone, then use one – if not, don't. The idea is to get into your normal speaking comfort zone as best as you can.

2 **Don't take any drugs** such as tranquilizers, anti-depressants or alcohol to help you stay calm. A pharmacist once told me there is nothing that will dim your emotions without dimming your brain power. During an emotional encounter such as this, you need to call upon all the speaking skills you have available.

3 **Elevate your eye contact** a few degrees above your normal level – that is, don't look at any familiar faces in the audience; this may elicit an uncontrolled emotional response in you. The audience will not notice if your eye contact is slightly elevated.

4 **Have an escape route.** You may not be able to continue or even start, and someone should be there to rescue you. (I asked the minister to stand by. If I had taken an exceptionally long pause and then nodded to him, he was to come and take over.)

5 **Begin by talking about someone or something other than the deceased** – perhaps quote a poem. This will allow you to "warm-up" and get going before addressing the specifics.

6 **Prepare a short introduction for yourself** to be read by the minister/priest/rabbi or person in charge of the meeting.

Although the occasion is solemn, there may be an opportunity to include humorous tales or events. This is perfectly acceptable as long as they reflect the personality of the departed and respect the feelings of grieving family and friends.

Finally, keep in mind that the purpose of the eulogy is not only to pay tribute to the departed, but also to comfort, console and offer solace to those who attend the service.

T

Edward C. Mathews, ATM, is a member of Magic Circle Club 1458-56 in Houston, Texas.

hall of fame

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Anthony Miller, 7130-63
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Nanette O. Barrett, 8774-69
Geoff Oliver, 1126-70
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55 years

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45 years

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35 years

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Ephrata "Cloister", 3011-38

30 years

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25 years

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Potomac Edison, 2613-18
New Bern, 2812-37
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20 years

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15 years

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Good Neighbor, 4043-8
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10 years

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Ad Lib, Too, 5602-33
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Bellevue, Washington
Earthsave, 6987-2
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MVTL Beaker Speakers, 3693-6
New Ulm, Minnesota
Spirited Speakers, 6637-6
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Signet, 7356-10
Shelby, Ohio
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___	5813	___	339*
___	5815	___	339-O*
___	5814	___	390
___	5805	___	390-A
___	5806	___	5920
___	5807	___	5939
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- Women's membership pin (5702), 5/8" diameter with guard clasp, $4.50
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- Club President with two zircons (5802), $16.00
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- CTM tag (5942) has white letters, $4.50
- ATM tag (5940) has red letters, $4.50
- DTM tag (5941) has blue letters, $4.50

See the Supply Catalog for a complete listing of member anniversary tags honoring membership and service.

Identification Badges

- TOASTMASTERS ID BADGE (343/pocket, 343-A/pin back) ...White badge with name, office and club name engraved in red,$7.00 each.
- CTM ID BADGE (340/pocket, 340-A/pin back)...Brown badge with name and club number engraved in white, $7.00 each.
- ATM ID BADGE (391/pocket, 391-A/pin back)...Red plastic badge with name and club number engraved in white, $7.00 each. Your ATM badge can show your level of ATM achievement. These polished bronze and silver speaker figures adhere to your ATM badge. $2.50 each:
  ... ATM Bronze attachment (391-B)
  ... ATM Silver attachment (391-S)
- DTM ID BADGE (389/pocket, 389-A/pin back)...Gold plastic badge with name and club number engraved in black, $7.00 each.
- TOASTMASTERS CLUB ID BADGE (339/pin back)...Small blue plastic badge, with name and club name engraved in white, $3.95 each.
- ENGRAVED CLUB OFFICER BADGE (339-O/pin back)...Blue badge with white engraving of Club office and Club name. Please specify name, office and Club name, $3.95 each.
- CLIP-ON ATTACHMENT (390-A)...You can turn a pin-back badge into a clip-on badge with this attachment. An alligator-style clip that can be attached to a collar, pocket or placket. Use with badges 340-A, 343-A, 389-A and 391-A, $1.25 each.

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