

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | MARCH 2017

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Draws Crowds**

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The Challenge of Leadership

Every Toastmasters club needs leadership, yet many clubs suffer from a lack of willingness by their members to take on leadership roles. Considering that our organization's tagline is "Where Leaders Are Made," this pattern undermines our avowed aim of becoming the premier provider of communication and leadership skills, and it goes against the reason many members joined their clubs.

The sixth commitment in the Toastmaster's Promise is *"to serve my club as an officer when called upon to do so."*

For many, the combination of communication and leadership is hard to accept, but, in reality, the two skills are inextricably linked. I know of no effective leader who is not also an effective communicator. Each individual skill enhances the other. Yet the lack of members willing to commit to leadership roles is a major obstacle for clubs. It keeps the club from delivering a positive and safe environment in which members benefit from the club experience.

Membership in your club is a commitment not just to achieving your goals, but to helping create an atmosphere of support for your fellow members.

So why this reluctance to take on a club leadership role? Some believe they are not ready for it. You will never know if you are ready until you step outside your comfort zone. Others simply do not care to take on additional responsibility, maybe due to time constraints. To those people, I simply say that if everyone pursued that line of reasoning we would have no clubs and no organization at all. Finally, there are those who believe that the current club leaders are doing a "good enough job, so let them get on with it and we will do our own thing."

The danger with that thinking is that we run the risk of "burning out" the willing few. Second, to quote a well-known saying, "If you always do what you've always done, then you always get what you always got." But, most important, the club officer pool is the well from which all our future district and international leaders come. Restrict the depth of this pool and you restrict and diminish the source of our future leaders and the organization itself.

Fellow members, district or international leadership may well not be your goal. I know it was not mine when I joined 26 years ago! However, the experience of fulfilling your commitment to your club could change your life ... as it changed mine. Can you afford to miss the opportunity? Take the challenge, fulfill the promise and become a club officer.

Membership in your club is a commitment not just to achieving your goals, but to helping create an atmosphere of support for your fellow members....

"Remember the Member."

MIKE STORKEY, DTM
International President



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The *Toastmaster* magazine (ISSN 00408263) is published monthly by Toastmasters International, Inc., 23182 Arroyo Vista, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688, U.S.A. Periodicals postage paid at Mission Viejo, CA and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address change to the *Toastmaster* magazine, P.O. Box 9052, Mission Viejo, CA 92690, U.S.A.

Published to promote the ideas and goals of Toastmasters International, a nonprofit educational organization of clubs throughout the world dedicated to teaching skills in public speaking and leadership. Members' subscriptions are included in the \$45 semi-annual dues.

The official publication of Toastmasters International carries authorized notices and articles regarding the activities and interests of the organization, but responsibility is not assumed for the opinions of the authors of other articles. The *Toastmaster* magazine does not endorse or guarantee the products it advertises.

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Printed in U.S.A.



“Most things in life aren’t learned when we do them right; they are learned when we make mistakes.”

— Valarie Suski, DTM
Morning Sun Club, Kamloops,
British Columbia, Canada

I Got a Card ... and It Was Nice

This note is in support of Susan Coon’s letter, headlined “Too Much Cynicism,” in the November 2016 issue. The letter reflected her disagreement with John Cadley’s July column “You Got Me a Card! How ... Nice.” One day, I went to my mailbox and found a handwritten card enclosed in an envelope. It was from my district’s program quality director (PQD). She was personally writing to thank me for my work with the silent auction during the recent district conference. It brought a big smile on my face! The gesture meant so much to me because, for the most part, I was a committee of one and endured many challenges to make the event successful.

It reminded me that district members actually care and appreciate the things I do to serve and help our members. I called and left a voicemail telling my PQD how much her card meant to me. Let’s not underestimate personal appreciations.

Diana Hardy, DTM
Raconteurs Club
Columbia, South Carolina

Proper English

I was very surprised to come across the word *emcee* in a letter from Jean-Marc Glasser in the November issue. I can understand the writer being puzzled since,

as a well-educated Australian of very mature years, if I had read the word *emcee* I would not have known what it meant either. Perhaps the reason it is new to me is that it is exclusive to Toastmasters and I am a relatively new member. *Master of ceremonies* has always been the term used, and any written or spoken abbreviation has always been the initials *MC*, not a single phoneticized word.

Jean-Marc’s opinion is correct—the fact is that *emcee* is “not proper English.” However, the *Toastmaster* does not use “proper English” spelling, preferring “Americanized” spelling such as replacing the letter *s* with *z*. *Emcee* does not fit the rules of proper English but it may be legitimate Americanized *Toastmaster* jargon.

Isabella Parker
Coolum Communicators club
Queensland, Australia

Editor’s Note: *American English is written in different styles, and the Toastmaster magazine, in general, follows The Associated Press style, which offers this: “British spellings, when they differ from American, are acceptable only in particular cases such as formal or composition titles: Jane’s Defence Weekly, Labour Party, Excel Centre, London Palladium Theatre.” In some other cases Toastmasters-specific style is used, as are entries in the Merriam-Webster dictionary.*

Difference of Opinion

One thing that Toastmasters has taught me is that variety truly is the spice of life. So when I read the article “When Choosing Nouns and Verbs, Stay Strong” by Paula Fuchsberg (November), I half-heartedly agreed with everything she wrote. Although I enthusiastically champion her main premise that a speech is enhanced by the speaker using vivid and descriptive nouns and verbs, she only told half the story.

I started this letter by remarking on variety. Well, it turns out that once you have trained yourself to use short, punchy nouns and verbs, you need to do a quick reversal. Sprinkle back in some longer, round-a-bout words into your speech to break up the sameness.

A good speechwriter soon realizes that short, powerful word structure can set up

the audience to enjoy a wordy, ‘slang-ish’ comment or two to drive a point home. A British detective show had one character retort, “I didn’t really try to climb over the fence; let’s just say I ambitiously fondled it.” This is just an example of how artful verbiage can follow short declaratory words to build up the hyperbole, hysteria or hilarity.

Sharon Alfred, ACG, ALB
Bolling Toastmasters
Washington, D.C.

Being the Best You Can Be

Mike Storkey’s Viewpoint (November) on how being prepared is important is admirable. However, I would argue that his viewpoint is idealistic, and that being unprepared is a perfect teaching moment. Often, good intentions and plans don’t meet. If members sign up and show up (to participate in some way), they demonstrate commitment and are as prepared as they can be at that moment. I would hope that their evaluators give them advice on ways to prepare, such as talking about their subject in conversation with others to get prior feedback. If evaluators don’t offer advice, general evaluators should. In addition, this is an opportunity for the members’ mentors to teach them about the time required to prepare adequately.

Members also have an opportunity to give written advice and encouragement. Most things in life aren’t learned when we do them right; they are learned when we make mistakes. It is the club’s job to create a safe environment where the member can make mistakes and then be guided to learn from those mistakes. Being prepared is great, but sometimes it is idealistic. We need to support our members so they can learn and grow.

Valarie Suski, DTM
Morning Sun Club
Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

Write it in 200 words or less. State your name, member number and home club, and send it to letters@toastmasters.org. Please note: Letters are subject to editing for length and clarity, and may be published in both the print and electronic editions.

Features



16

16

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Toastmasters Act Out

Actors and announcers offer lessons from the stage, screen and sound booth.

By Craig Harrison, DTM

Photo of Lili Wexu by Bjoern Kommerell



20

20

STORYTELLING

Story Takes a Turn

The recent popularity of personal storytelling draws crowds to many stages.

By Craig Harrison, DTM

Articles

12

THE CLUB EXPERIENCE
POLISHED SPEAKERS
IN POLAND

Feeling welcomed in Warsaw.

*By Caren Schnur Neile, Ph.D.,
ATMS*

14

PRESENTATION SKILLS
WHAT IS PLAGIARISM AND
HOW CAN YOU AVOID IT?

Take care to protect your reputation and relationships.

By Jesse Scinto, ACS

19

MAY I PLEASE HAVE
YOUR ATTENTION?

Tips for the public address announcer.

By Craig Harrison, DTM



12



14

COVER: Photo of Lili Wexu by Riccardo Cellere

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Articles

24

HOW TO

8 TIPS ON TABLE TOPICS

How to look good as a Topicsmaster.

By Allan Kaufman, DTM, and Allan Misch, DTM

26

CLUB PROFILE

GLOBAL MESSENGERS

Special Olympics athletes transform their talents in Gavel club.

By Paul Serman

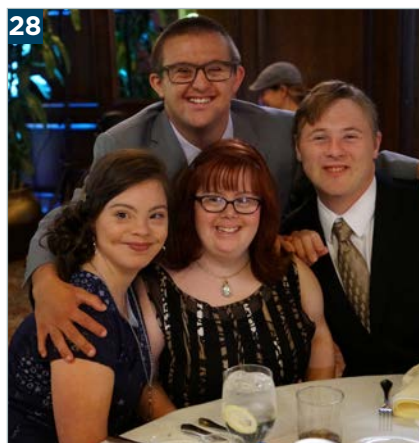
28

MEMBER PROFILE

A STAR IS BORN

A young woman with Down syndrome is a hit on TV show *Born This Way*.

By Paul Serman



Columns

2

VIEWPOINT

The Challenge of Leadership

By Mike Storkey, DTM International President

11

MY TURN

Finding a New Path

By Dorothy Rosby, ACS

30

FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT

More Punch

By John Cadley

Departments

3

MEMBERS' FORUM

6

QUICK TAKES

10

TRAVELING TOASTMASTER

▶ MEMBER MOMENT 

Finding Joy After Tragedy

BY MARIAM JEHANGIR

When Jay Fagnano, CC, delivered his Ice Breaker at the Glumac DTLA club in Los Angeles, it made people cry. The speech, entitled “I Wish I Wasn’t Standing Here,” told the story of his son’s death.

Nick Fagnano was 20 years old when he was tragically killed by a rare lightning strike at Los Angeles’ Venice Beach in 2014. He left behind two heartbroken parents and a devastated community. While losing a child is perhaps the most difficult experience a parent could go through, the Fagnanos managed to not only continue on with life, but also honor their son in a way that enriches the lives of so many others.

The Thrive in Joy Nick Fagnano Foundation was started after the couple visited the Dominican Republic on a charity project. On the way back, the Fagnanos decided there was much work to be done in serving children both abroad and in their home city of Los Angeles, and they formed a foundation in their son’s name. Jay shares their story below.

What does your foundation support?

The Thrive in Joy Nick Fagnano Foundation is an active participant in Vision Trust, which helps vulnerable children in 17 countries including the Dominican Republic. We continue our work of rebuilding and improving conditions at the Remar Orphanage and Tia Tatiana school, both of which serve children in one of the poorest cities in the Dominican Republic.

An annual scholarship is awarded by our foundation to a student transferring from a community college to the Sol Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California, where Nick was two weeks away from starting as a transfer student. Thrive in Joy also awards character-based scholarships to exemplary students at Nick’s former elementary and high schools.

Finally, we help high school students develop into community leaders.

Tell us about your Toastmasters experience.

Joining the Glumac DTLA Toastmasters club in July of 2015 was one of the best decisions I made after losing Nick. I had been asked to speak a couple of times about our experience and felt a great desire to get better at it. I discovered the club and was instantly hooked.



Jay Fagnano and his wife, Mary, with a young baseball fan from the Remar Orphanage in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Toastmasters allowed me to work through some of my grief through the speeches I gave. I opened myself up to some very raw emotions and the group allowed me to go places with my sorrow that I hadn’t been able to express before. Writing and giving speeches was part of my “grief therapy.”

What was the speech you gave at the University of California, Merced?

My experiences in Toastmasters played a vital role in the speech I gave at the Catholic Newman Club at UC Merced. I have a strong Catholic faith and was able to address these young students and talk about what my wife and I had done up to that point to honor Nick’s life. I drew upon what I had learned by giving speeches in my club.

I have since spoken at a breakfast meeting to the Fresno Chapter of the Catholic Professional & Business Club, and also recently gave the eulogy for one of my best college friends. I believe Toastmasters was the vehicle that allowed me to give a talk that helped many others deal with his untimely death.

Can you explain the meaning behind the name “Thrive in Joy”?

Coming up with the name was easy. We discovered a document on Nick’s computer titled “The Reality of Heaven,” in which he wrote about different religions’ views of the afterlife. In the conclusion, he wrote, “The

afterlife that I want to be a part of involves joy, excitement and gratitude as we will finally be reunited with the loved ones that we have lost on earth. Perhaps ‘Rest in Peace’ is actually not the best term in relation to death, rather a phrase such as ‘Thrive in Joy’ best represents how I will want to spend eternity.”



Jay, Mary and Nick in Maui, Hawaii.

Mariam Jehangir is the editorial assistant for the Toastmaster magazine.



Members of Aki Toastmasters club in Hiroshima, Japan, pose in front of Itsukushima Shrine as part of a tour of Miyajima, a small island outside Hiroshima. The Shinto shrine is listed as a World Heritage Site. The tour took place on the first day of the 2016 District 76 Fall Conference to help introduce members to Hiroshima.

▶ ADVICE FROM THE PROS

The Most Common Technique—Volume

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

Volume is perhaps the best tool for achieving vocal variety, especially when it comes to emphasis. By a slight increase in volume, you can stress or accentuate your key thought within a sentence. I'm not referring to shouting, or even raising your voice to a high level.

There can be a place for that, however, especially if you are trying to indicate anger or alarm. In addition to emphasis, alarm and anger, volume can also be used to indicate intensity or joy. In fact, a common idiom is "shouting for joy." Loudness is not the only way to use volume. Getting very quiet is also an effective technique.

This can be used to indicate calmness, apprehensiveness, tenderness and even having a secret. And just as you can

indicate emphasis or anger with high volume, you can also accomplish the same aim with a comparatively lower volume. In fact, a quiet volume, combined with a slow pace, sarcastic tone and gritting of the teeth can show, quite effectively and dramatically, a seething anger.

One of my favorite techniques is to build to a crescendo on a key point, pause, and then continue the thought in a softer-than-normal volume. The contrast can be very dramatic, if that is your intent. One note of caution here. Volume is best



used as a contrast to your basic delivery—a word or phrase at a time. If you deliver your entire speech at a high volume, you will lose your audience.

Volume has many uses in a speech. Enjoy using it—and exploring its many possibilities.

This article was reprinted from Bill Brown's Speech Delivery Tips email series. Find out more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.

▶ MEET MY MENTOR



Mark Young, CC, ALB

BY MARY NESFIELD

Mark Young first heard about Toastmasters growing up in Belize. His first Toastmasters experience wasn't until July 2012, however, when he visited the Tortola Toastmasters club while on a work assignment in the British Virgin Islands. This inspired Mark to form the Antigua Toastmasters club in St. John's, in the country of Antigua and Barbuda, where he now resides. When Cherry-Ann Casimir joined the club, Mark took her under his wing.

A self-proclaimed introvert, Cherry-Ann, CC, ALB, used to pretend to be busy to avoid being called on to speak in the club, but Mark soon put an end to that. She says Mark asks questions before giving her mentoring advice. The questioning, she says, led her to take a course of action she otherwise wouldn't—to learn by doing.

What is it like to have Mark as your mentor?

Mark is assertive, friendly and always willing to share his knowledge. He also listens well. When I ask him, "What do you think I should do?," his responses prompt me to think. He is instrumental in my personal and professional development. He admonishes me to be bold and courageous, and to soar with excellence.

What is your goal in Toastmasters?

I didn't want to keep hiding and always be the last to speak up. At first, I just listened during meetings. And then I started participating more in the program, and that bolstered my confidence.



FROM LEFT: Mark Young, CC, ALB and Cherry-Ann Casimir, CC, ALB

It made me courageous enough to participate in speech contests, and I toasted my way to victory in the 2015 District 81 Speech Evaluation Contest.

What else has Mark helped you with?

His mentorship paved the way for me to become charter president of the Antigua and Barbuda Airport Authority Toastmasters club, which I led to President's Distinguished within its charter year. I also sponsored and mentored the Digicel Antigua and Barbuda Toastmasters club in Antigua.

NOMINATE YOUR MARVELOUS MENTOR!

Do you know an exceptional mentor who has positively influenced you? Send a 200-word description and photo (1 MB or larger) of you and your mentor to MentorMoment@toastmasters.org.

▶ PRESENTATION SKILLS

Zen and the Art of Public Speaking

BY JOHN ZIMMER, ACB, ALB

Robert Pirsig's book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* was published in 1974. The book has sold more than 5 million copies and is widely considered a modern philosophical classic. In *Zen*, Pirsig discusses the metaphysics of quality. He explores the subject over the course of a 17-day motorcycle journey across the western United States with his son.

I first picked up *Zen* years ago when I was still a teenager. I have picked it up again recently and while reading, I came across an extended passage in which Pirsig bemoans the shoddy workmanship by some mechanics on his motorcycle and the shoddy workmanship by too many people in general. (The mechanics did such

poor work that Pirsig made them stop and did the job himself.)

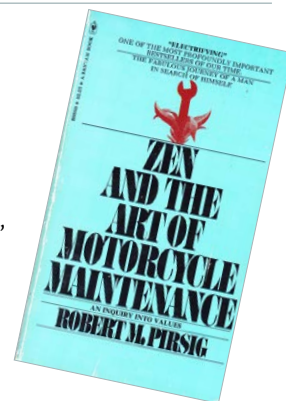
After fixing the motorcycle, Pirsig reflected on why the mechanics had done such poor work. He wrote, "When you want to hurry something, that means you no longer care about it and want to get on to other things."

Based on my experience, many people prepare their presentations with the same attitude as the mechanics in Pirsig's book. They do the work, but not in a meaningful way. And thus, they do a disservice to themselves and, more importantly, their audiences.

You have to care about your audience and, by extension, your presentation. When you care about your presentation you will prepare it carefully and thoughtfully, with the audience in mind. If you don't care, you

are more likely to do a poor job and, as a result, waste people's time.

The next time you have a presentation to deliver, show some care for your audience as you prepare. Your presentation will hum along like a well-tuned motorcycle.



John Zimmer, ACB, ALB, is a member of the International Geneva Toastmasters club in Switzerland. He is an international speaker, trainer and lawyer, as well as a seven-time champion of Toastmasters district speech contests. John writes the public speaking blog www.mannerofspeaking.org.



► **LOOKING AT LANGUAGE**

Celebrate Poetry!

March 21 is World Poetry Day. Take the time that day to read some great verse from writers across the globe and reflect on the power and beauty of language.

Reading poetry can help you as a speaker. For one thing, it can improve your speechwriting. Reading evocative, rhythmic verse can inspire you to make the language of your speeches more musical and descriptive. Compelling speeches include rich detail and a pleasing cadence.

Consider the opening passage from “A Sleepless Night” by Philip Levine, a Pulitzer Prize-winning American poet. Look at how his vivid, lyrical language evokes the senses.

*April, and the last of the
plum blossoms
scatters on the black grass
before dawn. The sycamore, the lime,
the struck pine inhale
the first pale hints of sky.*

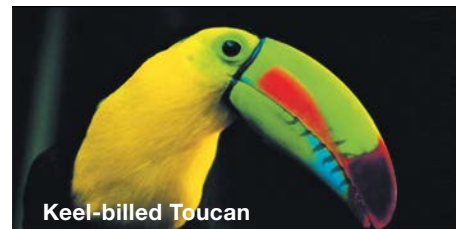
Using poetic devices such as **metaphors** can also strengthen a speech. A metaphor is a word or phrase that symbolizes something else—something that is abstract, not literal. For example, this is one of Shakespeare’s most famous metaphors:

*All the world’s a stage,
And all the men and women
merely players.*

Another poetic tool is the **simile**, which shows the similarity between two things by connecting them with the words “like” or “as.” For instance, say you are giving a speech about your trip to Paris and you want to describe the divine taste of Parisian pastries. You could write, “The warm croissant melted as butter in my mouth.”

World Poetry Day was started in 1999. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaimed it a day to “support linguistic diversity through poetic expression and to offer endangered languages the opportunity to be heard within their communities.” (Learn more at www.un.org/en/events/poetryday/.)

So many poets, past and present, light up the world with their imaginative work: Pablo Neruda, Emily Dickinson, Seamus Heaney, Derek Walcott, Maya Angelou, Anna Akhmatova, Billy Collins and many, many more. On March 21, pick a poet you enjoy and immerse yourself in verse!



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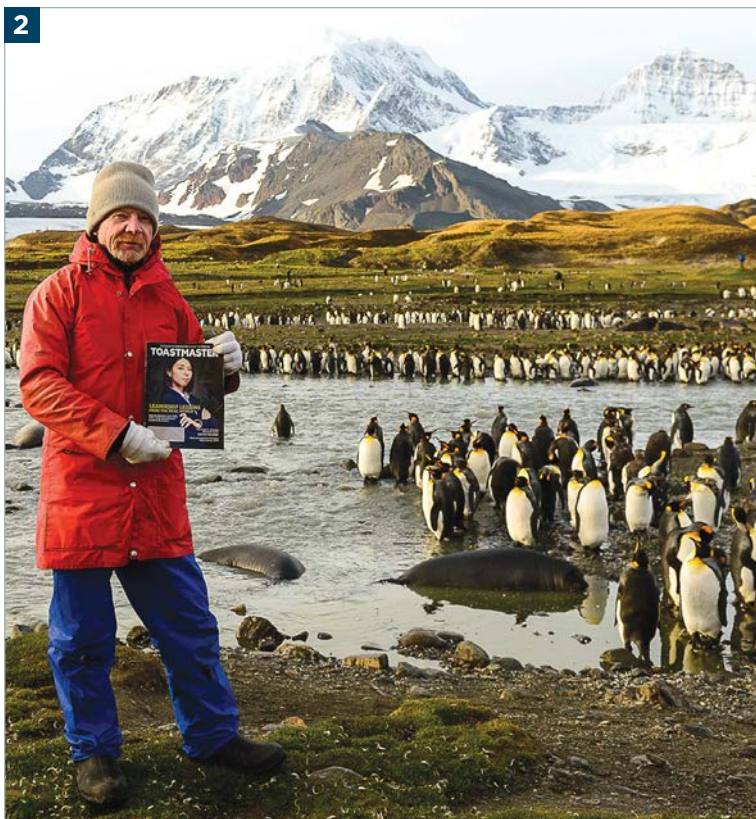
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1 | KIM NAGY, from Brighton, Massachusetts, takes a break with her horse on the way to Pacaya, an active volcano in Guatemala.

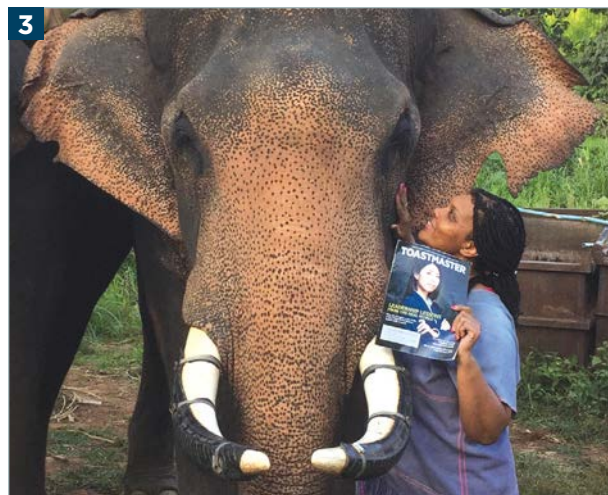
2 | KEITH BARNETT, ACS, ALB, from Queensland, Australia, enjoys seeing penguins and seals at St. Andrews Bay in South Georgia, Antarctica.

3 | KADIAN GRANT, from Piscataway, New Jersey, meets Panalo, a Thai elephant in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

4 | BENG TACK CHEAH, CC (left) and YEN SHEN CHAN (right), from Malaysia, pose with their camel travel companion during their trip around the Osian Sand Dunes near Rajasthan, India.



2




3



4

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 **PICTURE YOURSELF HERE!** Pose with the *Toastmaster* magazine during your travels and submit your photos for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue. Visit www.toastmasters.org/Submissions. Bon voyage!

Finding a New Path

How my speeches led to a new career as a humor writer.

BY DOROTHY ROSBY, ACS, CL

I owe a lot to a woman named Kathy. I only knew her for a short time long ago, and I've completely lost track of her, so she doesn't know this—but she helped put me on a path I hadn't imagined for myself when she invited me to join her Toastmasters club.

I'd just graduated from college and moved to a small town to work as a radio announcer. I was 22 and single. I didn't know a soul, and I worked Monday through Saturday, midafternoon until 10 p.m. It wasn't the makings of a great social life.

I'd graduated with majors in journalism and communications, so I was interested in public speaking. But that's not why I took Kathy up on her invitation. The club met for breakfast, and with my schedule, a breakfast meeting seemed like the closest thing to having a social life. Sounds pretty desperate, I know. But it was a great way to meet people, especially the kind I liked to meet: motivated men and women from all walks of life who wanted to improve themselves and their communities.

In 1984, I moved to South Dakota. I immediately joined a Toastmasters club; not just to meet people. I'd realized I loved giving humorous speeches. I began competing in Humorous Speech Contests and won some. At that time, the Humorous Speech Contest went to the regional level, and in 1987, I won with a speech about Publishers Clearing House sweepstakes.

I'm a little slow to catch on, though. It took me nine more years to decide that I wanted to devote myself to writing humor. I submitted some of my speeches to my local newspaper, and the editor agreed to take me on as a humor columnist. That was 20 years ago, and today my column runs in publications in 10 states in the West and Midwest United States.



Dorothy Rosby

As a columnist, I'm frequently asked to present, and Toastmasters has given me the confidence to do it.

I have a day job now, so my social life has improved. But I'm still in Toastmasters and I often inflict my columns as speeches on my long-suffering fellow members. Practicing columns as speeches has become such a valuable tool that I even have a name for it. I call it "toasting a column," and I usually "toast" speeches/columns while I walk on my treadmill. It's multi-tasking at its best. I'm practicing a speech, working on a column and exercising. It's far less tedious when I do them all at once!

There are differences between the written word and the spoken word but fewer than you'd think, especially in humor. I want my reader to hear my voice. That's a function of word choice and word and sentence length—all things I can try out while I'm "toasting" my column.

And presenting a column as a speech has other benefits. The audience's laughter—or lack of—lets me know what works and what doesn't. Comments from my evaluators and my audience give me ideas. And as a columnist, I'm frequently asked to present, and Toastmasters has given me the confidence to do it.

In 2014, I published a collection of essays called *I Used to Think I Was Not That Bad and Then I Got to Know Me Better*. And this year, I published my second book, *I Didn't Know You Could Make Birthday Cake from Scratch: Parenting Blunders from Cradle to Empty Nest*. Promoting books involves media interviews, readings and presentations. Thanks to Toastmasters, I'm able to pull it off, even when I'm nervous. I often think of how grateful I am to Kathy, wherever she is, for inviting me to join her club all those years ago.

But it's bigger than that. I might have found my way to writing humor anyway, but my Toastmasters membership and my career as a humor columnist and author are so intertwined, I can't imagine how. I can't help but wonder, when I mentor a new member or invite a guest to my club, what Toastmasters might bring into their lives that they haven't yet imagined. **T**

DOROTHY ROSBY, ACS, CL, is a member of Top 5 Toastmasters in Rapid City, South Dakota. Learn more about her at www.dorothyrosby.com.



Members of Toastmasters Polska, S.A., in Warsaw, Poland, welcomed Caren Neile (not pictured) when she visited their club in 2016.

Polished Speakers in Poland

Feeling welcomed in Warsaw.

BY CAREN SCHNUR NEILE, PH.D.

When I was hired to teach a class at a university in Warsaw, I wondered what I would do in my spare time there. Sure, the historic city has extraordinary sights. But what about friendship? What about good conversation? What about educational opportunities?

Then it hit me: What about Toastmasters?

Toastmasters has been operating in Poland for just 23 years, and the country already has 60 chartered clubs, with new ones springing up all the time. During my brief visit, I had the opportunity to attend meetings at three clubs.

Addicted to Speaking

Meetings at Warsaw's oldest club, Toastmasters Polska, S.A. (Speakers Anonymous), take place in the beautiful Fort Sokolnickiego, in a posh district of the city known as Zoliborz (pronounced, more or less, "Zholybush"). The club is one of the two in the city that conduct meetings in English, and among its membership are some of the most senior Toastmasters in town.

One of them, Antoni Jakubowski, ACG, CL, was the Toastmaster the evening I visited. Dressed in a white dress shirt and gray vest, this member of five clubs claims he is "addicted to Toastmasters." The consummate professional meeting host, he was energetic, inspiring and entertaining, especially when he

danced, donned a crown or showed photos of his grandchildren. It all made perfect sense, because the meeting fell on Children's Day, and that was the theme.

Although the word of the day was "childish," the meeting was anything but. It kicked off with former club president Kristina Jonkuviene, CC, speaking her warm, yet formal, appreciation for those club members who had organized a four-day retreat during the previous holiday weekend. Instead of the usual three speeches and three evaluations, we heard one speech and enjoyed a mini-evaluation contest with four exceptional participants. The speakers were all so good that I was glad I wasn't asked to judge!

No English in the House

At House of Toastmasters, which meets on the campus of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in the Praga neighborhood, the members' words were welcoming, skilled and all-around delightful—but they were spoken in Polish. In all my years attending Toastmasters meetings in various cities, I never attended a meeting in which I didn't know the language. My loss! Of course it helped that a lovely woman, Monika Puszko, CC, offered to interpret for me. She was as accommodating as could be, but explaining the prepared speeches and Table Topics would have been distracting to others. Do you think that stopped

me from enjoying myself, or from writing evaluations for the speakers? I just sat back and listened to tone, rate and pauses, and watched for facial expressions, gestures and use of space.

House of Toastmasters was chartered less than four months before I got to Poland, having grown out of a more established club called Toastmasters Leaders, of which Monika is a member. The new club, with the help of its founders and mentors, is growing steadily. Many of the members are young professionals looking to enhance their speaking and leadership skills, but about half are college students. To my surprise, I knew one of them.

The evening's Toastmaster, Adrian Lewandowski, age 20, says he may well be the youngest Toastmaster in the city. When we realized that we had seen each other earlier in the week at another club, he told me that he was making a point to visit every Toastmasters club in Warsaw during his few months off between finishing his exams and going on to study electrical engineering. Adrian's theme, the European soccer championship, elicited some highly energetic Table Topics, by the way. Just as sports coaches in different scenarios would speak to their team players, members spoke to motivate each other. By the time the session was over, all of us were charged to go out and reach—if not score—some goals.

The Elephant in the Room

Why would you name a club Speaking Elephants?

"Because," said Vice President Public Relations and president-elect Roman Gudym, CC, CL, "elephants have two big ears, so they're great listeners. They communicate with their whole bodies, including their ears. And of course, they never forget."

It took a memorable tram ride, two subways and a short walk to get from my faculty housing to the Mokotow area of Warsaw where the meeting was held, but I won't forget the friendly welcome I received. The evening's Toastmaster, Sudharman Ezhil, CC, originally from India, had chosen the theme Travel-Explore-Learn. He pointed out that his fellow English-speaking club members hail from a variety of countries, including Ukraine, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Argentina, the United States and China. Indeed, the evening's first speaker, Kim Jiyoung, from South Korea, titled her Ice Breaker, "Why Did I Come to Europe?"

Having such a wide variety of members is not the only reason the club is so popular, however. Says Roman, "We are one of the most active clubs on social media, especially on Facebook. We create a Facebook event page for each meeting, with a summary and photos. Because posts with pictures get most of the interest and 'likes' on Facebook, Speaking Elephants consistently reaches the top of Google searches for 'public speaking' or 'Toastmasters.'"

More to Learn

Speaking Elephants also advertises its Leader of the Month contests, in which members are awarded points for club meet-

ing participation. I had never seen this before. Plus the written evaluation form at House of Toastmasters is extremely organized, with highly specific guidelines for members on how to help the speaker. What's more, Polska, S.A., sends guests a friendly and informative email on the very same day they attend a meeting. That was a new one for me as well.

The members at each club graciously welcome guests and invite them out at the end of the meeting to continue the fun. Of course you didn't invent this, Warsaw, but it's a wonderful way to extend the meeting and the connections. No wonder Toastmasters Poland is becoming more and more popular.

In all my years attending Toastmasters meetings in various cities, I had never been to a club in which I didn't know the language.

"Toastmasters Poland is growing very rapidly," says new Division Director Krzysztof Kopeć, ACB, ALS, "and most of that growth has been in the last five years. During 2014 and 2015 we chartered six clubs in Warsaw alone. This year, we've chartered three, and we're about to add two more. That will make 16 clubs in Warsaw. But, with a population of 1.7 million in the city, I believe we can do even better."

That growth is promising, he says, because Polish Toastmasters are young and energetic. "The average age of a club member in Poland is around 30, and the average for the world is closer to 45." That youth, and the energy that comes with being young, was on full display at all three of the meetings I attended. Case in point: At none of the clubs I attended did anyone use a lectern. I haven't seen this in the States, and although it put me off at first, it was actually a welcome change. It encouraged speakers to work without notes (although they could hold them, if necessary) and allowed them more access to the audience.

As great a time as I had at these clubs, one of the most remarkable aspects of my visits happened *after* attending two of the meetings. Members approached me and asked, in private, how best to improve their skills. To one I gave a summary of the knowledge I've accumulated from being a Toastmaster for 18 years.

What did I say to the other member? Simple. Just keep attending these amazing club meetings. **T**

Caren Schnur Neile, Ph.D., ATMS, CL, is an affiliate professor at Florida Atlantic University. She is a frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine and has spoken at two *Toastmasters International* conventions.

What is Plagiarism and How Can You Avoid It?

Take care to protect your reputation and relationships.

BY JESSE SCINTO, ACS, ALB

Lee was as surprised as I was when I caught him cheating on his speech.

It happened in my graduate communication course. Lee spoke several lines from a Wikipedia entry as though they were his own. I discovered it by chance, when I looked up his topic and listened to the recording.

Lee had been a good student—eager to learn, quick to volunteer, always pleasant. When I confronted him, he insisted it was all a mistake. He knew the university's strict rule against plagiarism. He tried hard to avoid crossing the line. He apologized. But it became clear that Lee's understanding of plagiarism was murky at best. He had never received training. We didn't offer it. For him, the line between originality and plagiarism was so fine that he couldn't find it. He's not alone.

Many well-known writers, artists and speakers have fallen into the trap—from pop singer Robin Thicke (who was found guilty of copying another songwriter's work) to Barack Obama (who was accused of using words similar to those in a speech delivered by Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick). And while most Toastmasters will never face the same scrutiny as a celebrity or politician, unfairly borrowing other people's work—intentionally or not—can hurt our credibility and slow our progress toward becoming better speakers. Some basic safeguards will help us avoid embarrassment. We start by clarifying our understanding.

What is Plagiarism?

The simplest definition of plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas without proper attribution. That's what Lee did in speaking the lines from Wikipedia. It's pretty easy to prove, thanks to the internet.

Beyond the simple definition is a vast gray area where degrees of originality and intent factor in. Some experts argue for a plagiarism spectrum that assigns blame according to severity.

Turnitin, the online originality checker, identifies 10 different types of plagiarism. Other experts highlight cultural differences in defining plagiarism and question the ownership of words. They see intellectual property as a Western ideal tied to individualism and capitalism.

Instead of getting caught up in definitions, I think it's important to remind ourselves why we're in Toastmasters. Isn't it to find our *own* voice and develop our *own* communication skills? When we borrow other people's words too heavily, we deprive

ourselves of the practice we need to improve. We also undermine our relationship with the audience. Plagiarism is a problem because it leads people to believe we're something we're not: more pithy, more poetic, more insightful. When they find out, they feel duped. We lose their trust and our ability to persuade them.

To avoid plagiarism, we must know how and when to give credit. It requires us to make judgments about the distinctiveness of the material we borrow. For instance, no one would accuse us of plagiarism for saying, "We must stand firm," even though it's been said before. That's because it's not very original. But a unique combination of words or an expression that's highly identified with a particular person—like "brevity is the soul of wit"—calls for attribution.

When in doubt, we can ask ourselves a few common-sense questions:

- ▶ Am I borrowing from a copyrighted work or recorded speech?
- ▶ Is someone else widely known for phrasing things this way?
- ▶ Would my listeners mistakenly believe I'm the author if I don't say otherwise?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, then we must find a way to cite our sources.

Where Credit Is Due

Giving credit in a speech is tricky, because we don't have quotation marks or footnotes to work with. Detailed citations can impede the flow of the speech and break the listeners' spell. But audiences generally don't expect a full technical citation. It's often enough to simply indicate we're not the author.

As Robert Lehrman notes in his excellent *Political Speechwriter's Companion*, "If you have consciously borrowed material, find an economical way of acknowledging that you have a source." This could be done with a short preface, like:

- ▶ As the saying goes ...
- ▶ Someone once said ...
- ▶ I'm not the first to say ...
- ▶ To quote Shakespeare ...

Occasionally, you may want to emphasize a source to boost your credibility. You can do this by providing more detail:

- ▶ According to a 2016 report by the World Health Organization ...



- ▶ In her July 2014 speech before parliament, Angela Merkel said ...

These phrases let listeners know you're not claiming credit for the ideas. They can ask for your sources if interested. You should be prepared to produce them if necessary.

Avoiding Unintentional Plagiarism

What happens if your plagiarism is unintentional? Lee claimed he was so nervous he forgot to cite his sources. As Toastmasters, we can perhaps relate, recalling what it was like to give our Ice Breaker. Does he get a pass? Unfortunately, the perception of plagiarism can be just as damaging as the real thing. Your audience will be the ultimate judge. But there are some things you can do to avoid unintentional plagiarism.

1 Speak from personal experience. It's the most original content you can offer and the easiest way to avoid plagiarism. Audiences love a good story. They're eager to learn how you solved problems, faced adversity or found humor in a situation. A relevant, well-told personal story can be as gripping as a Hollywood movie.

2 Be a curator. In museums, curators seek out the most original, thought-provoking works to display. They carefully decide where each piece goes and what to say about it, documenting provenance. By bringing pieces together in a single exhibit, curators save patrons time and effort. Be the curator of your speech. Give credit where credit is due, knowing the audience will find value in your effort.

3 Keep good notes. In recent years, well-known historians have gotten into trouble for inserting long, unattributed passages into their books. Some blame their own poor note-taking, saying they forgot to write down the source. Revisiting their notes, they thought the passages were their own!

4 Check your facts. If you plan to use a well-known saying or quote, don't just go from memory. Check it on the internet and make sure you've quoted correctly and know who to credit. Similarly, if you've heard someone else use a particularly witty phrase—or think you've invented one of your own—check it. Having worked in advertising, this was standard practice whenever we thought we had something original. Often enough we found out otherwise!

5 Verify originality. If you're giving a high-profile speech or one that will live on the internet, consider using an online originality checker such as **Grammarly**, **Turnitin** or **Duplichecker**. Many political speechwriters are on record as using these services to vet major speeches.

6 Include citations on your slides. For slide presentations, the best practice is to place citations at the bottom of each slide, whenever possible. That way, if the deck gets split up, the citations remain with their related content. Alternatively, you can include an end slide with a bibliography.

Lee's Lament

Even if Lee had remembered to cite his source, he still had borrowed too much—nearly 20 percent of the speech. He paid a price in terms of his grade and his reputation. He also failed to find his voice on this assignment, which is the bigger regret. As Toastmasters, we owe it to ourselves and each other to be honest in our borrowings. It's a true sign of leadership. **T**

Note: Lee is a composite character.

Jesse Scinto, ACS, ALB, is a member of the Greenspeakers club in New York, New York, and the Associate Director for Curriculum Development in Columbia University's Strategic Communication program. He teaches media, public speaking and persuasion. Follow him on Twitter: @jessescinto.

TOASTMASTER

Actors and announcers offer lessons from the stage, screen and sound booth.

BY CRAIG HARRISON, DTM

You may have seen Canadian actor, director and voice-over talent **Lili Wexu** as Dr. Hundley on *Grey's Anatomy* (13th season). She also played a philanthropist in another TV series, *Art of More*, and a French bureaucrat in *Adam Ruins Everything*. And it was her voice that was heard by billions during the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

Of the Winter Olympics opening ceremonies, Wexu says "it was the most responsibility I've ever felt on a job. It was very intense. I had this little button to press every time I spoke. Simple enough, right? Well,

MASTERS ACT OUT

I also had to press it when I was *done* speaking. I remember being scared to death of forgetting to press it after my announcements,” fearing she would be heard saying something inappropriate.

“I couldn’t believe that my entire career, everything I’d worked for, had come down to whether I could deal with this little button.” The humor in it didn’t escape her.

After years of auditions, acting roles and voice-over recording sessions for clients such as American Express, Google and Starbucks, where the job requires bringing meaning to other people’s words, joining Toastmasters finally gave her a chance to write her own scripts. “Doing voice-over work, it’s other people’s words that I am breathing life into,” she says. “In my acting work, when I am in front of the camera, the words are still not my own.”

She joined Fox Talkz Toastmasters, a club near Los Angeles, as a logical progression to start writing and performing her own words. “My experiences have definitely colored all of my talks in Toastmasters,” she says. And they are delivered in her own voice and style.

Wexu is not alone. Many clubs are home to Toastmasters who are exploring their acting talents and developing their voice-over skills, as well as to working actors refining their craft and finding a forum for speaking in their own voice. These actors benefit from enhancing their listening skills by evaluating other speakers; honing their own speechwriting and storytelling talents; practicing Table Topics to think quickly on their feet; and competing in speech contests to simulate the pressure of auditioning scenarios. Even without lights and camera, the Toastmasters experience provides action!

Living the Dream

Alain Washnevsky, CC, took the long road to acting, and to Toastmasters. Born in Iran and raised in Austria, he came to the United States five years ago with a background in real estate and a dream of becoming an actor. Landing near Hollywood, in California, Washnevsky’s acting career took flight as he acquired stage and voice training and developed his body language. His acting



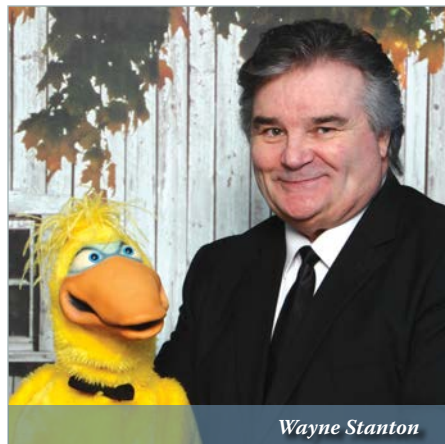
Lili Wexu



Alain Washnevsky (right) with Academy Award-winning actor Adrien Brody



Jo Streit



Wayne Stanton

work includes a lead role in the 2016 Academy Award-nominated short film *Day One*. He's also had roles in the popular American TV series *Scandal* (starring Kerry Washington) and *Homeland* (starring Claire Danes), as well as the recently completed films *Sable* and *Slipaway*.

Possessing a deep baritone voice, Washnevsky also sings opera. He was already singing and performing in front of people when someone said to him, "Your life story is inspiring; why not share your message?" and directed him to Toastmasters. Since joining Captivating Toastmasters in 2013, Washnevsky experienced a number of breakthroughs.

The club gave him a new perspective on performing. "Everything's not *Hamlet*!" Washnevsky says. "My club helped me become more conversational. I learned subtlety and how to have more of a dialogue with my audience."

He also learned speechwriting—"something I abhorred originally but now relish." Washnevsky also developed a sense of what makes a great story. "Now when I read a script, I look beyond the words on the page to ask, What's the message? What is the subtext?" Indeed, it is more than memorizing lines. He now derives body language and more from reading between the lines of his scripts.

Washnevsky wrote his Ice Breaker and won at the club level. He then won again at the area, division and district levels before competing in the International Speech Contest Semifinals during the 2014 Toastmasters International Convention in Kuala Lumpur, a mere seven months after joining. He then moved up to the finals and competed in the World Championship of Public Speaking® that year.

Wrestling with Success

After a decade of membership, Division Director **Wayne Stanton**, of the Testament Talkers of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, was challenged by veteran club member Spencer Silver: "You've got all these Toastmasters tools. It's fine that you use them here and you excel. Now take them to the real world!" So Stanton traded the warmth and comfort of his supportive club for the rough-and-tumble world of stand-up comedy. Ultimately he tasted success, winning an annual Yuk Yuk's comedy competition

and the upmarket bookings that ensued. Then a friend invited the former landscape gardener to join him in a business endeavor in a world even tougher than stand-up: professional wrestling.

Applying what he'd learned in Toastmasters and on the comedy circuit, Stanton found his calling with the formation of River City Wrestling, together with his friend Dave Pinsky. Stanton, confident and credible, became an impresario. As ring announcer and guest host, "I was now the front man," he says. "I became the greeter. Like the sergeant at arms, I welcomed people to our matches. As the ring

announcer, I would dress in a suit and tie, just as if I was giving a club speech. As a moderator, I was the voice of reason among the group of zany and unusual wrestling personalities, such as Tulip in the full-body pink leotard, and Brother Midnight, who sounded like a Baptist preacher.

When he returned to Toastmasters recently, it was a natural progression for Stanton to lead as division director to serve the greater good in sight of a fuller picture of how leadership supports communication in the Toastmasters service model.

From One Voice, Many

Jo Streit, ACB, of the San Francisco Bay Area, is an actor, film producer and voice-over talent. "For anyone interested in acting and/or voice-over work," she says, "practice is the key." A member of San Francisco's Renaissance Toastmasters, Streit says "Toastmasters gives us so many opportunities, whether it's Table Topics or evaluating other speakers where you perform on the fly"—particularly helpful for those who incessantly audition. And actors have to be observers of human nature, she says, "so turn your focus outward and start noticing the differences in how people speak, their intonation, speed, word choices and accents"—all things you can do in your club.

One of Streit's long-term voiceover clients was Wells Fargo Bank, for whom Streit voiced more than 40 different characters. Since the goal was to train bank employees, various characters were needed to demonstrate the range of interactions employees would have with customers. When you play a part as an actor, "It's not just words but your vocal variety and body language, and even props, that help bring your characters to life," she says.

Sometimes the character notes directors gave Streit were limited to name, age and a few details related

(Continued on page 25)



MAY I PLEASE HAVE YOUR ATTENTION?

Tips for the public address announcer.

BY CRAIG HARRISON, DTM

A number of actors, voice-over artists, professional speakers and Toastmasters shine when they serve as public address (PA) announcers. You can too! Some play this role at conferences, conventions, galas, sporting events, inaugurations, grand openings and all kinds of civic events.

Actor and Toastmaster Lili Wexu of Los Angeles says it's an honor and a privilege, yet also a big responsibility to provide PA services at local, national or international events. "It can be hard," Wexu says, "because while everyone can hear you, sometimes you can't hear yourself." The voice for the International Olympic Committee at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Wexu strives to sound warm, inviting and sophisticated in her announcing, even though "sometimes it's just the name you have to announce, so you have to infuse it with the right amount of excitement to set the proper tone."

Speech delivery coach Bill Brown, DTM, of Powerhouse Pros in Las Vegas, a master of ceremonies as well as a PA announcer, says, "Accuracy is crucial as an announcer. For one assignment I spent a great deal of time, in advance, learning to pronounce the name of Miss Vietnam as accurately as I could. It was a thrill when she said I got it right."

Certified Speaking Professional Christine Cashen of Lantana, Texas, served as a PA announcer for many years. She breaks down this specialized skill: "You're there to shine the spotlight on other people and give general direction to the audience in an official—but not officious—way."

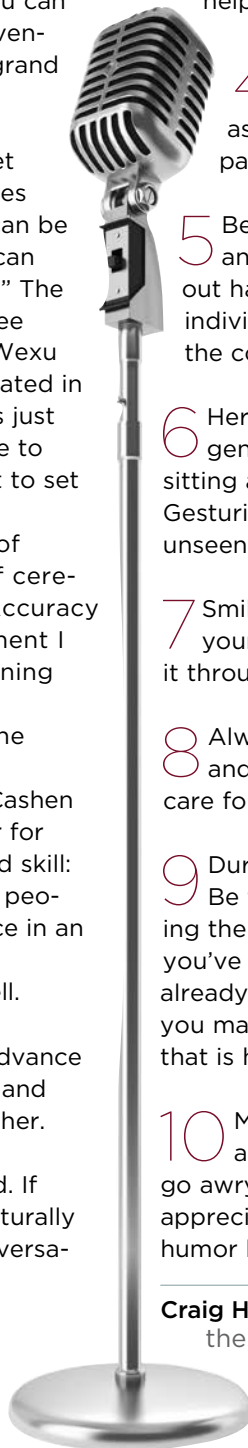
Cashen shares 10 tips for doing the job well.

1 Preparation is essential. Get the script in advance and study it to understand the big picture and how the different parts of the event fit together.

2 When rehearsing, read the script out loud. If words written on a page don't flow as naturally when spoken, alter them to sound more conversational and make them easier to say.

3 Use thick pens and highlighters to underline, embolden or flag key parts of the script and add crib notes, if helpful.

(Often, lighting is dim during the actual event, so both highlighting and using an illumination device help words pop off the pages.)



4 Arrive early to set up and get familiar with the surroundings and equipment, as well as to meet the other professionals and principals on the team.

5 Be meticulous about learning people's names and pronouncing them professionally. Spell out hard names phonetically and check with those individuals before the moment of truth, to ensure the correct pronunciation.

6 Here's a radio tip: Standing when performing generates more energy than speaking while sitting and also helps one be more expressive. Gesturing and using body language, even though it's unseen, adds vitality to your words.

7 Smile when making announcements. Although your smile cannot be seen, the audience can hear it through your voice.

8 Always have room-temperature water nearby and, if needed, drink warm tea and honey to care for your vocal chords.

9 During announcements, strive to stay present. Be familiar with what should happen (by studying the script in advance) to help ensure that what you've announced is actually occurring. (If you've already jumped ahead to the next announcement, you may not have noticed something unexpected that is happening in real time.)

10 Mistakes occur for a variety of reasons. Your ability to own it wins you points. When things go awry, don't act like nothing happened. People appreciate when you're truthful. And sometimes humor helps.

Craig Harrison, DTM, PDG, is a charter member of the Silicon Valley ImprovMasters club in San Jose, California, and a professional speaker. Visit www.VoiceOfCustomerService.com to learn more.

Story Takes a Turn

The recent popularity of personal storytelling draws crowds to many stages.

BY CRAIG HARRISON, DTM

For thousands of years, people around the world have told and retold folk and fairy tales, myths and legends. Through the oral tradition, these classic stories have been passed down from generation to generation, continuing a rich tradition of storytelling for families, communities and cultures.

Alongside this cherished tradition, we are now seeing an explosion in the popularity of personal storytelling, culled from our own lives and derived from our own experiences. Such narratives draw on our unique communities and diverse cultures.

The advent of popular storytelling events, from fringe festivals to The Moth and its StorySLAMs (more on these later), offers new and vibrant venues where audiences go to hear and share personal stories in myriad formats. And it's a logical migration path for Toastmasters too.

Getting Personal

"People's cravings for personal stories have a lot to do with their need for community," says David Levy, CC, ALS, of the Building Tomorrow's Communicators club in Cincinnati, Ohio. Levy is co-founder of Cincinnati's True Theatre, a monthly program where people tell true stories. "It's amazing how little we know about our neighbors," he says. "We live in communities yet all we do is go to work, go to the store and go home. We're not a part of our community. People want that."

David Pokorny agrees. The former stand-up comic and Toastmaster founded West Side Stories in Petaluma, California. He hosts events in which 10 willing storytellers are picked at random—reflecting his belief that *everyone* has a story to tell—to present personal five-minute pieces. A specific theme inspires and shapes the program. It all makes for compelling theater, he says.

"With all due respect to the folk and fairy tales we've heard for 500 or 1,000 years ... I know those stories already. I know how they end. With personal stories, I listen because I *don't* already know how they will end!"

Pokorny says personal narratives have a universal quality, because the tellers give you an authentic glimpse into their inner lives. "It's this person onstage who is opening up and really breaking down the fourth wall," he says. "They are (figuratively) naked up there, telling their own story. Sometimes it's heart-wrenching,



“They are (figuratively) naked up there, telling their own story. Sometimes it’s heart-wrenching, sometimes it’s hilariously funny and sometimes it’s embarrassing, but all of it is real.”

—DAVID POKORNY

sometimes it's hilariously funny and sometimes it's embarrassing, but all of it is real."

Indeed, a hallmark of personal stories is their authenticity. These aren't actors sharing their stories; these are true narratives, and whatever the emotion of the story, it is real and raw, and that's what draws us in.

The Moth Emerges

In 1997 The Moth was born. The storytelling gathering was conceived by New York writer George Dawes Green in an attempt to re-create the feel of his childhood in Georgia, where stories were told on the front porch of the house. He longed for the feeling of community that came from swapping personal stories.

As the gatherings stretched from his living room into his hallway and to small and then larger venues, the popularity of personal stories proliferated. Now, 20 years later, The Moth has presented more than 18,000 stories to standing-room-only crowds worldwide, and it has inspired numerous emulators who cater to their local communities.

Currently, the storytelling organization produces more than 500 live shows each year in nearly 30 cities, including Los Angeles, Chicago, London and Melbourne, Australia. Shows include Mainstage programs, which are curated events featuring five tellers who develop and shape their stories with the help of directors; community programs that teach the craft of personal storytelling; and StorySLAMs, open-mic competitions open to anyone with a five-minute story to share related to that show's theme. Winners of SLAMs in different cities ultimately compete for the title of GrandSLAM champion.

The Moth Radio Hour features storytelling from around the world and airs on more than 400 radio stations. One recent episode, recorded at the Sydney Opera House in Australia, featured a young Malaysian Australian man talking about how he began to appreciate his culture by listening to rap music.

There is also The Moth Podcast. If you visit the website (www.themoth.org), you can check out its Story Library and listen to everything from the most recently released stories to the first ones ever aired.

Making The Moth Local

Levy and Pokorny launched their own versions of The Moth in Southern Ohio and Northern California, respectively, to tap into their community's hunger to

hear and tell personal stories. So did Kay DeMartini, a former stand-up comic, improviser, storyteller and TV personality. DeMartini presents a personal-story-telling event in Oakland, California, called BustingOut.

"All stories have a message and a power," DeMartini says. "That's why legends are created and why stories continue on and have an impact. Yet our [own stories] are autobiographical—and powerful too."

DeMartini is also a storytelling coach to speakers, including Toastmasters transitioning from speaking in their clubs to storytelling at public events. "I get them in touch with their story and recognize that they do have a story," she says. "Then I help them understand how to tell it."

A common mistake of beginning tellers is not understanding how to be audience-centered. "Often, how people want to tell their story is very different from how audiences want to hear a story," DeMartini says. "Performers love telling their stories but they've forgotten that the person that's most important is the listener." For example, some tellers give far too much background information, which may be significant to the teller but clouds the listener's ability to follow the story. DeMartini, Levy and Pokorny each stress the value of rehearsals to obtain coaching, reduce performance anxiety and build community among the performers.

Love Story

For 32-year-old Lariann Hand of Lakeview Toastmasters in Oakland, California, joining Toastmasters was about boosting self-esteem and confidence. A pastry chef at the time she joined, Hand served in officer roles and competed in speech contests. When Oakland's Sweet Bar café announced its inaugural StorySLAM a few Februarys ago on the theme of "Stupid Love," Hand entered and shared her autobiographical story of young love gone awry on a past Valentine's Day.

Inspired by a speech she'd heard in her club about vulnerability and humility, she recounted her painful tale of oversized stuffed animals, a trip to the emergency room and other craziness



that happened that holiday. However, her story, “Young Love,” had a happy ending when told live ... she won the SLAM!

Tall Tale to Monodrama

Carolann Murphy, CC, CL, hails from Ireland, famed for its long history of folklore and mythology. President of Wicklow Toastmasters in County Wicklow, she has excelled at entertaining and draws on her love of theater, literature and social issues for her speech and story topics. Murphy, a recent Tall Tales winner in District 71, says her performances are inspired by William Butler Yeats’ poem “The Mask” and her own true children’s story “The Magdalene Women,” which shines a light on Magdalene Laundries (or asylums) from 1765 to 1996 in Ireland.

Winning the Tall Tales contest spurred Murphy to create a fictional monodrama (a dramatic piece for one performer) based on historical fact. Titled “Are You There John?” it’s about a townswoman imprisoned in Wicklow Jail in the mid-1800s for a crime she didn’t commit. She performed the tale of abuse and heartache last year in a local drama festival.

Beyond Comedy

In 2004, stand-up comic Mary Armstrong-Smith joined Nora Toastmasters in Indianapolis, Indiana. She says the members offered something that she wasn’t getting in her comedy career. Like Kay DeMartini, who found stand-up to be somewhat artificial and canned as comics chased laughs, Armstrong-Smith, ACB, found the comedy construction confining and formulaic.

“It’s setup-punch [line], setup-punch, tag, tag tag,” she says. “And it has to be quick and ‘surface.’ You can’t go deeper.” As a natural storyteller, she excelled in the Toastmasters Humorous Speech Contest. Armstrong-Smith won at the district level, and her success led her to develop a great deal of new material, often of a more serious nature.

By 2007, she was performing her first original play, *Garden Variety Neurotic*, for the Indianapolis Theatre Fringe Festival. It’s about growing up with two mentally ill parents. Four years later, she unveiled a deeply personal piece about forgiveness, called *A Box of Darkness*.

Performing it, says Armstrong-Smith, was scarier than performing stand-up comedy. “In this one-woman piece I was baring my soul.” And that’s exactly what connects with audiences.

On the Fringe

Fringe festivals welcome solo performers, troupes, musicians and others to perform in sets or shows that can run to an hour in length. The most well-known of these is the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Organizers of the annual event say it’s the largest arts festival in the world. In 2016, more than 3,000 shows were presented over three weeks in nearly 300 venues throughout Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland. Organizers pride themselves on highlighting performers outside the mainstream, including unknown artists looking to build their careers.

Performers at fringe festivals either apply to speak, or in some cases are selected by a jury. If you are selected, marketing your piece is important, says Armstrong-Smith. To boost attendance at her Indianapolis Theatre Fringe Festival performance, she promoted it independently through postcards.

Story On!

Toastmasters will find great value in advanced manuals such as *Storytelling*, *Interpretive Reading* and *Humorously Speaking*, in which they can learn about writing and delivering presentations based on their own life and experiences. Even *The Professional Speaker* recognizes the role of story in keynotes.

Some districts have specialty clubs focusing on storytelling or poetry. Others have their own story contests. Best of all, the world beyond Toastmasters invites members to bring their stories to life at events such as Moth programs, StorySLAMs and fringe festivals. So tap into your own stories, show your humanity and build community as you share your narrative with others. Story on! ■

Craig Harrison, DTM, PDG, is a professional speaker who created the monodrama “Homegrown Humor” to share his personal experiences growing up in Berkeley, California, in the 1960s. To learn more about his storytelling, visit www.HackinBoo.com.

“Often, how people want to tell their story is very different from how audiences want to hear a story.”

—KAY DEMARTINI



8 Tips for Table Topics

How to look good as a Topicsmaster.

BY ALLAN KAUFMAN, DTM, AND ALLAN MISCH, DTM

So you find yourself on the meeting schedule as the Table Topicsmaster. What should you do? Follow our eight success tips for the Table Topicsmaster!

1 Make up a bunch of prompts for Table Topics, more than you expect you'll need. We suggest 15 to 20 topics. Place each topic on an index card or separate strip of paper.

2 Choose easy topics. Your mission is not to drain the last brain cell out of your fellow Toastmasters. It's to give them the opportunity for growth—to stand confidently before an audience and give an unprepared yet organized presentation. For example, topics such as these:

- ▶ “Describe your idea of a great vacation.”
- ▶ “My ideal mate is _____.”
- ▶ “Driving in rush hour traffic is hard on the _____.”
- ▶ “Overcoming fear is _____”
- ▶ “I love my _____.”

Avoid lengthy, hard-to-understand-and-decipher descriptions such as:

- ▶ “Pretend you're a dog and you're about to be captured by aliens from another planet during a civil war. What are you feeling?”
- ▶ “You're in a hotel room alone with an international celebrity. What do you plan to do?”
- ▶ “You see a lousy TV show. Tell your friends why they should watch the same show.”

3 Announce the time limits for Table Topics. Say, “The green card will be held up at one minute, the yellow card at one minute and 30 seconds and the red card at two minutes. Then the partici-

part will have 30 seconds to finish. The goal is to speak until you see at least the green card, which is the minimum time, and no more than 30 seconds past seeing the red card—the maximum time.”

4 Determine how much time in the meeting you will have for Table Topics. This will enable you to figure out how many people you can call up. Allow about three minutes per person. So if you determine you have 11 minutes, then you may be able to squeeze in four participants, or stop after three.

Your mission is not to drain the last brain cell out of your fellow Toastmasters.

5 Call up members first before calling on any guests. It's important for guests to see how it's done before you call them up. If possible, avoid calling members who already have speaking roles in the meeting.

6 Call up the Table Topics participant first and then state the topic. Allow the person to randomly pick the topic (pick a card or strip of paper) and then you, the Topicsmaster, read the topic out loud.

7 Call up guests without encouraging them to decline. Before the meeting, talk to your guests and find out their level of comfort speaking in front of a group. If a guest has a public speaking phobia, do not call him or her up to do Table Topics. Call on another guest.

When you call on a guest, say, “Our club likes to give our guests a chance to participate and grow, so let's welcome to the lectern John.” Then you, as Topicsmaster, lead the applause, encouraging the guest to come up.

Don't ask, “John, want to come up?” If you do that, John might say “no” and so might Mary, Anita, Fred and all the remaining guests in the room. Your guests will go home worrying about being called up next time they come to visit the club and some will not come back. You will have stolen their chance to grow in public speaking because you thought you were being nice. It's best for them to do Table Topics and get it over with before they have time to think about it.

8 Give guests very easy topics. Set aside a few easy topics such as:

- ▶ “What kind of work do you do and why did you choose your profession?”
- ▶ “What do you like to do in your spare time, and why?”
- ▶ “Describe your ideal vacation.”

The topics should not require a lot of thought. When guests can handle Table Topics, they leave with a sense of satisfaction. They say to themselves, That wasn't so bad. I can handle that.

We offer this guarantee. If you follow the eight success tips for the Table Topicsmaster, you will have challenging and entertaining Table Topics sessions. And without a doubt, you will look good as a Table Topicsmaster. ■

Allan Kaufman, DTM, and Allan Misch, DTM, are both members of the *Randallstown Network Toastmasters club in Owings Mills, Maryland.* For more public speaking tips, go to their website www.nosweatspeaking.com.

TOASTMASTERS ACT OUT

(Continued from page 18)

to the script's content rather than providing guidance on vocal style and delivery. "That meant I was responsible for creating each character's voice." She learned to keep good notes on how she performed each character to help her play them in future sessions. She employed these talents, and more, to win District 4's Tall Tales Contest during her time in Toastmasters.

Her recent commercial "Toymail: Connecting People One Pancake at a Time" won an award for Best Commercial at the 2016 HollyShorts Film Festival, considered "The Cannes of Short Films." She was cast as "aunt Barbara" and even close friends and family didn't immediately recognize her. "The character has a very different look and vocal delivery from my own ... they just didn't 'see' me, which is a great compliment as an actor."

As a media coach, Streit emphasizes delivery. She dissuades speech-giving CEOs from relying on teleprompters; this often results in a monotone delivery and speakers becoming disconnected from their words. Her advice: Don't focus on reading and ignore your delivery. "I've heard less-scripted leaders who meld their voice, their heart and their soul with what they want to communicate and they connect very powerfully."

Sound Advice

Former Toastmaster **Janet Keller** acted onstage in New York and San Francisco and has toured Europe. Among her credits: playing Mrs. Cratchit in *A Christmas Carol* at ACT (the American Conservatory Theatre), Lydia Languish in *The Rivals* at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Mrs. Webb in *Our Town* at Rough & Tumble. A past member of the Oakland, California's Lakeview Toastmasters, Keller has also done studio voice-over work and public address announcing. She finds Table Topics invaluable for aspiring voice-over actors. She says, "The discipline of responding to Table Topics week after week, month after month, helps actors sink into themselves and relax."

Even without lights and camera, the Toastmasters experience provides action!

Keller's advice for current and aspiring actors and voice-over talent is the same: "Always, no matter what the venue, my big tip is to breathe. That's one that will always save you whether you're onstage, on set, in a recording studio or at the Toastmaster lectern!"

Canadian actor Wexu offers additional tips: "For voice-over work, stand up if you can, unless it's a very long session. Engineers often give you the option. It helps the overall delivery of your performance when you aren't restricted. Don't be afraid to use your hands! It helps to convey your energy level. If you're sitting, sit straight! And if you raise your voice louder than your natural speaking voice, warn the engineer so he can adjust your levels. You don't want to blow his ears off (or damage the equipment)."



Alain Washnevsky on a film set.

Keller intimates that many actors, despite playing large halls, are nevertheless petrified of standing and speaking their own words in a smaller, well-lit room full of strangers. Commonly, after a performance, an actor will return to the stage for the "curtain speech" to thank the audience, take questions and ask for support. Keller often gave that speech by default. Even seasoned actors can initially find speaking—outside and within Toastmasters—to be simultaneously liberating and terrifying!

To help with that, Wexu says, "Do theater, any chance you get. You'll develop all the skills needed to be a professional actor on set, or in recording sessions." She says Toastmasters has helped her to perform well at auditions, which are by far the most stressful aspect of the acting business. "And it helps build confidence for when you're on set or at a recording session."

"In this field you need a bit of luck, preparation and lots of patience!" adds Wexu. "Good things happen when they are meant to, if we're prepared."

As Toastmasters around the world turn to acting and develop their vocal talents, and as actors discover Toastmasters and get support refining their technique, the club experience helps them in numerous ways. Toastmasters is a place where actors, announcers, voice-over artists—and anyone—can find their own voice, and go from one voice to many. **T**

Professional speaker **Craig Harrison, DTM**, of Berkeley, California, is a past district governor who cites winning his district's Tall Tales Contest as a milestone on the way to starting his own speaking and training organization: www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com.

Global Messengers

Special Olympics athletes transform their talents in Gavel club.

BY PAUL STERMAN

Joseph Gorin was born with cerebral palsy and didn't begin speaking or walking until he was 3. Which made what he did two years ago particularly special to his parents. At a Southern California leadership event hosted by the healthcare company Kaiser Permanente, Joseph, then 26, delivered a speech to an audience of 500.

He spoke of how much he enjoyed participating in the Special Olympics, where people with intellectual disabilities around the world compete in various sports.

Joseph has flourished in floor hockey, softball, golf, track and field, and other sports. His mom, Ticky, was among those looking on as he spoke at Disney's Grand California Hotel.

"We never dreamed he'd even be speaking [one day]," she says recently, recalling when he was a toddler. "It was pretty amazing to see him speak in front of 500 people."

Toastmasters has played a vital role in his speaking success, say Ticky and her husband, David. Joseph belongs to a Toastmasters Gavel club in Santa Ana, California, whose members are Global Messengers. What are Global Messengers? They are adults of all ages who compete in the Special Olympics and speak to the public on behalf of the international organization. These special-needs athletes talk about how the sports and camaraderie of the Special Olympics have affected their lives.

There is also a Toastmasters Gavel club for Global Messengers in Hawaii. Chartered in 2006, it has 25 active members and meets monthly at the Special Olympics Hawaii office in Honolulu. In 2014, Toastmasters' then-International President, Mohammed Murad, DTM, presented an award to Special Olympics Hawaii in recognition of the club. At the ceremony, Robert Cravalho, DTM, of District 49, said, "I think a lot of people in the district

are very proud and happy and joyous when we have members of the Global Messengers club in our speech contests."

The Global Messengers in the Santa Ana Toastmasters club are from the Southern California chapter of Special Olympics. The club chartered in 2012—the perfect time, because the 2015 Special Olympics World Games were held in nearby Los Angeles. The Global Messengers in the club played an important role in publicizing those World Games, sharing their own experiences, as well as

“One of our Global Messengers gave a powerful speech on the effect of bullying in her life. There wasn't a dry eye in the room.”

— SPECIAL OLYMPICS EXECUTIVE
DAVID ARMENDARIZ

information about the upcoming event, with the public and other athletes.

One club member, Debi Anderson, spoke at the opening ceremonies of the 2015 Games, in front of an audience of 80,000 people at the Los Angeles Coliseum. Her favorite Special Olympics moments include winning her first gold medal in track and field and the excitement she felt the first time she flipped over the high bar in gymnastics.

The improvements the Global Messengers have made from the time the Gavel club was formed until now have been striking, say members' parents.

"It's beyond belief—like night and day," says Gary Osterbach, ACB, ALB, whose daughter, Rachel, is a member. "I give Toast-

masters all the credit for that, but of course the Global Messengers themselves also get credit because they've worked extremely hard at this."

Saturday Speaking

The growing confidence and enthusiasm of club members is evident at a recent meeting. The Special Olympics of Southern California Global Messengers Gavel Club (the group's full name) meets on Saturday mornings, and more than 20 people attend this day, about a third of them parents. Joseph Gorin is the club president. Soon after the meeting starts, members share announcements.

Rebecca Nerney, a longtime Special Olympian who has competed in golf, volleyball and equestrian events, stands up. "Yesterday I gave a speech at the Anaheim Breakfast [Toastmasters] club and I did very, very well," she says with a smile. Furthermore, she adds, the Anaheim club donated \$1,000 to the Special Olympics.

The mother of Toastmaster of the Day Josh Levine tells the group about the recent reading he did at his synagogue on the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hoshanah.

"I got a lot of compliments about how well he read," says Ilene Levine. "He had pauses in all the right places."

"Very good, Josh," Joseph says from the podium. "Bravo."

In the club's early years, many of the members didn't want to speak at all—even to each other, say parents. When asked about the Special Olympics, members responded with few words. But with consistent practice in club meetings came newfound confidence.

"Practice is so important if you are going to improve your skills, and each Global Messenger has improved their own skills at differing levels," says Marilyn Skinner, mother of club member Jenny Skinner.



Club president Joseph Gorin (behind the lectern, with gavel) and other members of the Special Olympics of Southern California Global Messengers Gavel Club.



Rebecca Nerney gives a speech. At her side is fellow club member Jenny Skinner.

While some members still rely on reading their presentations, others can memorize or improvise their speeches, she says. A number of the members have completed one or more Toastmasters manuals.

Early on, club members would become distraught if they made a mistake. “They would completely break down” over minor errors, notes Gary Osterbach, who served as the club’s president the first few years. Now, if they trip up or lose their place, they realize it’s OK and carry on.

Initially, parents and other Toastmasters served in the officer and meeting roles. But now, with just a little guidance, the members are doing all that themselves. “They are running their own club,” says Marilyn Skinner.

Laughter and Pride

The prepared speeches begin at the club meeting. Adam Hogan tells about a time he locked himself in the bathroom and, to his mom’s horror, shaved off his eyebrows. The speech provokes hearty laughter from the group.

Then Joseph delivers a six-minute speech about his beloved family dog, J.J., a Jack Russell Terrier who became sick and died. He shares a photo of J.J. with the group. Joseph, a club member for three years, speaks with poise and confidence, rarely looking at his notes.

When he is finished, fellow member Pete Waldron says, “That was an outstanding speech, buddy, and I’m proud of you.”

Special Olympics executive David Armendariz says he, too, has seen a dramatic

improvement in the members’ skills. It makes a difference, he notes, because when the Global Messengers speak at public events about their experiences, their words resonate.

“Guests gain a better sense of what the Special Olympics are about, and they have deeper insight into the humanity of each athlete,” says Armendariz, the Orange County region director of Special Olympics Southern California. “One of our Global Messengers gave a powerful speech on the effect of bullying in her life. There wasn’t a dry eye in the room.”

He adds that he would love to see more Toastmasters clubs for Global Messengers, both in the U.S. and other countries.

Sharing Their Experience

After the recent meeting, which also included Table Topics, members talk about their Toastmasters experience. Greg Kozlowski, 53, who represented the United States in golf in the 2015 Special Olympics World Games, says his most recent speech was about learning golf from his grandfather. His mother, Charlene, says Greg’s impromptu speaking skills have

improved, noting that at one recent event, “he had to give a sort of improvisational speech to talk in front of 200 guests about his Special Olympics experiences. He was only told about 15 minutes beforehand but was prepared and confident based on his training through the Gavel club.”

Joseph, now 28, is a trained Special Olympics coach who mentors others in basketball and bowling. Being club president strengthens his leadership abilities, he says.

“I love to interact with my Global Messenger friends, and as the club president I like to help them improve their speaking,” says Joseph, who has given speeches to government officials, police officers and students.

In the recent club meeting, he is clearly in his element as he presides over the proceedings. Fittingly, Joseph closes the session on a positive note.

“Well done, everybody who gave speeches today,” he says, smiling. “Including me, of course.” ■

Paul Sterman is senior editor of *Toastmaster magazine*.

MORE ON THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS

The Special Olympics provides sports opportunities to individuals of all ages with intellectual disabilities. Events include the Special Olympics World Games, which are held every two years, alternating between Summer and Winter Games. The 2017 Special Olympics Winter World Games will be held in Austria.

A Star is Born

A young woman with Down syndrome is a hit on TV show *Born This Way*.

BY PAUL STERMAN

Sitting on the couch of her family's Southern California home, Rachel Osterbach talks enthusiastically about her life. She loves dancing. She loves musicals such as *Mary Poppins*. And last year she saw her first concert when her dad bought her tickets to see pop star Adam Lambert.

"He is my all-time favorite," says Rachel, a member of a Toastmasters Gavel club.

There's one bit of news she is particularly eager to share. "The big thing is that my show won an Emmy!" she says.

The 34-year-old is one of the stars of *Born This Way*, a television reality show that focuses on a group of young adults born with Down syndrome. Now in its third season, the popular show won the 2016 Emmy Award—the top prize in the U.S. TV industry—for "outstanding unstructured reality program."

Born This Way represents a milestone for diversity on TV: It is hailed as the first time people with intellectual disabilities have been given a primary voice on a reality series. Airing on the A&E network, the show looks at the full lives of its seven cast members, highlighting their joys, struggles and relationships with family and friends. They talk about most of the same things all people do, such as love and work. Rachel, who works as a mailroom assistant at an insurance company, says the program shows that "anybody with Down syndrome can do anything."

(For those who don't have access to the A&E network on TV, episodes of the show can be viewed online.)

Rachel is enjoying the perks of celebrity. She travels to places like Orlando, Florida, to make public appearances for the show, signs autographs and gets to spruce up her wardrobe with new dresses. "My mom and I go shopping a lot."

People sometimes approach her to tell her how much the series means to them. Just the other day, she says, two people recognized her while she was eating breakfast in a restaurant. "One of them started crying a little bit," says Rachel. "She said I'm such an inspiration to people."

Spreading the Word

Rachel is also a Global Messenger, one of a number of adults around the world who have participated in the Special Olympics—sports competitions for people with intellectual disabilities—and speak to the public about it. She belongs to a Toastmasters Gavel club specifically for Global Messengers in Southern California. (See page 26.) Rachel and her dad, Gary, share a special bond when it comes to Toastmasters. Not only does he attend the club meetings with her, but he belongs to a club himself—the Smedley Chapter One Club in Irvine, California.

Rachel says she was nervous when she first joined Toastmasters, but "I told myself if my dad can do it, I can do it." Since then, she has given many speeches, including a few at the Smedley club.

They both talk about getting butterflies before giving speeches, the hard work it takes to improve and the benefits that come with practice. Gary recalls a recent



Rachel Osterbach

"I told myself if my dad can do it, I can do it."

— RACHEL OSTERBACH

speech that Rachel gave at a Special Olympics fundraising event in Fountain Valley, California. "Afterward, one of the people there came up to her and said, 'I can tell you went to Toastmasters because you have gestures and vocal variety,'" Gary says. "So that was pretty cool."

Toastmasters has also helped both of them with the TV series. Parents of cast members often appear in the show, discussing issues such as their adult children's growing independence and the challenges that come with that. When he and his wife, Laurie, are interviewed on camera, says Gary, he draws heavily on his Table Topics skills.

Table Topics practice has also benefited Rachel, he adds, because she participates in panels and Q&A sessions in connection with the show. "She is much better now at not giving one-word answers and knowing that she needs to talk about things."

A Special Scene

Rachel was discovered for *Born This Way* through a local drama class that helps



Rachel Osterbach stands in the middle of *Born This Way* cast members and their parents. Rachel's parents, Gary and Laurie, are at the far left.

people with Down syndrome express themselves. She made a strong impression on the show's producers.

"Beyond the fact that Rachel is just precious, loving and kind, we admired her honesty," says Laura Korkoian, an executive producer of the series. "Rachel is strong and passionate and clearly in touch with her feelings."

As Rachel puts it, "Everybody thinks I'm the mother in the show. I tell them what's right and what's wrong."

You can see her caring nature in the exchanges between her and her dad. As the two sit next to each other on the couch, Gary talks about why he joined Toastmasters 13 years ago.

"I had a fear of public speaking, and typically my job required me to do public speaking. I used to agonize if I had to give a speech. I would lose sleep the night before and think of ways to get out of it."

"You never told me you had a fear of public speaking," says Rachel.

"I used to have that fear," Gary says.

"Well, how come you didn't tell me this?" replies Rachel. "I could have helped you with that."

The fact that Gary's struggles came before Rachel was even in Toastmasters is beside the point. If there's a problem, she wants to help.

Reality Show

The cast mates in *Born This Way* encourage and support each other. In one scene from Season 2, Rachel and three others sit around a table playing cards. Cole says he is graduating from high school and feeling nervous about getting a job.

Rachel tries to reassure him. "It's not scary," she says. "It's so easy, Cole, because I have a job. ... You're moving on up, and that's really cool."

"It may take a little bit longer or they might need a little more support, but [people with Down syndrome] can, and will, accomplish their goals."

— LAURA KORKOIAN,
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
OF *BORN THIS WAY*

The show doesn't coddle its cast members by dancing around tough issues. Emotional situations and painful realities are apparent. You see Rachel, for example, looking for love—and being rejected. But the reality of the situations is part of what makes audiences relate to the show.

Korkoian, the executive producer, says the series challenges stereotypes and misperceptions that people have of adults with intellectual disabilities. Some viewers may have had little experience with people with Down syndrome, she says, but by watching these seven adults, they see that their aspirations aren't so different from anyone else's.

"It may take a little bit longer or they might need a little more support, but they can, and will, accomplish their goals and contribute to society socially, politically and economically," says Korkoian.

Meanwhile, Rachel is as busy as ever. She is filmed in the TV series, works at her job with the insurance company and attends Toastmasters meetings. Though she no longer competes in the Special Olympics—she participated for more than 20 years in sports such as basketball, floor hockey and softball—she volunteers at the events and gives speeches as a Global Messenger. She also serves in an advocacy role: In 2014, she was appointed as a member of the California State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

"I'm very, very proud of her," says Gary.

"Thank you, Dad," Rachel says. **T**

Paul Sterman is senior editor of *Toastmaster magazine*.



More Punch

The trouble with voice-overs.

BY JOHN CADLEY

They say never watch how sausage and legislation are made. You might want to add radio voice-overs to the list.

“Fred? Fred? I need you to read it with more punch.”

“Punch?”

“Yeah, punch—more ... *MORE*.”

“More *more*?”

“What you just did, only more. And pick it up a little. That one came in at 33 seconds. We need to make up three seconds. OK, people, ready? Anderson Plumbing 30-second radio commercial, Take 4. And ... go!”

“Plumbing accidents can happen at any time—usually the most inconvenient times. Dinner for eight and the toilet overflows. Help! Settling in for a cozy evening and a frozen pipe bursts. Yikes! Well, Anderson Plumbing is here to help—just when you need it. You’re in trouble, we’re there on the double—with licensed, factory-trained technicians to fix whatever’s got you in a fix. That’s Anderson Plumbing. 563-4756. That’s 563-4756. Anderson Plumbing—563-4756. We’ll get your plumbing humming.”

“OK, not bad, Fred. Couple of things. I need you to hit the ‘ven’ in ‘inconvenient’ harder. InconVENient. Really hammer it. More punch on the ‘Help!’ too. I mean, don’t yell it but—you know—you’re in trouble. I need to hear it in your voice. Think of a truck coming at you, only, you know, not like you’re gonna die. And the ‘you’re in trouble we’re on the double’ thing. Give it more weight. I need to believe you. It sounds like you’re gonna stop for a doughnut or something. And don’t rush the phone numbers.”

“Do we need them three times? I think that’s why we’re going over.”

“This is radio, Fred. No visuals. We got a tattoo it on their forehead. Two more things—I know you emphasized the ‘you’ on ‘whatever’s got *you* in a fix’ but I need it bigger, fatter. Make them imagine their living room is under two inches of water. And the last line—‘we keep your plumbing humming.’ That’s our tagline, Fred. It’s the soul of the brand. I need to hear it like the Gettysburg Address. Sincerity, warmth, passion, dedication—make me want to trust you with my retirement money. And

“Anderson Plumbing 30-second radio commercial, Take 4. And ... go!”

you’re still two seconds over. Ready? Anderson Plumbing 30-second radio—Take 5. And ... go!”

“Plumbing accidents can happen ANY time—usually at the most inconVENient times. Dinner for eight and the john blows up. Hellllp! Settling in for a cozy evening and a frozen pipe bursts. Yowser! Well, Anderson Plumbing is here to help—just when you need it. You’re in trouble, we’re there On. The. Double.—with licensed, factory-trained technicians to fix whatever’s got your own self in a fix. That’s Anderson Plumbing. 563-4756. That’s 563-4756. 563-4756. We’ll ... Get ... Your ... Plumbing ... Humming.”

“What was that?”

“More punch.”

“You went completely off script. *Yowser*?!?! Where did *that* come from?”

“I was in the moment.”

“This is plumbing, Fred, not *Hamlet*. Dial it back a few notches and don’t go rogue on me. And now we’re seven seconds over. Ready? Take 8. Go!”

“Wait. I need some direction. I’m not sure what you want now.”

“Fred? Fred? Listen to me. Are you listening? Imagine your best friend calls and tells you water’s leaking into his basement all over his velvet Elvis paintings. He asks for help. Read the commercial like you’re giving your best friend helpful advice.”

“Is the leak from the toilet?”

“*YOU’RE THE VOICE-OVER, NOT THE PLUMBER!* You don’t need to know. Just talk to your friend. Take 9. Go!”

“Well, Frank—

“Stop! Cut! Who’s Frank?”

“My best friend.”

“You’re killin’ me, Fred. I need 30 seconds on clogged drains and you’re giving me your life story. Here’s what we’re gonna do: Take ‘inconvenient’ from Take 2, the ‘on the double’ line from Take 3, ‘Get *you* in a fix’ from Take 7, and ‘Get your plumbing humming’ from Take 6. Plug all those into Take 1 and we’ll put some Bruno Mars-type music underneath. The client will *have* to buy it. His wife loves Bruno Mars.” ■

John Cadley, a former advertising copywriter, is a freelance writer and musician living in Fayetteville, New York. Learn more at www.cadleys.com.

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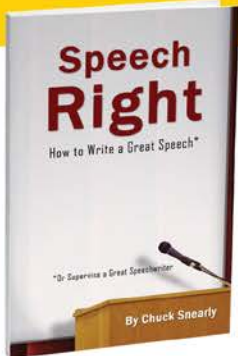
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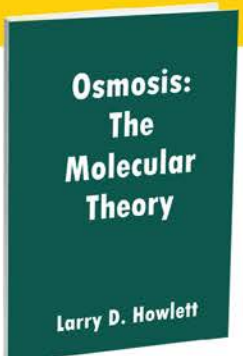
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