

# The TOASTMASTER<sup>®</sup>

SEPTEMBER 2003

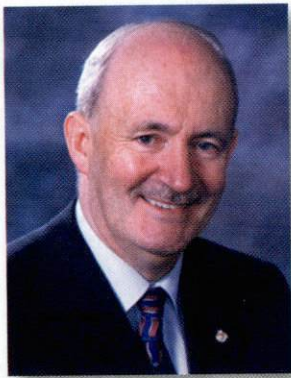
## *R*omancing the Club

Like any relationship, you get out of  
Toastmasters what you put into it.

**Meet Ted Corcoran, DTM**  
Toastmasters' new  
International President.

***Parlez-vous* Red,  
White and Blue?**  
How to spot an American abroad.

**How to Push an Elephant  
Through a Straw**



## VIEWPOINT

# Your Dreams Are Your Possibilities

◆ HELLO EVERYONE! GREETINGS FROM THE EMERALD ISLAND OF IRELAND AND THE United Kingdom, home of the wonderful Toastmasters of District 71. I am very proud indeed of having the unique honor of serving not just my own country and district, but all the nearly 200,000 Toastmasters around the world.

We are truly an international organization, made up of different countries, cultures and languages. But wherever or whoever we are, we realize that progressing through the Toastmasters program will inevitably change us in so many ways. That's why my chosen theme for the year is "Your Dreams Are Your Possibilities." I have long been inspired by the words of Bernard Edmunds, the American writer whose words could have been specially written for those of us who are Toastmasters:

*To dream anything you want to dream;  
that is the beauty of the human mind.  
To do anything you want to do;  
that is the strength of the human will.  
To trust yourself to test your limits;  
that is the courage to succeed.*

I firmly believe that our dreams can become real! And I also believe that the skills and increased confidence we all gain through our Toastmasters experience will help us achieve them. In fact, our organization's vision statement validates this, by stating that our program "empowers people to achieve their full potential and realize their dreams." What a powerful statement! And, of course, all of us are the "people" mentioned!

All success starts with a dream, so we must first imagine what it is that we want to achieve. However, the dreams we have today may not be the dreams we have tomorrow or next year. The miracle is that as our self-confidence and self-esteem grows, so does our awareness of our potential. Because of this, we go on to dream of even greater things to accomplish. When we first join Toastmasters our dreams may be very simple – answering our first Table Topic, delivering our first speech, indeed just showing up! Later, our dreams may be to serve as Toastmaster of the meeting, to complete our CTM or to be a club officer. Then many of us expand our dreams to include serving as a district officer or a district governor – even serving on the Board of Directors. What happens is that our awareness of our potential changes. We are now ready to accept more and more challenges, secure in the knowledge that we are ready for them.

Remember, Your Dreams are Your Possibilities! So why not accept the challenge? This is the year to make your dreams come true! Good Luck!

Ted Corcoran, DTM  
International President-elect 2003-2004

# The TOASTMASTER

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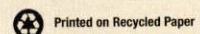
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### *The Toastmasters Vision:*

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

### *The Toastmasters Mission:*

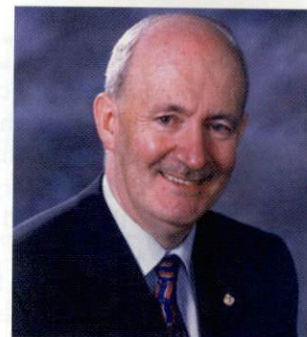
Toastmasters International is the leading movement devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality.

Through its member clubs, Toastmasters International helps men and women learn the arts of speaking, listening and thinking – vital skills that promote self-actualization, enhance leadership potential, foster human understanding, and contribute to the betterment of mankind.

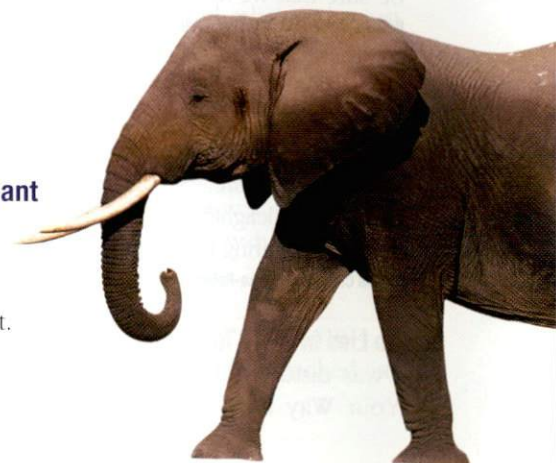
It is basic to this mission that Toastmasters International continually expand its worldwide network of clubs thereby offering ever-greater numbers of people the opportunity to benefit from its programs.

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*By Ken Tangen, Ph.D.*





### Size Does Matter

I could not resist commenting on the letter by Mike Kesselring who in the July issue said that “most states in the U.S. are bigger than most countries.”

In his list of large countries, he did not mention Canada, the second largest after Russia. Regarding the comparative sizes of individual states, Alaska is the largest by far; I counted at least 16 countries in the world larger than Alaska. Texas is the second largest U.S. state, and I counted 38 countries larger than Texas (*Oxford World Atlas*). Mr. Kesselring’s state, North Carolina, would rank 95. As they say, perspective is everything.

Michel Facon, CTM • EarthSave Club 8237-21 • Vancouver, BC, Canada

### Myth Comes True

I laughed out loud when reading William Hennefrund’s cautions on interpreting audience body language in his August article, “The Six Myths of Public Speaking.”

It reminded me of a small humor workshop that the late humorist John Cantu gave last year. I knew John casually through our local National Speakers Association chapter, so I sat up front, hanging onto every word he said. During the break he approached me and asked, “Have I said anything that would make you angry? You look like you’re ready to bite my head off!” Apparently, I’d been sitting with my arms folded (which I do frequently; this is a bad habit) and keeping a persistent scowl on my face, (another habit when I focus intently). We had a good chuckle over his misunderstanding and my errant body language, and we stayed friends until his untimely death this past May.

The lesson learned from this experience: We as audience members have a responsibility to speakers. It’s OK to let them know how we feel about their presentation, just be sure that we’re sending them the right message.

Roberta Guise • ProToasties Club 7146-4 • Belmont, California

### Inspiration Times Two

Your July issue was doubly inspiring. First, it inspired me to write a speech based on the article, “It’s Never Too Late to Start an Adventure.” Second, I found it timely that you should publish the delightful article on Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle as I am preparing to go back to school in Hawaii.

Wylma C. Samaranyake-Robinson, ATM-B • Nathan Hall Club 6967-27 • McLean, Virginia

### No Lies in Table Topics

I was disturbed by the July article, “Lie, Cheat, and Steal Your Way to Table Topics Success!” One of the com-

ments I hear most often from Toastmasters is how satisfying it is to get to know people better. If I were to find out that someone had made up a story about his life, I would no longer trust him and feel that I really didn’t know him at all.

If a Table Topics respondent wants to make up a story, why not present it as such? “I never thought much about whether I prefer Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck, but I’m imagining a teacher telling me that my pug nose reminds her of Donald Duck.” She could then continue the story she’s fantasized, which would be just as cute as if it had really happened.

Rosemarie Eskes, DTM • TNT Club 1831-65 • Rochester, New York

Table Topics is my biggest challenge at Toastmasters, so I was excited to see “Lie, Cheat and Steal Your Way to Table Topics Success” in the July issue. Like many people, I find it very difficult to speak eloquently and succinctly in an impromptu situation. However, I found that the article focused on techniques (specifically lying, cheating and stealing!) that may be able to help me at Table Topics, but might not be so useful elsewhere. If I am at a board meeting, for example, and am unexpectedly asked to comment, I cannot lie, cheat or steal! While my Table Topics answers will most definitely liven up due to the author’s suggestions, I would welcome some more general ideas for use outside Toastmasters.

Sarah Taylor, CTM • Gig Harbor Club 3759-32 • Gig Harbor, Washington

### Terrible Ten

I thoroughly enjoyed the article written by Richard Lederer in the July issue. It was a very good reminder of the grammar I was taught in elementary school. These twin words truly cause confusion, and we have to be careful when using them in our conversation and writing. I read the article slowly to understand each word, including completing the two exercises. Thanks to Richard Lederer for this very informative and useful article.

Vimal Goyle, CL • Via Christi Club 6297-22 • Wichita, Kansas

I enjoyed reading “The Terrible Ten” by Richard Lederer. In fact I possess several of his books. A notable omission from “The Terrible Ten” is *unique/unusual*, a common error in speeches. We often hear *most unique* or *very unique* when *unusual* should be used. Unique means “one and only” and there are no varying degrees of unique.

Michael Levinrad, DTM • District One Showcase Club 4970-1 • Santa Monica, California



## Two Ears but One Mouth:

# Listening is the Sincerest Form of Flattery

◆ DO YOU ATTEND YOUR TOASTMASTERS GROUP MEETING only when you have a speaking role? If so, you're missing out on half the fun: listening.

Effective communicators are not only good at expressing ideas with words, but also at embracing what others are saying. Sure, listening to a speech can be a drag – it may be long, too technical, or not delivered in a riveting, let alone interesting, manner. But astute listening skills can open a world of opportunities. For example, you might catch on to a new idea, find new meaning to an old thought, or best yet, be inspired to deliver your next speech.

I have found a few simple tools that will make your listening experience more enlightening than ever before.

■ **Decide to listen.** Even if you don't have a speaking role at a meeting, commit to attending. Making a commitment to yourself is the first step. The rest will simply follow. Four months ago, I attended a nearby club meeting but began to daydream in the middle of a speech. I jerked back to reality when I heard the speaker say, "This is the best money-saving technique..." I realized that had I listened, I would have learned a valuable lesson.

■ **Be objective.** Let go of your day and any preconceived notions about the speaker or topic. Freeing yourself from your own thoughts and emotions will guarantee a more pleasurable (and fair) listening experience. This may be a challenge, because as we progress in a club, we form opinions about others' speaking abilities and personalities. It's important to let go of those judgments when a speaker stands before you. Try to see her/him as a brand new member you are hearing for the first time.

■ **Try to wear the speaker's shoes.** That is, try to feel what she is feeling throughout the talk. Watch the speaker's facial expressions and body language so you can hone in on her true feelings. If you can see where the speaker is coming from, you can better judge the entire speech. One of my fellow members made a speech about climbing to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro. As she spoke, I was thinking that a voluntary trek up to 19,000 feet was crazy! But as I watched her eyes gleam with the joy that adventure brought her, I too felt a sense of accomplishment. I can assure you that climbing up that mountain is

indeed an awesome adventure – even if you're just hearing about it!

■ **Draw mental pictures.** Since we retain only seven percent of what we hear, but 85 percent of what we see, try to visualize the speech. If the speaker is describing a town, see it. If a time in history is being reminisced, be there. My third speech, titled "Blame it on the couch!" was about Feng Shui, the Chinese art of interior decorating according to the principles of energy flow. In my speech, I requested the audience to picture their homes and interior furnishing. To this day, several of my team members still come up to me and discuss my speech. They remember it better than I do!

■ **Take notes.** You can resort to the good old college method of taking notes while listening to a speech. Jotting down statistics, important dates, names or ideas will make your listening experience more memorable. You might even take home a few good tips. I still have treasured notes that I scribbled down during a speech about car maintenance.

■ **Connect.** Try to connect with the speaker by realizing your similarities rather than noticing your differences. Most of us long for the same qualities and comforts in life, even if we express them in different ways. By creating a mental connection to the speaker, you're becoming part of the experience rather than just observing it.

■ **Focus!** Respect the speaker by letting go of your day. Forget how you got there or where you have to be tomorrow. Just be present in the moment and allow yourself to focus on what the speaker prepared and rehearsed – just for you!

Psychologist Joyce Brothers once said, "Listening, not imitation, may be the sincerest form of flattery." She's right. Listening is the best gift you can give to a speaker or anyone you talk to. We really don't know how a speaker will present information to us – we only know how well we can receive it. **T**

**Meg Dixit** is a member of Sierra Speakers Club 5610-4 in San Francisco, California. She can be reached at [meg55@mail.com](mailto:meg55@mail.com).

By Carolyn Cairns, ATM-S

**You get out of Toastmasters exactly what you put into it.**

## Romancing the Club

Being a Toastmaster is a lot like being in a relationship. And the whole process of finding and staying in a club that's right for us is a lot like the dating scene.

### The Blind Date

First, there is desire – to overcome the fear of public speaking. Once we have made up our minds to pursue the object of that desire, we take the first tentative steps toward reaching that goal. Perhaps we heard about Toastmasters from someone we know. Maybe we found the Toastmasters Web site while surfing the Internet. No matter how we discovered Toastmasters, something compels us to meet the club of our affection.

Once we've lined up the blind date, the wait can be agonizing. Intellectually, we know that the only way to evaluate whether a Toastmasters club has potential is to test-drive it – to get a feel for the club's energy, the vibe, the group dynamic. On an emotional level, however, the anticipation, the expectation and the fear of the unknown can be stressful and intimidating.

Then the big day arrives. It's time to pay your first visit to a Toastmasters club. It all comes down to that first impression – the moment when you walk through the door. What's the feeling you get? Is it good, bad, indifferent? Is there a connection, a mutual attraction?

After my first visit, I knew instantly that Toronto No. 1 was the club for me. Others may not get that same feeling. Instead, they may choose to "play the field" for a while – visit other clubs, see if there are ones better able to meet their needs. Like people, each club has its own special personality and chemistry. What works for some can be toxic for others. Some prefer a professional, business-like envi-



ronment where club meetings are structured, organized and formal. Others may prefer a looser, more laid-back format that offers the opportunity to network and socialize.

### Courtship

When the blind date goes well, the two parties may agree to see each other again with no strings attached. The courtship phase of the relationship begins when you decide to further explore the club as a guest.

That is why I decided not to join my club after the first visit. For me, to have signed up right away would have been to deny the whole courtship. I would have missed out on the chance to get to know the club better without commitment, to observe the group dynamics and to dream



about how I might one day be as accomplished as the speakers I listened to.

Once the suitors have had the chance to spend more time together, the moment for the big decision arrives. You're either in or you're out. If the club feels right, you sign up. If not, you keep playing the field and looking for other opportunities.

### **Going Steady**

You've joined the club of your dreams, paid your dues and boom – you're going steady. However, it's important to recognize that the mere act of "going steady" doesn't necessarily mean you are fully committed to the club.

You can be "an item," yet not function as a team due to busy schedules and conflicting priorities. It's the same with Toastmasters. You can join and attend the meetings. If you don't fully participate, however, you won't reap the rewards of your Toastmasters experience. Simply put, like any relationship, you get out of Toastmasters exactly what you put into it.

### **Commitment**

The turning point for many is the delivery of their Ice Breaker – the first speech presented to the club. Your Ice Breaker takes the relationship to the next level, demonstrating your commitment to the club and to your personal growth.

Operating from this newfound personal commitment, you and the club continue to gel as a team. You're speaking, leading sessions on the agenda and providing feedback on the club's performance. Chances are, you're feeling that the club is completing you. You're more confident, less fearful and may even feel a certain gratitude toward the club for all that it has done for you. No longer does the thought of presenting to a group of people terrify you.

Like most relationships, the time will come for the Test. For some, it's the "8-month hurdle." For others, it's receiving their CTM designation. Many begin to feel that they've gotten what they wanted from Toastmasters and don't see the point in sticking around. Others sense they've out-

grown the club and no longer get the same enjoyment and satisfaction from being together.

For many, the test may signal that it's time to move on. For others, it's a sign of true commitment – the crossroads where we realize how far we've come, yet remain aware of how much farther we can go.

### **Keeping the Fire Alive**

Those who decide to stay in their Toastmasters relationship realize that the initial passion hasn't died – it has evolved to a different level. Think of building a fire. When the kindling first catches fire, the flames are vibrant, huge

*"If the club feels right, you sign up.  
If not, you keep playing the field and  
looking for other opportunities."*

and reach for the sky. This is like the exhilaration and excitement of a budding romance just starting to catch fire. The initial stages of the Toastmasters experience tend to revolve around "what the club can do for me." The improvement, the confidence, the positive feedback is all about how Toastmasters can help me meet my goals.

As the fire burns, the embers start to smolder beneath the logs, gradually turning from red to white-hot. The pyrotechnics have gone, leaving a strong, sustaining heat that can ignite with the next new idea, inspiration, side-long glance or caress. You realize that it's all about giving back. The Toastmasters relationship is no longer all about you but about helping new members grow, acting as a role model, leading by example.

That is what it takes to remain committed to Toastmasters. As long as the embers are smoldering, they are just one log away from catching fire all over again and keeping your Toastmasters relationship rich, rewarding and passionate. As with any relationship, you must keep stoking the fire. The fire will continue to burn for as long as you add fuel. And in the end, you get out of Toastmasters what you put into it.

**Carolyn Cairns, ATM-S**, is a member of Toronto No. 1 Club 1289-60 in Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada.



**Meet  
Ted  
Corcoran,  
Toastmasters'  
2003-2004  
International  
President.**

**N**ewly elected International President Ted Corcoran, DTM, is looking forward to his term in office. He has served on the Board's Executive Committee since 2000 and been an active Toastmaster for 18 years. He believes strongly "in the power of this organization to do good in the world" and will serve as its highest ambassador in the coming year, promoting the benefits of club

membership to everyone he meets. Ted lives with his wife, Celine, in Dublin, Ireland, where he works for Irish Railways. They have two adult daughters, Sinead and Claire.

***You are Manager of Safety for Irish Railways. What are your responsibilities? How does your Toastmasters training benefit you at your job?***

This job is all about leadership, of which communication is a major part. My major task is to manage and continuously improve the Safety Management System within the company. Sometimes you inspire people, sometimes you persuade them, and sometimes you motivate them. At the end of the day, it's human behavior that makes the difference when technical defenses fail.

The government is our stakeholder. I play an ongoing role in sourcing funding for greater safety technical defenses. We have invested about \$600 million since 1998, and monitoring this investment takes quite a bit of work. My Toastmasters training enables me to tailor my presentations to different groups for maximum effect.

***What made you visit a club all those years ago, and why have you remained an active Toastmaster ever since?***

In September 1985, I bought a newspaper to read about a football game and happened to read a letter to the editor written by someone I knew about a new Toastmasters club starting. Out of curiosity, I went to see what my friend was up to, but I was determined not to get involved. At the end of the meeting, I found myself



the club's first president. Serendipity! Of course, I had no idea what I was doing. My mentor, the VP Education Dick Kissane, did all the work. I just acted presidential!

I have stayed because I think Toastmasters is a special organization in many ways. First, we recognize people for their efforts. You don't slave away all day and get ignored. Second, you get to help other people. And third, the people who join Toastmasters are invariably very uplifting, positive people – you want to hang around them.

***What's your favorite thing about Toastmasters?***

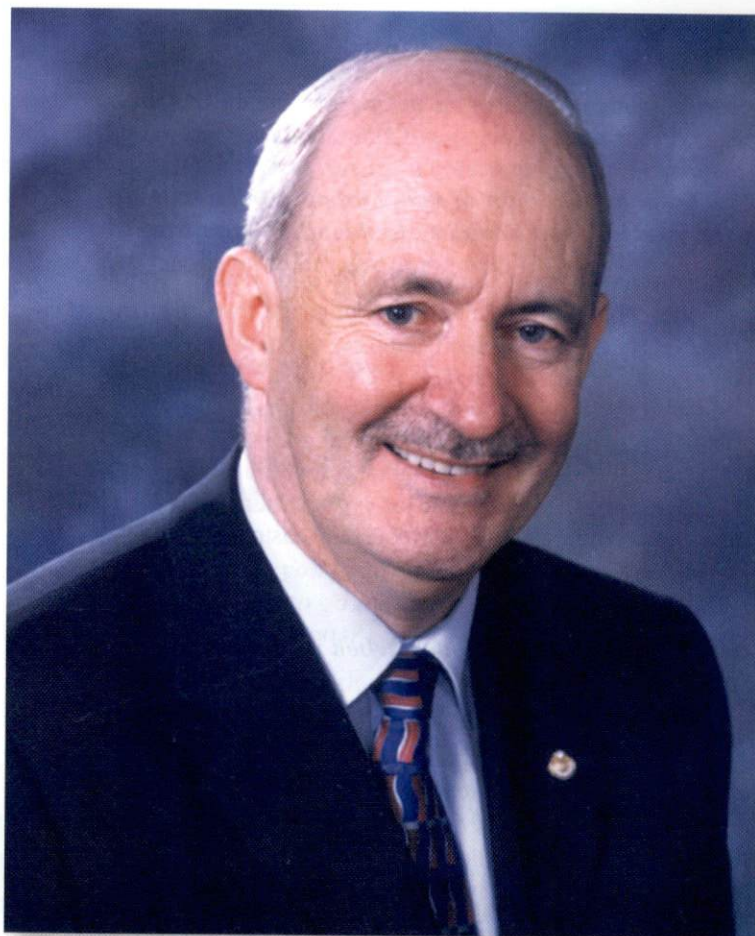
That we get to meet people from all over the world and that they all are eager to help others. I've found that the Toastmasters I meet are the same everywhere. The Toastmasters in Ireland are no different from those in Calgary, Las Vegas or Sydney – aside from their funny accents of course! They all have a sense of joy about them, a sense of common bond, and a sense of helping and being helped, which I think is very unique. We are all on this road to reaching personal goals, so we don't see ourselves as competing with each other, and that eliminates a lot of potential conflict.

***Tell us about your worst speaking experience.***

I'll never forget it. About 11 or 12 years ago, I was asked to give an after-dinner speech to an organization involved in the timber business in Ireland, about 150 people. I got no introduction, and I wasn't very confident to begin with. After a few minutes, about 12 men at the table right in front of me began to converse out loud. It absolutely devastated me. They kept talking, and I just kept going faster, just to get it over with. I found out later that drinks had been served. After the speech, I left and walked around the hotel to get some fresh air. I thought I was going to die, actually. My heart was beating, my stomach was churning, and I never went back through the door of that hotel.

***You are known for your wit and humor – especially in front of a crowd. Do you attribute this mainly to your Irish genes or to your Toastmasters training?***

A bit of both, I assume. I come from a witty race; the Irish are witty. I come from a witty county, County Kerry, which is known for the quick-wittedness of its residents, and thirdly, I come from a witty family. We had no television when I grew up, so we used to stay up every night telling stories. I love the ability of word play, of thinking of related but different themes, of connecting several ideas fast.



When your confidence levels increase, you don't feel fear to the same extent. If you feel pressure, stress or fear, your brain isn't free to process the information. So Toastmasters has given me the confidence to do it. When I'm on stage, I don't feel the slightest bit of pressure. It's that ability to think without duress that Toastmasters has given me.

***You're also famous for initiating the popular nightly "Sing-a-long" at the international convention, where delegates get together after the day's scheduled activities to showcase their skills in the performance arts. Are you a better singer, dancer or actor?***

Sing-songs are part of the furniture in Ireland. Well, I can't sing at all – ask anyone who has ever heard me try! I'm quite an OK set dancer, that is to say group dancer. Acting? I've never tried it, even though some people say I never stop.

The convention "sing-song" started on a small scale at the 1992 convention in Las Vegas. Now we have about 150 people most nights. I don't perform; I guess you can say I'm the producer. I've found that people are eager and confident to showcase their abilities. I don't ask people to sing unless I know they are up to it. I try to alternate light and dark, sadness and joy. Some nights it's brilliant. It is a

beautiful coming together of people of different cultures from all over the world.

***You seem to be a man of many talents. Tell us about your interests and hobbies outside of Toastmasters.***

I'm interested in most things in the world, really. World affairs in general; Irish culture and language in particular. I'm interested in Irish singing, music, dancing. I used to play the accordion. I'm proud of my country; our history and traditions go back a long way. I also read a lot – fact rather than fiction. Sports – I've played a lot of them. I've run marathons, played Irish football. I love golf; I play off a 12 handicap. If I hadn't run for Toastmasters office, the handicap would be less.... Of course, Toastmasters is my main hobby!

***Do you have any role models when it comes to public speaking – if so who?***

Brian Tracy, an American author and professional speaker, comes to mind. On the world stage, Tony Blair is a very inspirational figure, whether or not you agree with his policies. I'm also very taken with the President of the Republic of Ireland, Mary McAleese. She's extremely articulate, heartfelt, warm and friendly. She's a wonderful speaker and leader.

***"The Toastmasters in Ireland are no different from those in Calgary, Las Vegas or Sydney – aside from their funny accents of course!"***

Can I give you three of my role models in Toastmasters? Past International Speech Contest winners David Brooks, Mark Brown and Darren LaCroix. If you modeled yourself after any of them, you'd do great.

***In Toastmasters, we say that we teach "communication and leadership," although we are best known for teaching public speaking skills. Tell us why leadership and communication go hand in hand.***

Leadership is the art of persuading others to do what you wish to be done. In order to do that, you need to be able to communicate. You need emotional intelligence, and there's no doubt whatsoever that our emotional intelligence quotient – or EQ – grows through the Toastmasters process. A good leader employs different leadership styles

for different people, and it's this awareness that emotional intelligence brings – the need to vary your approach to the needs of different people.

In Toastmasters, we learn EQ through listening skills, through empathy in evaluations – both in giving and receiving them. Evaluation skills generally are appraisal skills. Another aspect of emotional intelligence that's crucial to leadership is the ability to be socially competent and confident. And of course, developing others – the longer you stay in Toastmasters, especially if you serve in an officer position, you are adding to your store of emotional intelligence. In any organization, people need to be managed, but they need to be led as well. Management is a process, but leadership is personal, requiring emotional intelligence.

***Explain the reasons you chose your theme, "Your Dreams are Your Possibilities"?***

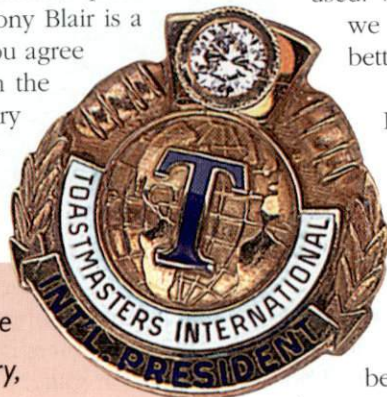
Every person has more potential than they've actually used. We put a ceiling on our achievements. If only we believed we could do better, we would do better.

We usually say "Oh, I could never do that." I'm a prime example of this. If you'd asked me if I'd ever be international president, I would have laughed – and so would my club members! The reason I now am is that I've always been ready to take the next step, which sometimes is not easy. There's always a risk of failure, of embarrassment, of not being able to cope. It's like being in a strange room and a door opens up, but you don't know where it leads. But when we face that risk, there's a good chance that you will cope, get stronger, and be ready for the next step.

I want to encourage people to take the next step, to grow with the challenge. You don't get from A to Z in one jump; you have to get to B first. It's great to have dreams, but we must break them down into steps. As our confidence and competence increase, so do our dreams.

***Tell us how you've made a dream possible in your own life.***

I started off in a clerical position at my work with Irish Railways. I didn't go to university – I've been educated in the University of Life. I left school at 18 and was lucky to get a job in the late '50s. It was a very secure job, which meant a lot in those days. Each time an opportunity for advancement came, I applied, even though sometimes it meant moving to different counties and back, or keeping antisocial working hours. But each time I moved up, and I'm now in a senior management position, reporting to the



managing director, which is pretty much as far as anyone can go in my position. We have about 6,000 people in our organization. So it wasn't so much about having big dreams as taking the next step, every time.

***What do you "dream" of for your term in office?***

It's great to see the organization do so well lately. I'd like to have a chance to make a difference, to persuade others to become leaders in their own time. I see myself as the bridge between the past and the future.

***What made you want to become International President?***

An international director first suggested it to me in February 1998. I thought about it and decided to run for office, because I wanted to lead an organization that has so much power for doing good in the world. I believe so much in this organization that I wanted to be part of it in a major way. I wanted to spend five years on a team working to advance the organization – not to make wholesale changes, but to add whatever is me to the contributions of the executive committee. The fact that no president had ever been from Europe also was a factor.

***As only the fourth International President from outside the United States, do you think you offer a different perspective of the organization than, say, someone from North America?***

There's no doubt that there is great strength in diversity, in having different people look at things in different ways. Our organization has "international" in its name. All the people who serve the organization outside the U.S bring a

different perspective. We seem to have a culture of being more self-reliant. Twenty-five percent of our members are outside the North American continent, and at the moment, that's where our main growth is. There is a great sense of team among Toastmasters outside North America, a sense of belonging to the rest of the world.

***"Believe that your potential for achievement is greater than what you are currently enjoying. Don't settle for what you have."***

***As President, you get to travel quite a bit. How do you decide where to go and who to visit? What's the purpose of these visits?***

Districts throughout the world receive a scheduled visit by the international president every seven or eight years. We try to visit a district in each region – I don't have any personal choice in where I go. During these visits, I meet the district leaders and try to help them and motivate them to be successful in any way I can. I also make corporate visits and am available to meet the media. In fact, tomorrow morning I'm appearing on a national television show here in Ireland.

***If you had a message for every Toastmaster, what would that be?***

To believe that your potential for achievement is greater than what you are currently enjoying. Don't settle for what you have.

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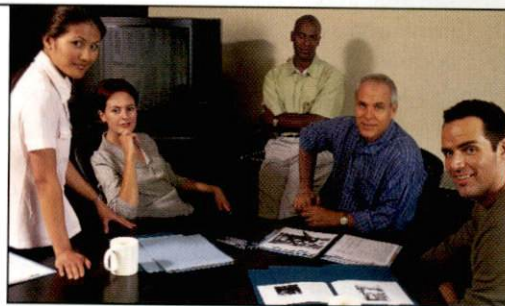
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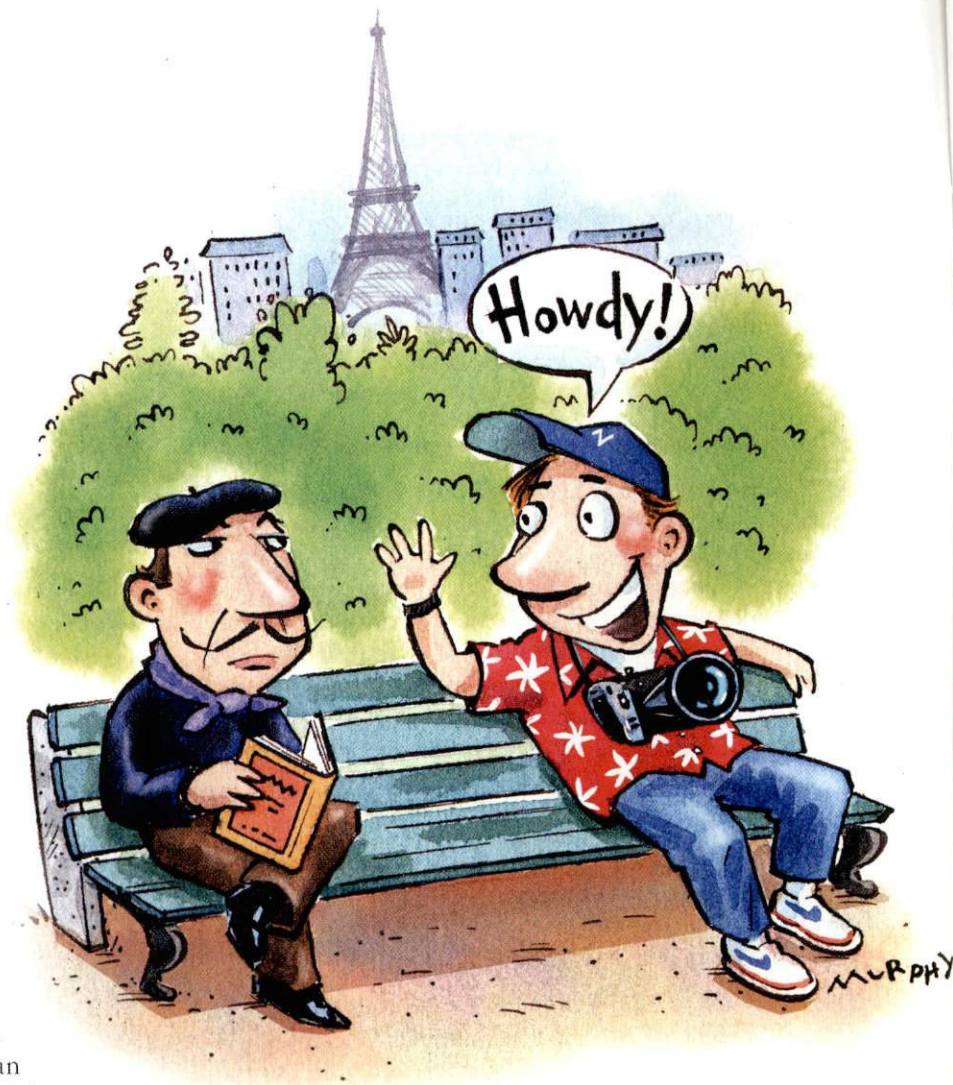


For the American tourist, the possibilities for misunderstandings abroad are as numerous as they are hilarious.

## Parlez-vous Red, White and Blue?

The Chamber of Deputies was full; the delegates filling the large hall were businessmen and high-level government directors from many European countries. The keynote speaker was an American. The German representative spoke first, carefully and formally addressing all the dignitaries by title and organization. The American listened to the translation via headphones and looked at his watch (*10 minutes just for the introductions!* he thought.) A French speaker followed, with similar formality. Finally, it was the American's turn (*These folks were sure livelier at dinner last night*, he thought. *They just need loosening up.*) He turned to the French speaker who'd introduced him, "Thanks, Francoises!"

Whispers of disbelief spread across the hall. Not only had the American insulted the speaker by using his first name, he'd pronounced the "s" at the end, thus turning the Frenchman into a French woman! Undaunted, the American opened with a joke (which had his fellow Rotary Club members rolling back in Oklahoma). He delivered the punch line and looked around expectantly. The chamber was quiet. The speech, thankfully, was brief. Strike three and the visiting team is out. Will the distinguished gentleman from the United States please come out from underneath the lectern now?



As a visitor to Europe, you may never be asked to give a formal speech. Still, the possibilities for misunderstandings abroad are as numerous as they are hilarious. Take the example of the American tourist who hesitates before quietly asking a Spanish pharmacist for help because she is "constipado." The pharmacist nods helpfully, and gives her aspirin and an antihistamine. (*Constipado* in Spanish means "having a cold.") In Germany, most of us have figured out that if you're directed to the *klosett*, it won't be a place to hang your coat (think "water closet" here). Even in England, Americans are left stranded by their own language. In large department stores, when women go in search of a pair of pants, they are politely directed to the lingerie department. They are told to take the *lift* to the *first* floor (or an elevator to the second floor, in American English).

As an American expatriate for almost 20 years, I know first-hand the difficulty of integrating into another culture. There's the classic story of the American who moved to



Italy and tried, really tried to fit in. He dressed in Armani and Gucci. He picked up the local language and expressions. One day, as he entered a little shop, he greeted the owner, *Buon Giorno!* The owner nodded, smiled. The American enthusiastically ordered what he'd rehearsed: *un chilo di parmiggiano; una bottiglia di vino rosso!* The owner continued to nod and smile as the grocery list was recited in perfect Italian. Finally, the owner said, "*Signore*, you're an

American, right?" The American sank into his Guccis, defeated – "How did you know?" he asked. "Well," said the owner, "This is a hardware store."

Sometimes it is those very characteristics that mark our national character – friendliness, informality and national pride – that send a different message on foreign soil. The first clue may lie right inside your suitcase. Many guys, I've noticed, pack for their European vacation as they would for a golf trip: toothbrush, athletic shoes and most importantly, their lucky baseball cap (Go Yankees!), their business baseball cap (Big Al's Auto), and their patriotic baseball cap (USA!) I know this may go against our innate sense of individualism, but we are now advised to "blend" into the local culture we're visiting.

Most women, on the other hand, understand the concept of "blend." They want to integrate themselves imme-

diately into their surroundings. Even if it's their first time abroad, women can sniff out a designer boutique faster than you can say "Charge It!" Prickly shopkeepers and foreign languages do not intimidate them. They can communicate "I want to buy this!" almost telepathically – if not, they will use whatever method they can. I have seen American women maneuver through the most intricate transaction using nothing but their hands and facial expressions. Nonverbal communication is essential, in fact, and works much better than just saying everything *louder*, as if English could be absorbed by sheer volume!

But the three most important rules to communicating in Europe have actually very little to do with language:

### 1 Think of yourself as an ambassador.

Even if you're not riding around in a chauffeur-driven limo or golfing with heads of state, you are still representing the U.S. Most likely, the average European citizen isn't rubbing shoulders with the official ambassadors anyway. Instead, much of their opinions about Americans are going to come from you. Yes, *you* (and a whole bunch of Clint Eastwood westerns).



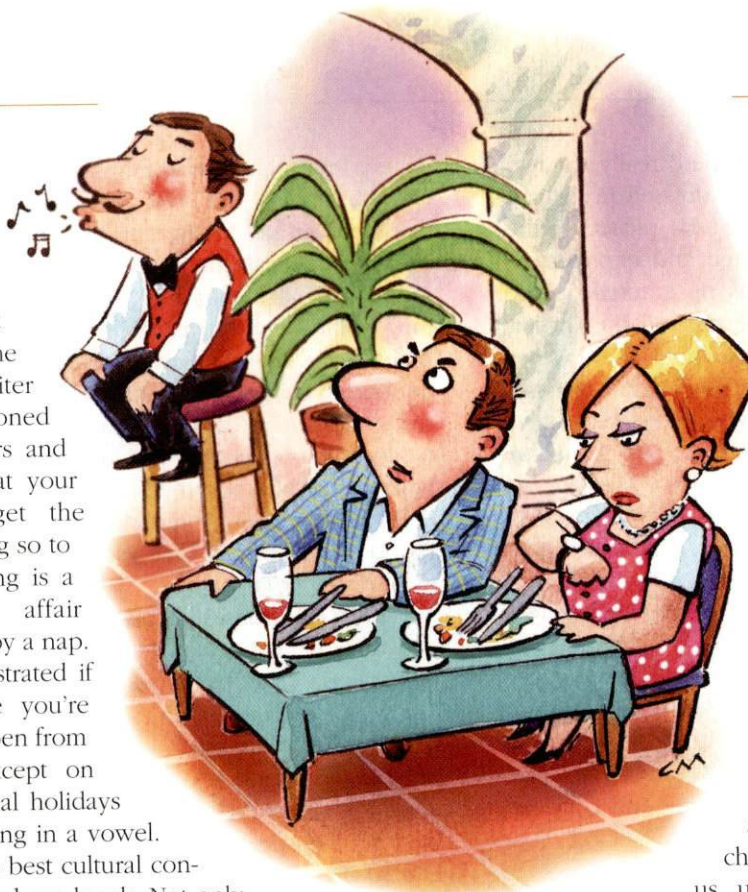
## Nonverbal Etiquette, *European Style*

handshaking going on, they have come up with a method to avoid giving each other blisters: the "formal quick-shake." This is not the American grip of "hold, pump and hang on" while you try to remember the person's name. Instead, just grab, shake and keep on walking. Otherwise you may get:

- ◆ **The handshake...** AGAIN? THE MOST COMMON American form of greeting is a handshake. In much of Europe, however, it's a handshake-a-thon! In the same office with the same colleagues, there's the daily morning handshake, the pre-meeting shake and the "back-from-lunch" shake. There is so much handshaking going on, they have come up with a method to avoid giving each other blisters: the "formal quick-shake." This is not the American grip of "hold, pump and hang on" while you try to remember the person's name. Instead, just grab, shake and keep on walking. Otherwise you may get:
- **The hug.** Be ready – in many Mediterranean countries, you may get a hug, even from a colleague at work. This is not the time to back away in horror. Although not usually given on the first encounter, by the second meeting you might very well qualify for the "brief official hug," usually followed by the "friendly shoulder pat." Americans often stand dumbfounded during this ritual, teetering stiff as statues. But what really throws them for a spatial loop is:
- **The kiss.** As common as the handshake in social situations, the "facial cheek kiss" or the "fake facial cheek kiss" maneuver is practiced in most European countries. Also light and quickly done, the lips can either touch you or simply sound like they are touching you (the "fake facial"). As the "kissee," the trick here is just to follow the kisser. Do not (unless you want to communicate something other than a simple hello) kiss on the lips. Instead, follow the right-left, two-kiss sequence. In Italy it's two, in Belgium it's three, and in France it's four kisses (normally right-left-right-left). The best approach is just to relax and try not to bump noses.

**2 Don't take it personally.** The same Italian waiter who has abandoned you for two hours and seems surprised at your impatience to get the check, is not doing so to offend you. Dining is a slow, deliberate affair usually followed by a nap. And don't be frustrated if the tourist office you're seeking is only open from 4:10 to 5:17, except on saint days, national holidays and any day ending in a vowel.

Instead, make the best cultural connection of all – go have lunch. Not only can you watch the locals watching you, but you'll probably find the Tourist Office folks there, too.



**3 Pack an open attitude.** Why struggle with a strange situation? Embrace it. Laugh at yourself. It may be the last thing that translates in a speech, but humor goes a long way on the road. This doesn't mean breaking into hysterical laughter if the *gendarme* pulls you over. In most cases, though, keeping your cool goes down better than belligerence. The French express "to be in a bad mood" with the phrase "to be of bad hair." If you're having a bad hair day,

refer to rule number two – go have lunch and a nap.

We communicate our own culture more than we realize. Europeans may shake their heads at the stereotypical American: the all-you-can-eat proportions of our Yankee pride and optimism, our billboard-sized patriotism and our Disney-like friendliness. Certainly our attitude is not everyone's cup of Earl Grey. Some of our countrymen should dim the red-white-and-blue flashing neon that announces them overseas. What we shouldn't do, though, is change those basic qualities that make us uniquely American. Instead, to any bemused observer of our particular idiosyncrasies, we should raise our glasses (Big Gulp-sized, extra ice) and declare, "*Vive la différence!*" **T**

**Deborah F. Anderson** is a freelance writer currently living in Luxembourg and the program manager for an English-language radio show, *The Corner Café*. She was the managing editor of *Living in Luxembourg*, a guide book for newcomers in the Grand Duchy. Deborah is also a consultant for several professional transition assistance firms that help clients who are relocating overseas.

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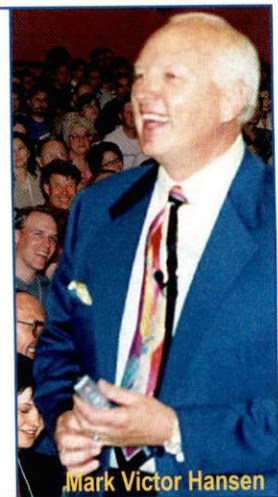
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By Mark Majcher, ATM



## Toastmasters Share Their Lessons Learned

# Staying Composed in Emotional Times

◆ IN JULY'S TOPICAL TIPS COLUMN, TOASTMASTER CHARLES Grace, ATM, asked for advice on how to stay composed during emotional speeches. Here are some of the responses:

■ *It will take a few rehearsals, but soon you'll be able to get through the presentation without crying. If the audience sees you crying, they will begin to focus on your sorrow and soon forget about the person's life they have gathered together to celebrate. One way to help you get through the speech without crying is to plan time to grieve after the presentation. Set aside some time later that day, or immediately after your remarks, to deal with the loss and express your emotions. During your speech it also might be helpful to keep reminding yourself that you set up this time to express your emotions. If you still get emotional, take a moment to compose yourself. If possible, take a drink of water. If after all this prep you just can't continue, it's okay to apologize and just sit down. The audience will certainly understand.*

PATRICK DONADIO, ATM • COLUMBUS, OHIO

■ *It's not uncommon to feel overwhelmed when delivering a speech that involves strong emotions. Don't minimize or eliminate deep feelings – they can be your greatest ally. Before your next presentation, experiment with these tools. They might help you utilize powerful emotions while keeping you open and centered. When we feel emotions deeply, our breathing becomes shallow or we hold our breath. Deep diaphragmatic breathing helps process emotions, so they move right through. Stay calm. Remind yourself that we all endure loss, disappointment and pain. Don't rush through an emotional moment. Instead, pause and regain composure. Make direct eye contact with someone and remember that you are not alone. Emotions denied will run wild. Acknowledged, they can become an asset. Practice, practice, practice. Emotional material packs a wallop when first presented. Over time, the impact lessens. Remember: It is the audience that should be moved, not ourselves!*

JAYMIE MEYER, ATM-B • NEW YORK, NEW YORK

■ *Several suggestions for avoiding choking up during an eulogy or emotional speech:*

1. Rehearse several extra times to get used to the emotional sections.
2. Interject humor – an anecdote about the deceased, an illustrative and pertinent joke, or a saying the person was known for.
3. Visualize the emotional situation or the deceased person smiling at you.

4. Avoid looking at members of the audience who are crying or choked up; concentrate on strangers.
5. Use many gestures and body language. It can be hard to do with this type of speech, but it will help deflect your emotions.
6. And of course, use every relaxation technique you can think of!

ANTHONY V. PERRELLA, ATM • HADDON FIELD, NEW JERSEY

Share with us that favorite tip, strategy or action that has made you a more effective communicator. Entries may be edited for clarity and length.

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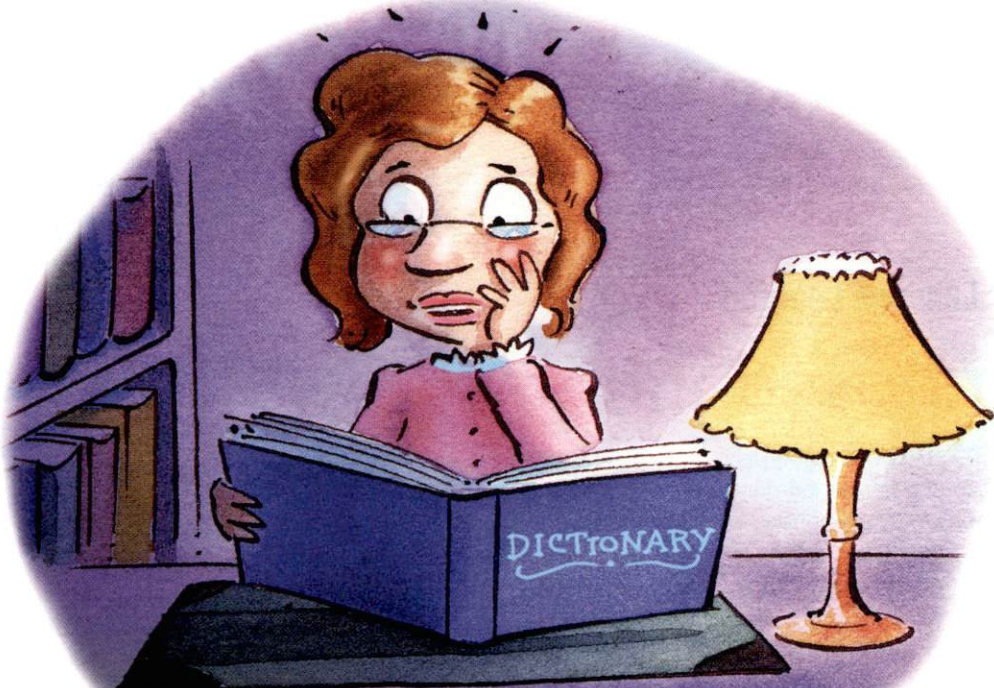
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The English  
language is a  
thousand-year  
fermentation  
of slang  
and profanity.

A circular illustration of a woman with brown, curly hair and glasses, wearing a pink jacket. She is sitting at a desk, reading a large blue book titled "DICTIONARY". To her right is a lamp with a yellow shade. In the background, there is a bookshelf with several books. The scene is lit with a soft, purple glow.

# The Traveler's Dictionary

Scholarship has its prurient pleasures. The Dictionary offers a surprising supply of scandal. If you look at the fine print – the etymology – you would discover how many respectable words have embarrassing origins. The English language is a thousand-year fermentation

of slang and profanity. We may owe our grammar to Oxford University, but our vocabulary comes from peasant stock. To illustrate the history and irony of English, I offer these examples of polite words and their sordid derivations.

*Travel* is literally a form of torture. Two thousand years ago, some Roman soldiers in Gaul were grumbling about the drudgery of building aqueducts, roads and other future tourist attractions. An eavesdropping native, whose ears were sharper than his Latin, misinterpreted the Romans' word for torture, *trepali*, as work. In time, all the Gauls were misusing the word, which they mispronounced as *travaill*. The Gauls then misinformed the Franks, who mis-

informed the Normans, who misinformed the Angle-Saxons when they weren't slaughtering them.

The Angle-Saxons, who had begun calling themselves English because it seemed less ethnic, numbered among life's *travails* the burdens and dangers of going on a journey. Where there even were roads, the wayfarer found that robbers had the right-of-way; and he risked contracting whatever diseases were being served at the roadside inn. The English Channel also seemed to be God's way of saying that traveling should be done only under duress. Since medieval spelling was never constrained by consistency, travel appeared as *trauayl*, *trawale* and *trauaile*. There was an equal flexibility in pronunciation, so Chaucer had no trouble making the word fit in with his rhyme scheme.

The Renaissance, with its wondrous sense of inquiry and innovation, inspired both the idea of travel and the letter "V" to spell it. The printing press, another novelty of the period, helped to promote Oxford University's idiosyncrasies as the standard for English grammar. Among the university's scholars and spoiled rich kids, travel evidently was preferred to *trauayl*. Four centuries later, we have yet to come up with another spelling, the robbers are now

BY EUGENE FINERMAN ■ ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRIS MURPHY



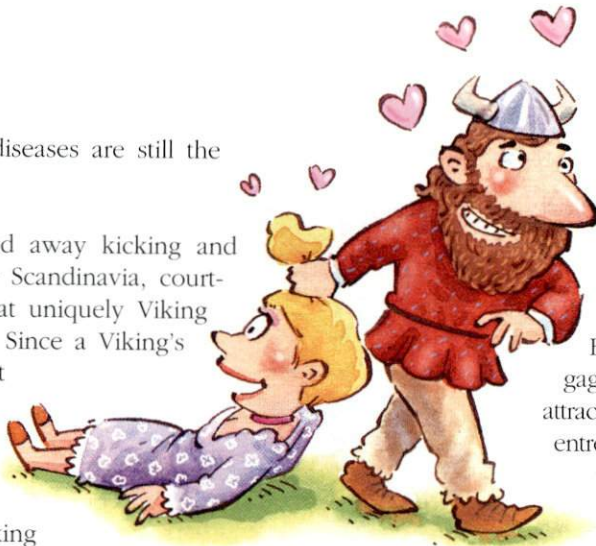
called "travel agents," and the diseases are still the most common souvenirs.

Luggage originally was carried away kicking and screaming. In eighth century Scandinavia, courtship was a matter of *lugga*. That uniquely Viking verb means to pull by the hair. Since a Viking's interest in a woman usually went further than that, *lugga* also made an excellent euphemism. Of course, the responsible Norseman did not just lugga them and leave them; even Viking etiquette recommended that some of one's children should be legitimate. These constraints, however, did not apply outside Scandinavia, and that proved quite an incentive to see the world.

Britain was all too often the destination of the medieval S.A.S. tours and, given the effusive nature of the Vikings, the English language was soon enriched with such Norse words as *slabtr*, *wrek*, *plunder*, *kidnappe* and, of course, *lugga*. *Lugga* made a particular impression on the British Isles, introducing red hair to Scotland and Ireland, and leaving eastern England blonder than the west. The Angle-Saxon, with either a genius for understatement or a very low opinion of his abducted sister's looks, redefined *lug* as hauling a burden.

*Luggage*, however, came over with another invasion. In 1066, Normandy's Duke William the Bastard conquered England in the hope of improving his nickname. The Normans, as that telltale *Nor* indicates, were descended from Norsemen who had the originality to overrun France instead of England. From their Viking grandfathers, the Normans had inherited the rampaging hormones; from their French grandmeres, they had acquired a need to sound nasal and to have the last word. The new masters of England had no compunction about the practice of *lugga*, but they abhorred the pronunciation. With their Gallic charm, the Normans thought women would appreciate being *luggage* rather than *lugga*.

Troubadours soon found steady work telling the nobles how wonderful they were. The knights, not knowing sarcasm when they heard it, even began to succumb to the troubadours' chivalry shtick. Although the Church had already tried to discourage the knights from slaughter, pillage and *lugga* – except on crusades, of course – it had only appealed to the nobles' decency rather than their vanity. Now, however, the chivalrous felt a *noblesse*



*oblige* to their public image. A major concession was made regarding luggage: it would no longer be free to the enlisted men.

Of course, the English soldier could hardly be expected to fight a Hundred Years' War without any luggage, but an army camp could always attract women of rentable affection. These entrepreneurs were available in the rear of the camp, where the supplies were kept. So, whenever a soldier needed his morale boosted, he could always find some luggage with the baggage.

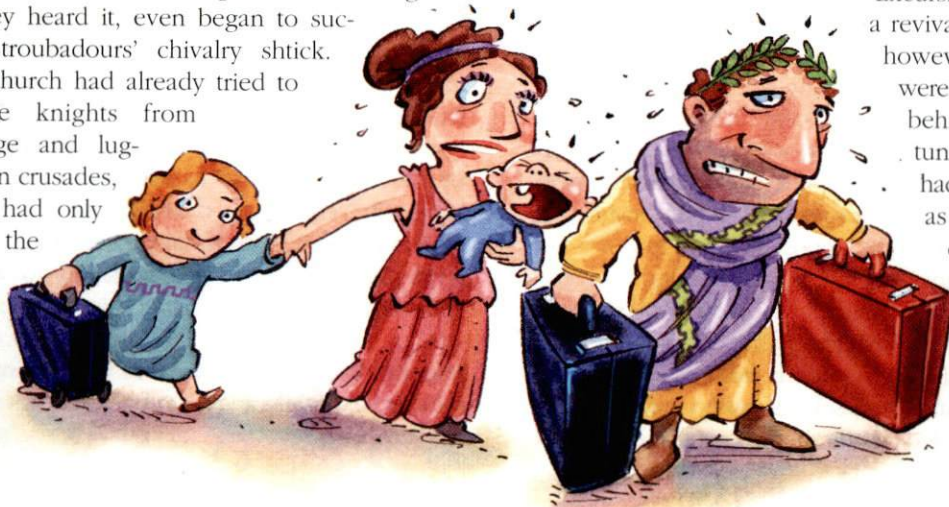
Since those soldiers were preoccupied with bubonic plague and losing a war to a mad shepherdess, they carelessly blurred the distinction between luggage and baggage. By the end of the sixteenth century, the words had been totally compromised: a soldier would carry luggage but carry on with the baggage. Today, baggage can be respectable, but luggage is more refined. The sole link with its origins is that, even after 1200 years, luggage still gets manhandled.

Excursions once offered short trips to death. In antiquity, invasion was the most common form of tourism. If the residents of a besieged city preferred not to be souvenirs, they would attempt an *ex cursio*. The Latin phrase means to run out, and its purpose translates to a surprise attack.

The excursion would rush forth from the city gates and hurl itself upon the enemy, who theoretically would be slaughtered and routed. Of course, the enemy was rarely so accommodating. Excursions required a capacity for suicide, although the defenders of Jerusalem always expected a miracle (and they did have it in writing).

Although *ex cursio* was a Latin term, it was not a Latin intention. The Romans had created the empire by doing the besieging. From their perspective, excursions simply made good target practice. By the end of the first century, the Mediterranean world had succumbed to the Roman choice of death or aqueducts.

Excursions might have had a revival in the fifth century, however, when the Romans were the ones covering behind city walls. Unfortunately, Latin grammar had deteriorated as badly as Roman morale. The classical *ex cursio* had been replaced by the slang *salire*: to leap. So, if a Roman officer wanted his soldiers to attack the



besieging barbarians, he would order a sally rather than an excursion. The legionaries usually responded by killing the officer. Their idea of strategy was to surrender to the Goths in preference to the Vandals or the Huns.

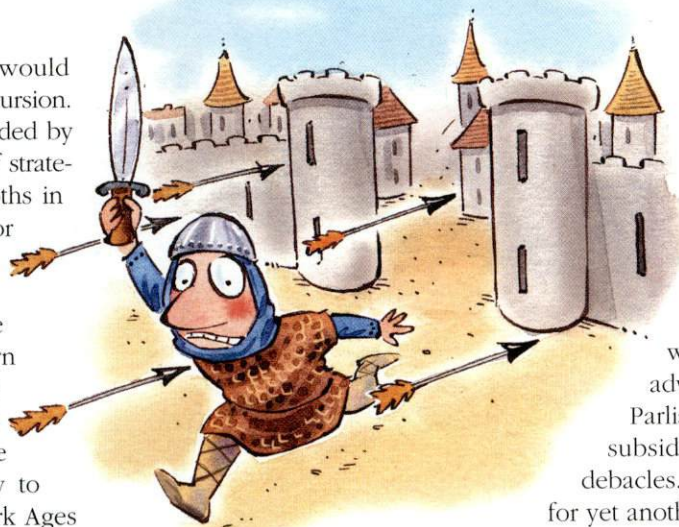
After the collapse of the Roman Empire, it would be four centuries before Western Europe again had anything worth stealing, which the Vikings promptly did. Europe then needed another century to recover from that; but the Dark Ages had certainly ended by 987, when Hugh Capet demonstrated his consumer confidence by seizing the throne of France.

The ensuing intrigues and wars inspired a building boom in fortifications: this was France's first fashion industry. Being French imports themselves, the Normans introduced castles to England, ensuring that no one would conquer the country as easily as they had. The castles also protected the Normans from each other. When a castle was besieged, the defenders would attempt a counter attack. Since the French language is based on Latin slang, and the Normans only knew what the French told them, the attack was called a *sally*. Of course, there were churchmen who knew that the correct word was excursion, but they either had taken a vow of silence or seemed to enjoy everyone else's ignorance. *Excursion* remained in Latin obscurity.

Then, desperation revived the word. In recalling the glories of Elizabethan England, the army is always omitted. Its successes consisted of escorting Jesuits to execution. Its problems stemmed from commanders who were better gigolos than soldiers. Queen Elizabeth selected her officers on their ability to flatter her. Since this was the Renaissance, the aspiring commander was required to fawn in several languages and have knowledge of classical hyperbole. His tactical skills were demonstrated by dancing. This trial of charms produced officers who could read Latin, French and Greek, but not maps.

Their incompetence would not have mattered if they had limited their duties to inspecting halberds at Greenwich Palace. Of course, being incompetent, they were unaware of it; so, they were eager to fight overseas. In the Netherlands, the English wanted to help a brave, persecuted people win their freedom from foreign oppression; in Ireland, the English wanted to do the opposite.

Although the campaigns differed, the results were similar. The Elizabethan army made a tradition of being in an Irish ambush or a Spanish siege. Of course, there was another military tradition, one that is still observed: in the face of defeat, obfuscate the facts into a victory. The English officers needed an euphemism for their inepti-



tude, and their knowledge of Latin provided one: *excursion*. So, instead of confessing that the English had blundered into a trap and barely fought their way out, the commanders would boast, "We made an excursion."

Although Queen Elizabeth was susceptible to charming adventurers, and so was James I, Parliament was not. It grew tired of subsidizing excursions and other debacles. When Charles I wanted money for yet another military escapade in Ireland,

Parliament demanded to choose the commanders. (They had to be devout Protestants who would enjoy their work in Ireland.) The King, however, would not compromise his prerogatives, and he threatened the Parliament with his army. Of course, Parliament could afford an army of its own, and Charles soon found himself making an excursion from London.

The English Civil War was to decide whether the monarch had divine rights or constitutional idiosyncrasies. The Roundheads and the Cavaliers were also divided by their use of *excursion*. Oliver Cromwell would not tolerate the word. Puritans did not believe in euphemisms, especially Latin ones that smacked of Popery. The Cavaliers, however, found *excursion* to be a very encouraging word. Upholding the traditions of the royal army, and losing the war, the Cavaliers preferred an excursion to France rather than a visit to an English scaffold.

Their excursion lasted more than ten years, until 1658, when Oliver Cromwell obliged the royalists by dying. After enduring a decade of Puritanism, England longed for pageantry and syphilis, and Charles II could offer both. The Restoration had a libidinous urgency; accelerated adultery had to compensate for all the missed opportunities. So, when a gentleman felt himself besieged by monogamy, he would attempt an excursion. Of course, bad morals still required good manners. A gentleman would graciously lie to his wife, disguising his excursion as a visit to the theater rather than to the actresses.

As both an alibi and an euphemism, excursion disseminated through the gentry. The ladies either were tactfully naive or making excursions of their own. The word certainly meant a short trip for pleasure, no matter what the motive. By the 1680s, the word had spread to the middle class, and so lost its venereal intent. Even today, however, excursion retains a trace of its military context. Consider how tour guides always stray from the itinerary to steer you to souvenir shops: excursions still tend to be ambushes. T

**Eugene Finerman** is a freelance writer living in Northbrook, Illinois. He welcomes your comments at [finerman@theramp.net](mailto:finerman@theramp.net)

"When I use a word it means just what  
I choose it to mean – neither more nor less."

– HUMPTY-DUMPTY

## The Book Review:

# No Uncertain Terms by William Safire

◆ WHETHER YOU HAVE A PH.D. IN ENGLISH OR SIMPLY A desire to improve your self-expression and understanding of language, William Safire has a book for you. It should be read and then tucked away safely for future reference.

Safire is both a political commentator and an authority on English vocabulary, speech, language, usage and writing. In all, he has written 14 classic books on words. *No Uncertain Terms*, published in June by Simon & Schuster, is the latest in this body of literary gemstones. As with most of his other books, this one is based on his column, "On Language," which appears weekly in *The New York Times Magazine*.

This is a particularly valuable book for English speakers, whether native born to the language or developing skill in its use as a second language. Every thought we express is a series of building blocks that start with words. Whether we use language confidently and correctly depends to a large measure on our initiative to pick up good books and begin reading; books like this one on language are particularly helpful.

*No Uncertain Terms* makes learning English grammar fun and interesting because Safire explains every word, and there are hundreds, with a memorable story of how it evolved, what series of events gave it life, and why it is the wisest choice among other options.

In the past year, approximately 10,000 new words have been added to the English language. These words are either modifications of old words or new words that define our culture and technology.

One of the many things I learned in *No Uncertain Terms* was the existence of "stump compounding." I often feel as though I am the last person to learn about new things. (If you already know about stump words and how they combine to make new meanings, then that proves my point.) As Safire explains it, a stump is a piece of a word, the front or the back, that is combined with other stumps to create a new word. Take the word *Bosnywash*, for example. It is the stump compound of *Boston* and *Washington* with the initials of New York. The meaning is "Northeast Corridor." The stump concept was first noticed in 1922 by Otto Jespersen, the Danish linguist, who noted that children tended to shorten names by using ends: Albert became Bert, Arabella

just Bella and Elizabeth, Beth. Now adults create new coinages to shorten geographical names such as NoHo for North Hollywood.

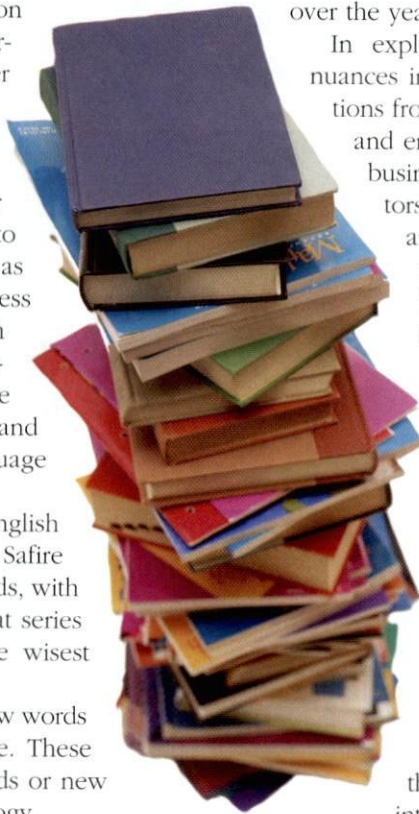
Besides explaining the evolution of words, Safire enlivens his instructional narrative with an explanation of fun phrases, such as *enough already*, acronyms such as: SWAG (scientific wild-ass guess), and the most popular baby names over the years.

In explaining the meaning and importance of nuances in the English language, Safire uses illustrations from around the world, many from politicians and entertainers, soldiers and generals, high-tech business executives and entrepreneurs, educators and writers. The illuminating examples and explanations reflect the global village we live in, giving readers a comfortable feeling for the familiar as well as a sense of adventure through the historical and international perspectives.

The book is structured into a series of essays, each with a distinct theme. In one essay, Safire reviews the evolution of language and, with the aid of linguists and other word mavens, discovers the future of English and American English as global languages. One of the authorities contributing to the essay is New Zealander Robert Burchfield, former chief editor of the *Oxford English* dictionaries. In Burchfield's view, English and American English will not merge; in fact he asserts that many languages will continue strong into the third millennium, with electronic translations strengthening diversity yet asserting unity among all people.

There are hundreds of good reasons to read this book, one for every word and phrase explained. It's available at popular bookstores as well as at Internet booksellers. At 370 pages and less than \$25, it is a great bargain in the reference category. **T**

**Larry Welch, DTM**, is a member of Toastmasters in Washington, D.C., and Singapore. He is author of *Mary Virginia, A Father's Story*, writes the motivational e-newsletter *On the run* from his home in Singapore, and can be reached at [lnwelch@aol.com](mailto:lnwelch@aol.com).





2003-2004

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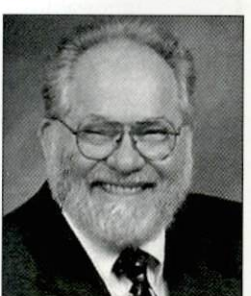
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How to Push an

# Elephant

through a Straw

**The key is finding the right straw – and identifying the elephant.**

**C**ommunication is like pushing an elephant through a straw. The job of conveying a message to someone who lacks your extensive vocabulary, experience and high level of motivation often seems impossible. It's hard work. It can be frustrating. But it also can be very rewarding. When we are unable to communicate, we are miserable. When it works, we're like a master magician, reveling in the success of our sleight of hand.

There is much to say and only a limited amount of time available. Our elephants are huge but our resources limited. To communicate effectively, we must squeeze our knowledge into a tight space. The secret to speeches that work like magic is finding the right straw for your elephant. Your speeches will improve in clarity and effectiveness when you match the right elephant (things to learn) with the right straw (ways to learn).

## Elephants

You already have the elephant. You know your elephant better than anyone. You've been feeding it anything and everything you can find. You have parts of it written on napkins, envelopes, calendars and dozen of notes posted on your wall, mirror and refrigerator. Once you choose a topic, it's easy to have a pile the size of an elephant.

But which kind of elephant do you have? Although there are millions of individual topics, there are only three types of elephants: facts, concepts and behaviors. Anything we wish to learn, teach or communicate can be shuffled into one of these categories. The three categories describe the form of the information, the way in which we process it. We treat all behaviors alike, ignoring whether they are good

habits or bad ones. We treat all concepts the same, regardless of their content. We treat all facts alike, independent of their truth.

## Facts

We don't like facts very much. Facts are details, small bits of information. It's not that they are innately bad, but they are rather ugly and tend to attract paperwork. In and of themselves, facts are too small to be likable, so we avoid them whenever possible. Have you ever invited people over to watch a pictorial display of facts (slides of your vacation, for instance)? Then you know: We hate facts.

Facts include names, dates, phone numbers, checkbook balances, social security numbers, proce-

BY KEN TANGEN Ph.D. ■ ILLUSTRATIONS BY CREATAS



dures (do this first, then that), and most of the course content from kindergarten through graduate school. We not only dislike facts, we try to get rid of them. We even make computers and calculating machines that are designed for the express purpose of crunching facts. The poor little things never have a chance.

We dislike facts because they trick us. We like to think of facts as being true. If it is true, it is a fact. Actually, truth is independent of its form. Facts need not be true. The statement "Seattle is the capitol of Washington state" is a fact – as opposed to being a concept or a behavior – but it is not true. Olympia is Washington's capital.

It would require a huge amount of storage space to carry all the facts we know personally, let alone the millions of details we have not yet met. So we do not take them with us. Instead, we use concepts.

## Concepts

Concepts are easy-to-carry rules that can be applied to a wide variety of situations. We like concepts. We will spend hours watching them on TV, in movies and plays. They are so adorable. Concepts are easy to learn, easy to carry, and easy to share with others.

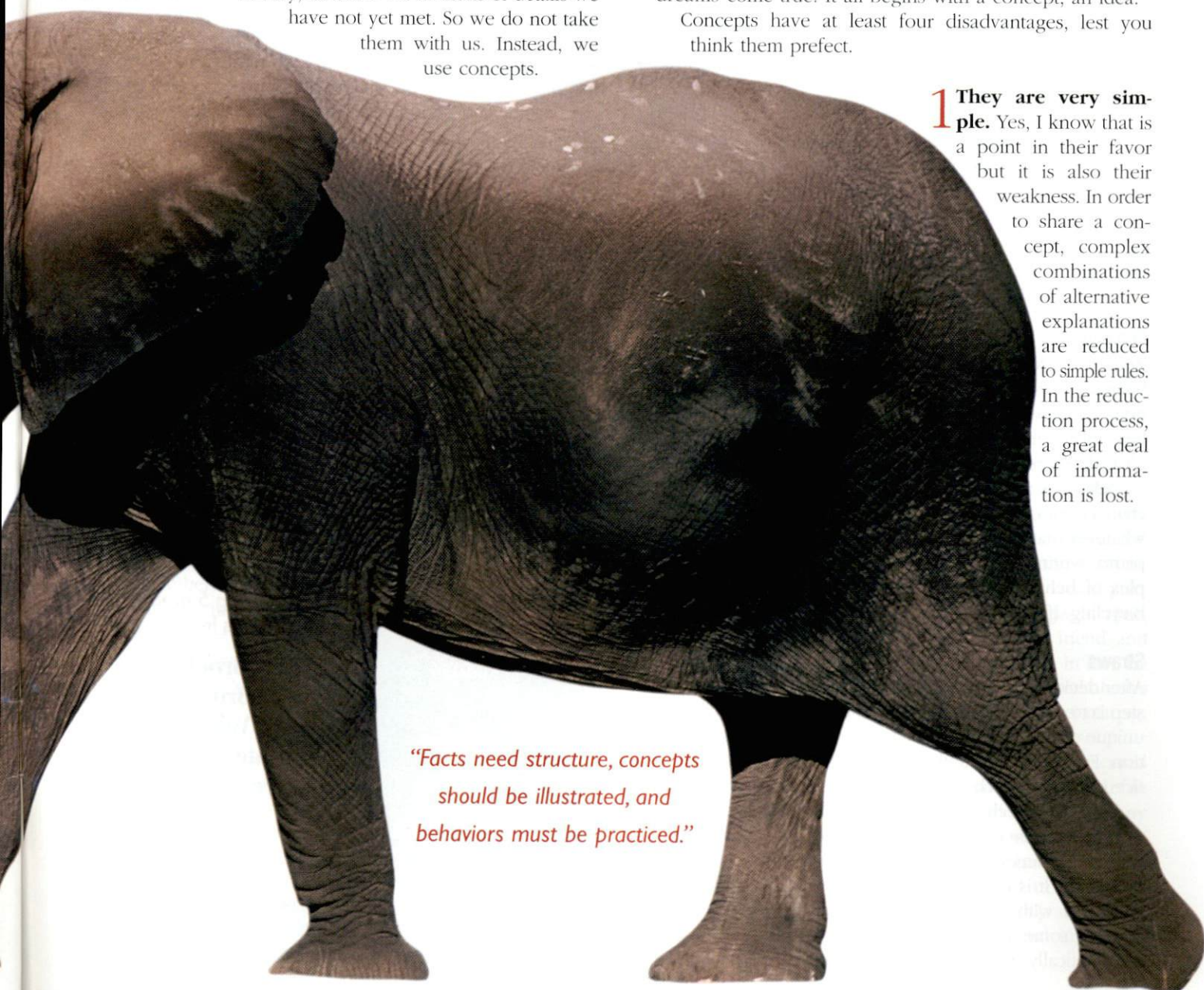
We like our concepts so much that we are inseparable. We travel with our prejudices, drink with our sorrows, jog with our status symbols and work with our insecurities. We pamper our beliefs, sacrifice our principles, salute our achievements and sail with our dreams. We diet with our self-concept, lunch with our ego and party with our libido. With a single concept, say the idea of generosity, you can raise millions of dollars for starving people, build hospitals, furnish libraries and make a child's Christmas dreams come true. It all begins with a concept, an idea.

Concepts have at least four disadvantages, lest you think them perfect.

**1 They are very simple.** Yes, I know that is a point in their favor but it is also their weakness. In order to share a concept, complex combinations of alternative explanations are reduced to simple rules. In the reduction process, a great deal of information is lost.

*"Facts need structure, concepts should be illustrated, and behaviors must be practiced."*

aw



**2** Concepts are not always fashionable. It is not that the ideas themselves change that much; concepts are quite stable fellows, but what was “in” last season may not be “rad” now. Although concepts are long-lasting, we seem to bounce between them. We get tired of the same old ideas and want to try some new ones. Have you had your concepts rotated recently? It is not as painful as it sounds. We do it all the time.

**3** We often pretend concepts are facts. Watch out, for example, when people say they are going to share with you three steps for financial success. Although they describe them as steps (facts), they are usually principles (concepts). Steps suggest that one item must be completed before another, but most concepts are independent of each other.

The reason for calling a concept a step is to fool people into thinking that the idea is more truthful because it is more concrete. Because concepts are difficult to verify, this thinking goes, let’s call them facts and people will think they are true. Like facts, however, the truth of a concept is independent of its style. Some concepts are true, and others are less than fully accurate. No matter, they are all concepts, and we process them all in the same manner.

**4** The greatest disadvantage to emphasizing concepts is that we can **learn what to do but not know how to do it**. The danger of “book learnin’” is that students may know the themes of British literature but not know how to write a decent business letter. In everyday life, concepts must be put into action. You can never replace doing public speaking with reading about it.

### Behaviors

Behaviors are the things we do. We ask, answer, bank, breathe, bob, belch, catch, cry, crawl, creep, dip, dive, drink, erase, elope, fight, flirt, gush, growl, grovel, hit, hide, hug, hustle, hurry, haggle, jog, jostle, jump.... You get the idea. Behaviors are all the things we do, big and small.

Behaviors are usually verbs, or at least can be logically changed into verbs. An airplane is a thing but airplaning – whatever that may be – is an action, a behavior. Playing a piano, writing poems and running cross-country are samples of behaviors. So are listening, sharing, praying and bicycling. If it requires practice, it is a behavior.

### Straws

After deciding what kind of elephant you’re using, the next step is to pick the right straw. Each content area has its own unique characteristics. For facts, the right straw is organization. For concepts, it’s illustration. And for behaviors, practice is the correct choice. Let’s look at each in turn.

If your speech is primarily fact-based, organize the material. People can learn facts best when there is an organizational framework. Like shoes, a collection of facts is best when it is organized. If your speech is highly technical, filled with facts, the best approach is to group the items in some manner. Although you could list your facts alphabetically, it is probably more helpful to group them

by similarity. This “blocking” technique increases the likelihood that people will remember your facts.

If your primary goal is to communicate a concept, illustrate it. Most speeches are conceptual. Undoubtedly, you begin with an general principle and give multiple illustrations of that principle. Most speakers are quite skilled at sharing concepts. The best way to improve your concept communication is to have fewer concepts and more illustrations. Having many points to remember turns concepts into facts and makes your presentation boring.

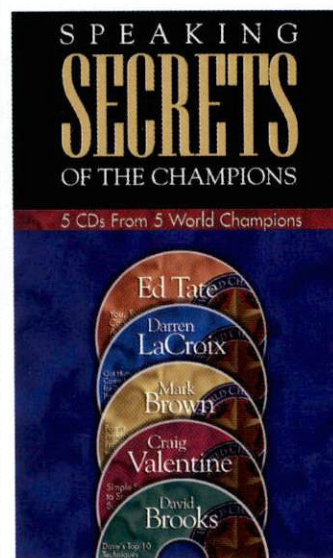
Behaviors, on the other hand, must be practiced. The best approach to teaching your audience how to perform a skill is to have them do it. Do it in the context they will have to perform it. Do it with feedback (so they know how well they did). And do it over and over again (so they can modify their performance). Practice with clear criteria and immediate feedback makes perfect.

### Magic

When crafting a speech, choosing the right straw for your elephant can mean the difference between a successful presentation and a flop. Facts need structure, concepts should be illustrated, and behaviors must be practiced. Now go make some magic! **T**

**Ken Tangen, Ph.D.**, of Costa Mesa, California, has more than 20 years of experience as a research psychologist and management consultant.

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## IN MEMORY OF

## Past International President Patrick A. Panfile, DTM, 1929-2003

◆ TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL MOURNS THE LOSS OF ONE of its leaders, former International President Patrick "Pat" Panfile. He died of kidney failure on June 13, at the Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, New York, at age 74. He is survived by his wife, Julie, daughter Paula and son Kelly, as well as two children, Greg and Kim, from a previous marriage, a brother and eight grandchildren.

Pat Panfile, DTM, served as the 1980-1981 President of Toastmasters International and remained actively involved with the organization for the rest of his life. Once when asked about his hobbies, Panfile answered, "I don't have time for them. I devote all my energy to Toastmasters activities, my job and my family."

Many people will attest to Panfile's devotion to Toastmasters. A charter member of Postprandial Club 3259-65 in Rochester, New York, Panfile held offices at all levels of the organization, earning him a reputation as a dynamic speaker and a highly capable, dedicated leader. During Panfile's memorial service, Tobi Keefe, a Postprandial club member, said, "Pat stayed in Toastmasters for over 30 years not for his own growth, but for ours. He loved Toastmasters and he loved helping people."

Panfile's friend of 33 years, Past District 65 Governor Alan Turof, DTM, talks about Panfile's "irresistible charisma" and describes how they met:

"When I first met him, in 1973, as my supervisor at Xerox Corp., he reached his hand across a conference room table, and with a beaming smile on his face and a lot of enthusiasm said, 'Hi, I'm Pat Panfile.' Later that day he introduced me to the concept of Toastmasters. Many of us know about Pat's 3-foot rule: If within three feet, talk about Toastmasters. I was hooked!"

Turof continues: "More than any other person in my life, with the exception of my wife and parents, Pat had the greatest influence on my personal growth and well-being. He taught

me to make people welcome and to make them feel that they were an important friend. He encouraged me, constantly, to have the confidence to meet life's challenges and inspired me through training in Toastmasters. He taught me the value of a positive, can-do attitude."

As International President, Panfile's theme was "The Spirit of the '80s." In an interview in the September 1980 *Toastmaster* magazine, he said he chose that theme because of the unique "organizational spirit" of Toastmasters. "It has a very positive impact on people's lives and motivates them to achieve personal growth and success," he said. "Then there is the spirit of success that is possessed by each of our members. That spirit shows through in everything they do and makes them valuable members of businesses, communities, their families and Toastmasters International."

A senior program manager at Xerox Corp until his retirement in 1985, Panfile had a masters degree in electrical engineering. Upon his retirement, he started Execucom, a consulting business. He also sold administrative software to colleges and universities, and until last year, taught public speaking at Finger Lakes Community College. In 1966, Panfile joined Toastmasters at the invitation of a friend, and helped start the Postprandial Toastmasters Club. In fact, he was a charter member of two additional clubs and always credited the organization with "making me a better manager, husband and father."

Past International President Eddie Dunn, DTM, served on the Toastmasters Executive Committee when Panfile was president. "I got to know him well and have many great memories of our time spent together," Dunn says. "Pat certainly knew how to entertain and how to get into 'full character' when telling a story. He had a captive way of communicating, whether in a large group or visiting one-on-one. He was a very memorable and interesting individual – certainly one of a kind." **T**



To become a better speaker, learn the fundamental rules of persuasive communication.

## The 7 Communication Secrets of Trial Lawyers

Do successful lawyers have a “gift” that makes them great communicators? Yes, some are more talented than others, but consistent winners earn their victories by applying a few fundamental rules of persuasive communication.

Anyone who wants to be a better communicator – an executive, a professional speaker, or anyone to whom public speaking is essential – can benefit from the same concepts that lawyers use with great success. Here are the trial lawyers’ seven secrets of communication:

### Prepare

**Have a plan.** You talk better when you know what you are talking about. Excellent trial lawyers are excellent preparers. You too should have a plan of action, a structure for your presentation. Whether your outline is a written or mental checklist, know the points you want to make, and put the points in a meaningful order for maximum impact. A good lawyer never asks a question in a trial without already knowing the answer, or knowing what to do if the witness springs a surprise answer. Don’t expect to be spontaneously brilliant. Plan your talk.

**Know your audience.** Lawyers know that the backgrounds, experiences and beliefs of jurors are crucial to trial results, because people are inclined to defend their opinions and attitudes even in the face of contradictory evidence and reason. Consultants trained in psychology are paid in big cases to study the backgrounds of potential jurors in hopes of finding a receptive jury. Here is the point: If you want to persuade an audience of one or one thousand, know as much as you can about each recipient of your message.

**Anticipate questions about your credibility.** By planning your message and knowing your audience, you can prepare to address the audience’s doubts about you or your “case.” Always look for the weaknesses in your contentions or your credentials, and be ready to address them. Ask yourself, “Why would this audience not want to listen to me on this issue?” Then ask yourself, “What can I do to over-



come this resistance?” Whatever you decide is the best way to attack your obstacle, do it early in your presentation.

**Visualize winning.** Lawyers often take their clients to the courtroom a few days before a trial to acclimate them to the environment. The sense of comfort and familiarity can make both the lawyer and the client better communicators when the trial starts. If you are giving a presentation in an unfamiliar setting, go early and stand where you will give your talk. Go alone, and take your time to get comfortable with the surroundings. Imagine giving the presentation in the same room, filled with warm, appreciative people. Close your eyes and hear the applause. See the smiles. Feel the victory!

### Be humble

**Arrogance repels.** Smugness is ugly. We don’t like to listen to jerks. It is hard to define what makes a person likeable, but the “like factor” is important in persuasive communication. Even if you are not a natural at conveying warmth and humor, you can still improve your likeability by observing basic rules of manners and etiquette. The “magic words” from kindergarten still work: *please, thank you, you’re welcome*. These words are especially effective when said with sincerity and an honest smile.

Can humility be learned? Yes, because humility is an attitude. If humility does not come naturally to you, then choose to work on your humility. A humble attitude is a choice. If you have the desire to improve your attitude, try cultivating your humility.

### Communicate on multiple levels.

**Speak to the head and to the heart.** Different people respond to different types of messages. A well-planned talk will appeal to reason, common sense and emotion. Try to hit all three aspects and weave them together.

**Communicate with a range of expression**, using sight, sound and movement to appeal to as many of the senses as you can. Help your audience see and feel – as well as hear – your message.

To touch the audience's hearts and minds, be especially careful of your choice of words. Words are powerful. The wrong word at the wrong time to the wrong group can put a chill on your speech that fire and brimstone cannot thaw.

### Take Full Advantage of Primacy and Recency

**Primacy.** What is first heard and seen – the first impression – sticks. An opinion or attitude, once formed, resists change. Trial lawyers have long known that juries don't review a case impartially after all the evidence has been received. That's an unnatural way for human beings to make decisions. What really happens is that opinions are quickly formed (the "good guy" and "bad guy" are identified early in the communication process), and evidence contrary to these opinions is subconsciously filtered out and rejected.

How do you take advantage of primacy? Start strong.

To me, the first question to the first witness in a trial is being like a heavyweight boxing champion, on the opening bell, walking directly toward his opponent and throwing an immediate uppercut to the chin.

Starting strong means not saying "good morning" or "I'm glad to be here today" or some other clichéd time waster. Starting strong means using the first words, the first sentence, to grab the audience's attention and to start the persuasion process.

**Recency.** What's heard last stays "ringing in their ears," and is remembered best. In trials, the lawyer who gets the last word treasures the chance to send the jury off to the deliberation room with a resounding, emotional BANG!

People act on emotion, so finish with a memorable, emotional flourish.

### Apply the "Rule of Three"

There is a rhythm to our language. Eloquent, thoughtful and effective speakers have learned that certain patterns of speech carry more impact than others.

Bad lawyers tend to write in redundant pairs. Cease and desist; devise and bequeath; insist and demand. But good trial lawyers, those who live by the spoken word, are aware of the power of threes.

"Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

"Preserve, protect and defend."

"Government of the people, by the people, for the people."

The rhythm of threes is poetic, it is artistic, and it is dramatic. Learn to profit from the impact of the "Rule of Three."

### Grasp the power of words

**Use simple, strong language.** Don't try to impress with hundred-dollar words. *Love* is a powerful word. *Honor* is

a powerful word. *Respect* is a powerful word. Don't dilute the strength of your message with bureaucratic, stuffy or pretentious prose. Reject clichés.

Simple, clear, punchy words create a picture in your listeners' minds. Your audience will not remember the words; they will remember the images their minds created with your words.

Finding the right words takes work. Don't expect the best words to be the first to come to your mind. Keep digging for the truth in your message, and keep trying to find the right words to convey your meaning.

### Tell the story

**Anecdotes sell; statistics bore.** The best lawyers know that stories are interesting. Every case that ends up in court has a story; successful courtroom advocates focus on the story.

Which of these two versions of an event is better?

- **Vague and legalistic:** "The defendant on the occasion in question failed to exercise due care and negligently collided with another vehicle, causing severe harm."
- **Specific** (tells the story): "Bob Smith got himself drunk that Saturday night, ran a red light, and crashed into Jane Doe's car, paralyzing her for life."

Both versions are accurate, but the one that tells a story is the one that holds the audience's interest.

### Conclusion

Do what the winners do. Prepare well, act humbly, communicate on multiple levels, use primacy and recency to advantage, use the Rule of Three and the power of words to tell the story. Then you will communicate like trial masters. **T**

**Mark David Pierce, CTM**, an attorney and communication consultant, is a member of Sunmasters Club 4248-23 in El Paso, Texas. Visit his Web site, [www.markdavidpierce.com](http://www.markdavidpierce.com).

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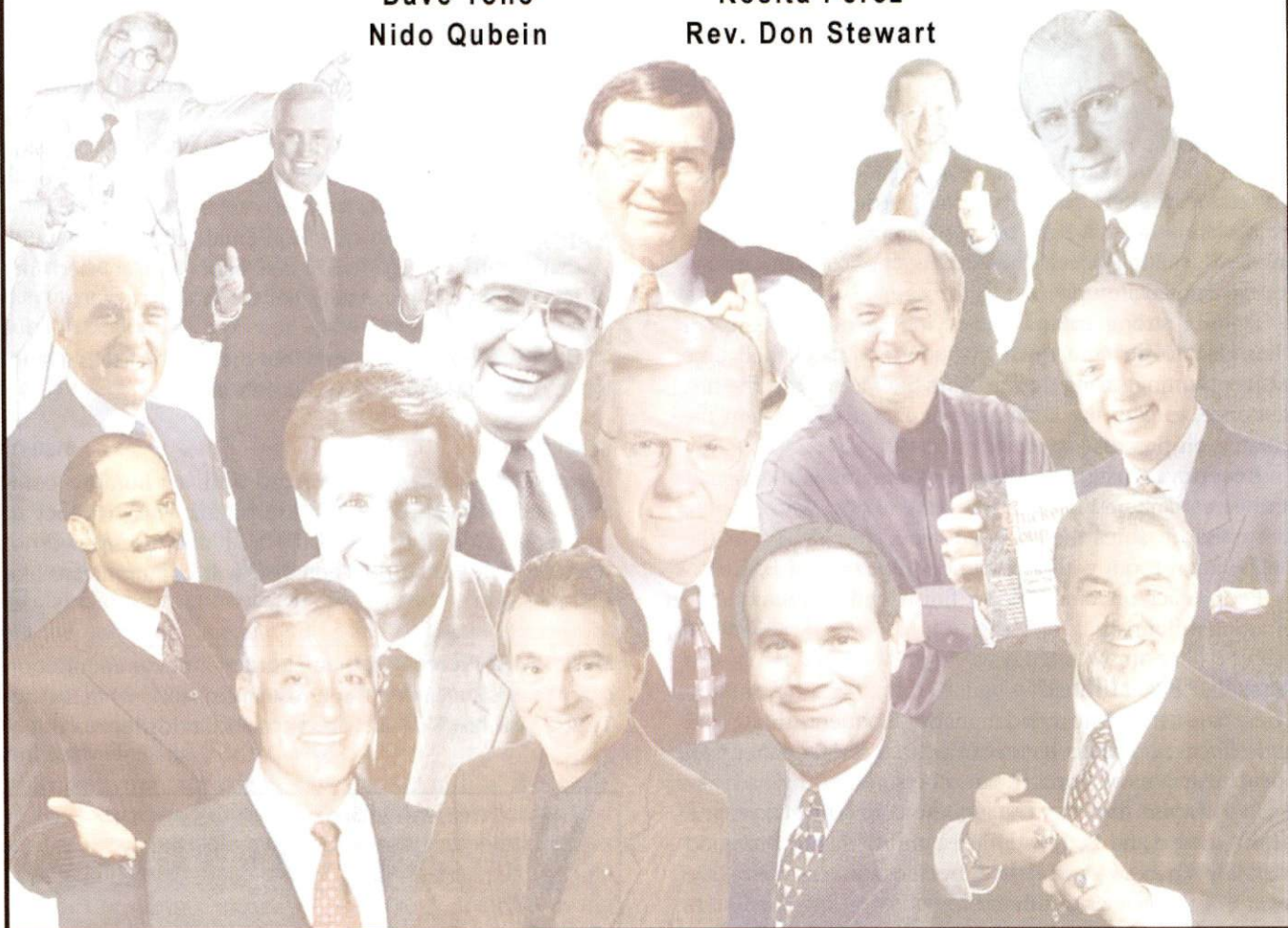
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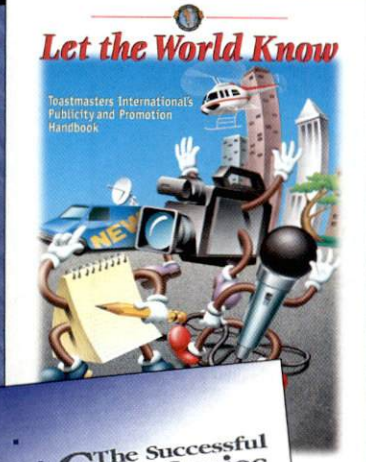
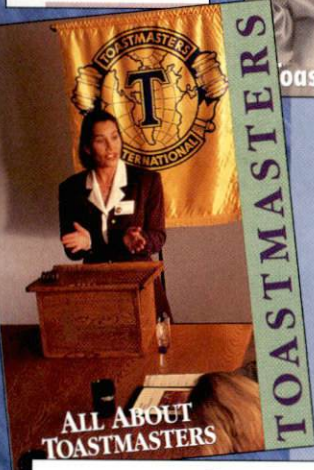
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