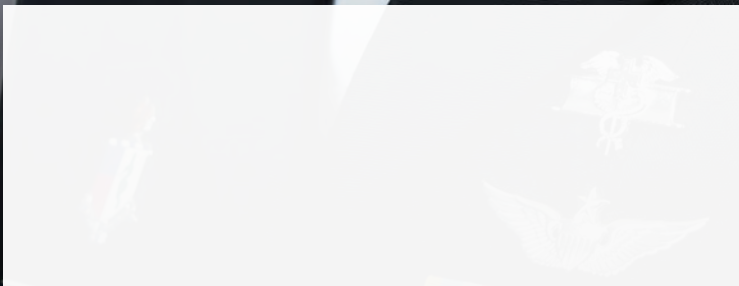


THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | JANUARY 2020

TOASTMASTER®

In Command

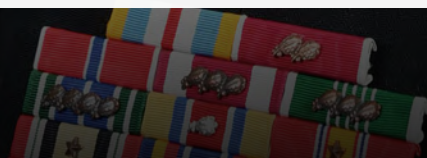
Major General Laura Yeager makes history as the first woman to lead a U.S. Army infantry division. (That's 10,000 troops!)



**The Many Hats
of the Club VPE**

**Change Your Habits,
Change Your Life**

YEAGER



Trust: It's Built by Action, Not Accident



A couple of years ago my daughter Ramita was practicing for a dance performance with her team members. A sequence in the dance required her to participate in a “trust fall.” As she plummeted backward toward the floor, she knew that her designated teammate would catch her to break the fall.

But that did not happen, as her teammate got distracted just at that moment. Ramita fell to the floor and sustained a back injury. That “trust fall” led to a fall of trust.

Trust is an important ingredient in any relationship. It's key to the success of any team, maybe even more so in Toastmasters, where teams are common. Building trust takes time and effort. It requires dedication and commitment from every member of the team.

The late Toastmasters International Golden Gavel recipient Stephen Covey noted that, “Contrary to what most people believe, trust is not some soft, illusive quality that you either have or you don't; rather, trust is a pragmatic, tangible, actionable asset that you can create.”

A personal touch goes a long way in fostering trust.

How can you build trust? Create a team charter or agreement listing how the team will work together and act on shared core values. Be open to listening without being judgmental. Be willing to trust and thus, allow others to reciprocate. The enthusiasm to have open and transparent conversations with team members creates the environment where trust flourishes.

Get to know team members as individuals. Find out who they are, their likes and hobbies, or a little about their families. A personal touch goes a long way in fostering trust. The next step is to allow everyone the freedom to air their opinions in a safe and supportive environment. Confidentiality is the key to instilling confidence in the team so that they can be trusting of each other.

Despite all our best efforts, trust does break down at times. When that happens, do not give up on each other. Make a conscious effort to rebuild trust. Understand the reasons for the trust failure. If nothing else works, make use of a mediator who can assist in reconciliation. At such times, focusing on the objectives and goals that brought the team together in the first place can guide you to reestablishing trust.

It took Ramita some months to regain confidence in this dance sequence after her fall. But she worked on it with her team. Today, she continues to participate in “trust falls” with unflinching trust in her teammates.

My fellow Toastmasters, I wish you a happy, successful, and “trustworthy” new year!

Deepak Menon, DTM
International President

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Members showcase their club talents and unique culture.



Etihad Airways Toastmasters in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, gathers for its 125th meeting since chartering in April 2014. The club proudly notes the meetings have been consecutive, without a single cancellation.



Members of Sysco Labs LS Toastmasters in Colombo, Sri Lanka, celebrate their newly appointed executive committee.



Super Speakers Toastmasters in Puchong, Selangor, Malaysia, hosts a Japanese-themed meeting with Table Topics based on Japanese idioms, as well as speeches related to Japan and a session on origami, a paper-folding art form common in Japan.



Send your fun club photos to photos@toastmasters.org. Include a description and your club name, number and location. Photos must be in jpeg format with a resolution of at least 300 dpi (dots per inch) and size of at least 1 MB (megabyte). Out-of-focus images cannot be accepted. It is not necessary to include the Toastmaster magazine or other branded materials in your photos, but if Toastmasters materials are displayed, they must reflect the current brand.

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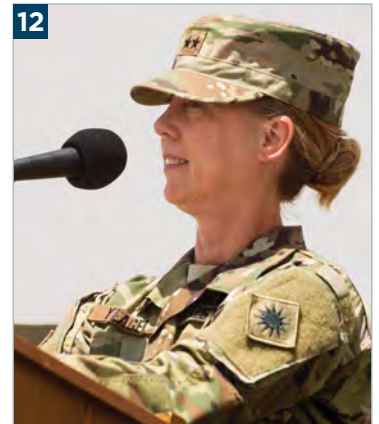
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


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-  **View** collections of fun and interesting photos.
-  **Access** valuable resources through hyperlinks.
-  **Share** articles with prospective members, friends and colleagues.



FIND MORE ONLINE THIS MONTH:



Leadership on the Front Line

Major General Laura Yeager made history in 2019 after becoming the first woman to command a United States Army infantry division. Learn how she is putting her Toastmasters training to the test as she leads 10,000 soldiers.

New Year, New You



What will you achieve this year? Hear advice from Toastmasters Toolbox author Bill Brown, DTM, on setting goals and accomplishing objectives.

WEB RESOURCE



Videos for All

Did you know Toastmasters International has a YouTube channel filled with shareable videos? Find member testimonials, Pathways education tips, convention highlights, World Champion speeches, expert advice, and more. Share with prospective members, colleagues, and friends. www.youtube.com/Toastmasters

Achieving Accredited

Watch a video to discover more about the six Toastmasters who recently claimed the coveted designation of Accredited Speaker.



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▶ PATHWAYS

Countdown to a New Education Era

If you haven't already transitioned to Pathways, get ready to do so! **July 1, 2020**, will mark the official changeover from Toastmasters' traditional education program to the Pathways learning experience.

When Pathways launched in 2018, existing members were given a two-year transition period. During this time, you could—and can up to June 30—work in the traditional program, in Pathways, or in both. (All new members are required to work in Pathways.) Starting on July 1, the first day of the 2020-2021 program year, Pathways will be the only education program available to members.

You're encouraged, however, not to wait until then to enroll in Pathways. The earlier you plunge in, the more comfortable and confident you'll be in navigating the program.

It's worth remembering that although change is challenging, it also leads to growth and self-improvement. The expansive Pathways program, available online and in print, was designed to help members develop more skills and achieve greater success meeting personal and professional goals. You can develop a wide variety of competencies, from blogging and networking to leading meetings effectively and communicating better in relationships. Several updates have been made in recent months:

- ▶ All 11 paths in Pathways have been “unlocked,” meaning that as soon as you get your chosen path, you can access any project in any of the path's five levels. Being able to view what's available in the higher levels may help you plan your projects and chart your learning.
- ▶ It is now easier to access Pathways projects. You can get to Base Camp—Pathways' online learning management system—through your Toastmasters Profile once you log in.
- ▶ The changes in Base Camp access include a new onboarding experience for selecting paths and getting into Base Camp. A demonstration of the new access process is available at bit.ly/TI_SelectAPath.



All Pathways educational content has been translated into eight languages: Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, and Traditional Chinese. Content is also being translated into Tamil and Korean, and two paths will be available in those two languages in early 2020.

An important reminder: To earn any final education awards in the traditional program, you must submit your award applications to World Headquarters by June 30. And it's highly recommended you not wait to the last minute to send them in. **The deadline will not be extended.** If you have questions, please email educationprogram@toastmasters.org.

Get ready to head down the homestretch toward a new era in Toastmasters education.

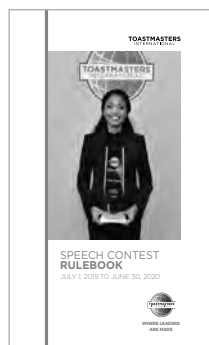
Learn more about the Pathways program at www.toastmasters.org/Pathways. The webpage also has an FAQ section, which includes answers to questions about unlocking access within paths.

▶ SPEECH CONTESTS

Know the Rules

Speech contests are a memorable part of the Toastmasters experience. Not only are they exciting and fun, but they're also a great opportunity to improve your skills (by competing, serving as a contest official, or attending and watching the participating speakers). The rewards of the contest experience stretch far beyond whether you win a trophy or not.

Before you sign up, take a look at the Toastmasters *Speech Contest Rulebook* to learn the basics. (Failing to follow the rules



could get you disqualified from a contest.) Even if you've competed numerous times, it's a good idea to brush up on the rules and review recent updates. You can download the 2019-2020 *Speech Contest Rulebook* at [www.toastmasters.org/resources/2019-2020-speech-contest-](http://www.toastmasters.org/resources/2019-2020-speech-contest-rulebook)

rulebook. To learn more about Toastmasters speech contests in general, visit www.toastmasters.org/SpeechContests.

► NEWS FROM TI

Why Brand Matters

With a membership exceeding 358,000 in 143 countries, Toastmasters International is an organization whose brand imagery and messaging must be consistent for the organization to remain recognizable and strong. It is vital that the Toastmasters logo and brand colors are used appropriately. Clubs and members are responsible for ensuring brand compliance. A consistent brand is important because it helps the organization convey a clear message and allows others to see the Toastmasters logo on marketing materials or in a club meeting and know they will be able to improve their speaking skills in a safe, supportive environment.

The brand is more than just a look—it's a feeling.

Brand is in the environment in which meetings, conferences, and events are set up. It's in the products we offer. It's in every communication made by World Headquarters, districts, and clubs. It's in the way members convey the Toastmasters brand through their interactions within the club and in the community.

The brand is our identity.

While every club has its own personality, the brand should still shine through so that a member can attend any meeting and have a sense of familiarity and comfort. How can you help represent our global brand?



- Review the Brand Manual at www.toastmasters.org/BrandManual.
- Visit the Brand Portal for logos, images, and templates at www.toastmasters.org/Branding.
- Email the brand specialist at brand@toastmasters.org with any questions, especially when creating custom items.

► CONVENTION

Paris Awaits!

Paris, France, is the site for the 89th Annual Toastmasters International Convention, August 5-8, 2020. Now is the time to start planning! (To register, visit www.toastmasters.org/Events.)

During your visit, consider taking a day trip from Paris. We've rounded up a few suggestions to get you inspired. Most are accessible by train; distance is from the city.

- **Versailles.** (35 km/21 mi.) Former palace of French kings and queens in the 17th and 18th centuries, Versailles is an extravagant and opulent architectural site that boasts 2,300 rooms spread over 63,154 sq. meters, including the stunning gardens.
- **Disneyland Paris.** (32 km/20 mi.) Comprised of two theme parks (Disneyland Park and Walt Disney Studios Park), hotels, shopping, and a golf course, it's one of only two Disney resorts outside of the U.S.
- **Giverny and Monet's Gardens.** (76 km/47 mi.) The Impressionist painter Claude Monet lived in the quaint village of Giverny for 43 years, and some of his most famous paintings were inspired by his garden and feature his water garden and Japanese bridge.
- **The Loire Valley.** (213 km/132 mi.) The Loire Valley is home to over 300 castles that date from the 15th–17th centuries. Among the most popular: Château de Chenonceau, Château d'Ussé, Château de Chambord, Château d'Azay-le-Rideau, Château d'Amboise, Château du Blois, and Château de Cheverny. The area also boasts numerous famous wineries.



Versailles, near Paris, France

- **Normandy D-Day Beaches.** (271km/168 mi.) The liberation of Europe from the clutches of the Nazis during World War II began on June 6, 1944. Five beaches in Normandy were strategically used in the invasion, the most famous being Omaha Beach, which now includes three museums and the American Cemetery of Normandy with nearly 9,400 graves of soldiers who died in combat.
- **Mont-Saint-Michel.** (363 km/225 mi.) Located on the coast of Normandy, Mont-Saint-Michel is both an island and an iconic Romanesque abbey, which was originally only accessible at low tide. Today there are shops, hotels, and restaurants, as well as a causeway connecting the island to the mainland.
- **Wine regions.** The Champagne region is closest to Paris (144 km/90 mi.) and is famous for its eponymous Champagne. Additionally, France has seven famous wine regions. From Paris, consider the regions of Burgundy, known for its dry red and white wines; Alsace, which borders Germany and is famous for its beers as well as its sweeter wines; and the Loire Valley, which is known for its Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc.

▶ **SNAPSHOT**

Members of Tachikawa Toastmasters in Tachikawa, Tokyo, Japan, practice karate kata at the Itsukushima Shrine in Hiroshima. Black Belt holder and Toastmaster Takayuki Fujiwara (holding magazine) instructs his fellow members weekly to help them enhance their confident posture, direct eye contact, and strong voice in public speaking.

▶ **NEWS FROM TI**

How to Submit an Article or Idea

Have a story idea for the *Toastmaster* magazine?

We'd love to hear it! Submit your ideas for topics you would like to see covered to submissions@toastmasters.org.

Have an article you'd like to write?

To write for the magazine, please send article queries (outlines or proposals) rather than completed articles. This helps us to better guide the direction of submitted stories and ensure they fit the magazine's editorial needs. We welcome completed article submissions for My Turn, as well as nominations for Meet My Mentor and Member Moment.

Keep the following tips in mind when putting together your outline or proposal:

Topics should:

- ▶ Be relevant to an international audience (members live in 143 countries!) of Toastmasters as well as to the general public.
- ▶ Offer takeaway advice or tips, not just a summary of your own experience.
- ▶ Present something other clubs and/or members can adapt or learn from.
- ▶ Be unique and informative.



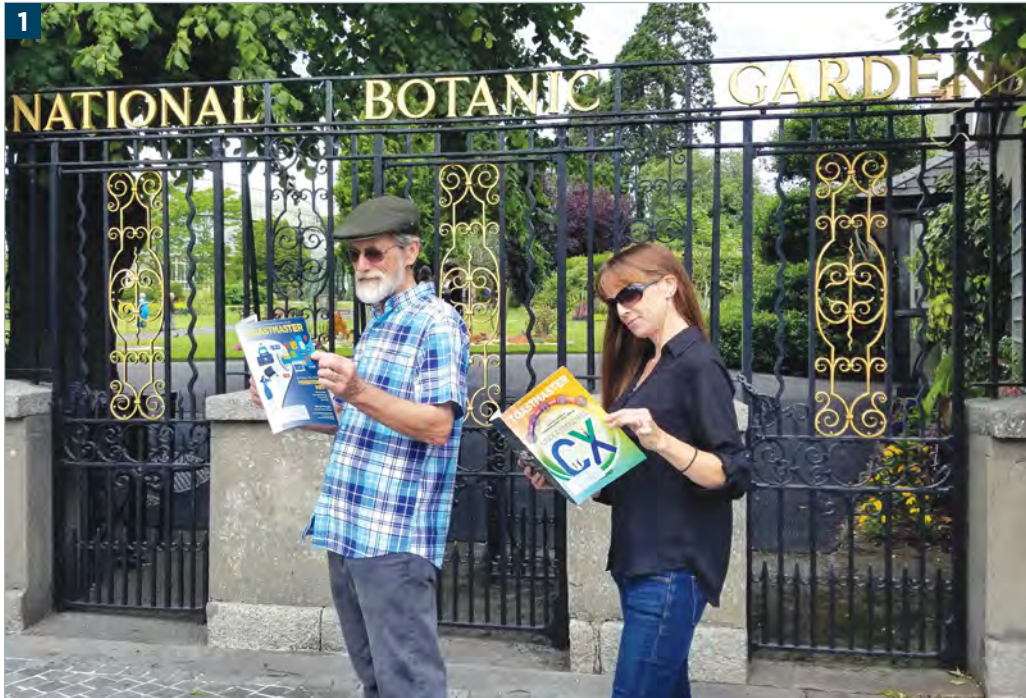
Please avoid:

- ▶ Topics or angles that overtly promote a product or service. Personal experience is fine, but articles need to offer practical tips and takeaways. Self-promotion greatly diminishes the likelihood that we will publish your article.
- ▶ Topics with any type of political angle or cultural bias.

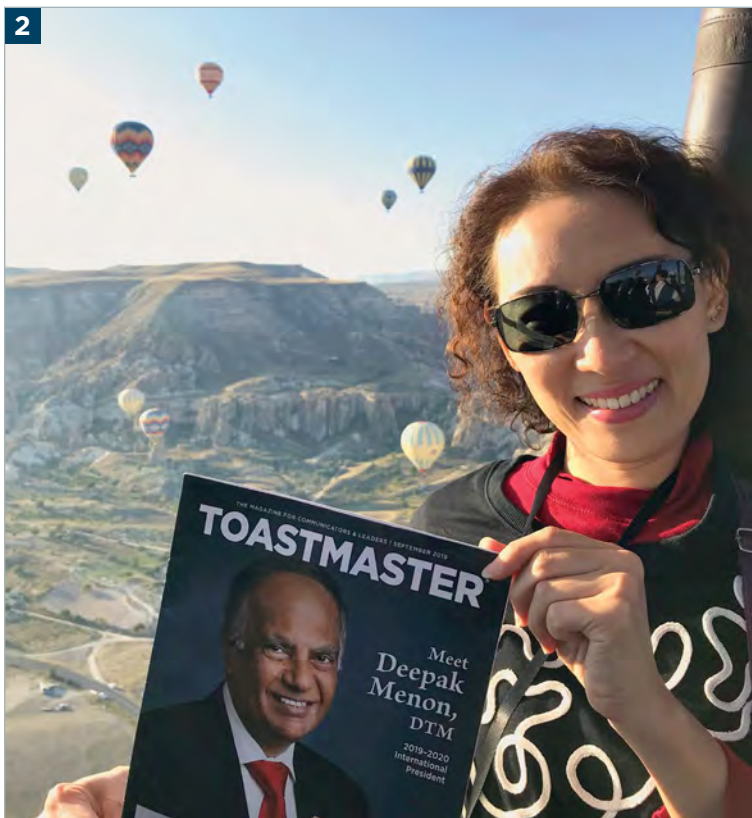
Articles and photos about club and member celebrations and anniversaries will be considered in a very limited scope. Be sure the photos are of high resolution (at least 1MB) and interesting to look at.


The magazine is planned three to four months ahead of publication, so in January, the April issue is produced. Finally, please note that the magazine receives many submissions, and we appreciate your patience.

For directions on how to submit a story, as well as the article submission form, please visit www.toastmasters.org/Submissions.



- 1 | **JOHN MULLINS** and his daughter, **CAROLINE MULLINS-ERRO**, of Modesto, California, visit the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin, Ireland.
- 2 | **KOH LAY HOON, DTM**, of Singapore, takes her Toastmaster magazine on a hot air balloon ride in Cappadocia, Turkey.
- 3 | **NARISSA DUVENHAGE** of Johannesburg, South Africa, hikes on Table Mountain in Cape Town, South Africa.
- 4 | **NATHAN MELLIN, DTM**, takes fellow club member **KARENA YIM**, both of San Francisco, California, for a flight around the area.



 **View additional photos** in this month's *Traveling Toastmaster* photo gallery at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine.

 **PICTURE YOURSELF HERE!** Pose with the *Toastmaster* magazine during your travels and submit your photos for a chance to be featured in print or online. Send images 1MB or larger to photos@toastmasters.org. Bon voyage!

In My Skin

Being an author was all I ever wanted.
Until I faced the terror of promoting my book.

BY ALEX KIESTER

For as long as I can remember, I've wanted to be a novelist. Some of my earliest memories are of walking around my neighborhood, barefoot, narrating stories in my head.

I started writing my first manuscript at age 25. It was more or less a disaster and fortunately, no one read it except for one gatekeeper of the publishing industry who gave it a polite but resounding no. My second book was better, thank God. It placed as a finalist in an international manuscript competition and was starting to get some real interest from real literary agents.

For the first time in my life, the thing I'd wanted more than anything, the thing I'd wanted since I was 7 years old—to become a published author—was within my reach. But rather than feeling excited, I was terrified. I was so terrified, most nights I cried myself to sleep.

All I could think about was that if my book got published, I would have to market it. I'd have to go on a book tour, stand in front of people, and—horror of horrors—I would have to talk. I'd experienced anxiety my whole life, but this was something else. What had begun as a garden-variety fear of public speaking had morphed into a full-blown phobia.

I was a human juxtaposition. More than anything, I wanted to get my book published, go to book events, and speak articulately about my work. And also, more than anything, I wanted to melt into the floor and have no one look at me ever for the rest of my life, thank you very much.

I was so desperate, I fantasized about hiring an actress to impersonate me to publicly market my book so I wouldn't have to.

In the year I spent avoiding anything that even resembled public speaking, my fear only got bigger and bigger and bigger. Soon, I was having upward of five panic



attacks a day. The night my throat closed in anxiety as I ordered takeout food over the phone, I knew something had to change.

In the year I spent avoiding anything that even resembled public speaking, my fear only got bigger and bigger and bigger.

So I visited my first Toastmasters club. My body shook as I walked into the building where the club held its meetings, and yet, when I was called on to participate in Table Topics, I didn't say no. I ignored the question and talked about how scared I was for a whopping 48 seconds. I relished the feeling of triumph when I sat down afterward. So, I went back the next week.

That was over two years ago. Today, I am a member of two Toastmasters clubs in Austin, Texas, have delivered over a dozen speeches, and have held every role on the meeting agenda many times over.

In the course of my journey, I started writing another book, this one inspired by my fear of public speaking. *In Her Skin* is about Meggie Meyer, an anxiety-ridden debut author who is so paralyzed by the thought of her own book tour, she hires a small-time actress to impersonate her during the two-week stint. For the first time since I'd started writing novels, this one didn't get rejected. *In Her Skin* came out as an audiobook this past October, exclusively through Audible, the online audio-entertainment company.

Signing my first-ever book contract was both a dream come true and what I'd not so long ago considered a nightmare. There, written into section 2.3.2, were two obligatory days of media interviews. And yet, I didn't cry myself to sleep thinking about them because I trusted in the confidence Toastmasters has given me. I trusted that when I stood up to deliver a toast at my book launch or when I leaned into the microphone during an interview, my training would kick in. And it did. I was able to speak confidently despite my pounding heart because that's exactly what I've done every Tuesday and Thursday for the past two years.

No longer do my fears dictate what I do or how I do it. No longer am I the anxiety-ridden author who can write but can't talk. I'm Alex Kiester, author and speaker. **T**

ALEX KIESTER is a writer in Austin, Texas. You can learn more about her debut novel, *In Her Skin*, at www.Audible.com/InHerSkin and more about her at www.AlexKiester.com. She is a member of the South Austin and Barton Springs Toastmasters clubs in Austin.

In Command

U.S. Army Major General Laura Yeager blazes new trails in the military.

BY MITCH MIRKIN

It's one thing to take command of a room. Good public speakers know all about that.

It's quite another to take command of 10,000 U.S. National Guard soldiers—men and women trained and poised for just about anything, from fighting enemy troops abroad to taming wildfires back home.

Maj. Gen. Laura Yeager, a former Toastmaster, has done both. She joined the United States military in 1986 and achieved an important “first” in June 2019, when she became the first woman to command a U.S. Army infantry division.

One of Yeager’s favorite activities at club meetings was Table Topics. She has put the practice to good use as a commander.

“There were several times during meetings when Table Topics focused on giving impromptu toasts and recognizing individuals for accomplishments,” she recalls. “This is a task that as a senior leader I am pleased to be able to do often. Getting experience in composing succinct and complimentary statements has been very valuable.”

Yeager now leads the Army National Guard’s 40th Infantry Division, based in her home state of California. The division includes 10,000 soldiers, mainly from the West Coast of the U.S. and areas such as Hawaii and Guam. In the U.S., Army National Guard soldiers generally live at home with family and serve part-time. They train at nearby bases one weekend a month plus two full weeks per year, usually during the summer. They can be called up to full-time active duty to

bolster the regular Army during times of war and can be called into service in their respective states during emergencies like riots or natural disasters.

For Yeager, the new division command isn’t her first instance of military trailblazing. Prior to her current position, she was the first woman to lead the Texas-based Joint Task Force North. That force helps law-enforcement agencies stem the flow of illegal drugs into the U.S.

“Being able to effectively communicate is an essential skill in the military that we do prioritize.”

—MAJ. GEN. LAURA YEAGER

She was also the first female to command the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade. In the U.S. Army, a brigade has between 4,000 and 5,000 troops. Trained as a Black Hawk helicopter pilot, Yeager navigated her first combat deployment in 2011 in the Iraq War, flying medical evacuation missions in Iraq along with leading her soldiers. In collaboration with other commanders, she made tough decisions about when and where to fly.

The same unit was once commanded by her father, Robert Brandt, a retired U.S.



major general who flew helicopters in the Vietnam War.

No Place for Gender Stereotypes

In today’s U.S. armed forces, traditional gender roles—and stereotypes—quickly fall by the wayside. The emphasis is on the ability to do the job, regardless of gender. By Yeager’s account, the egalitarian mindset has been in place much longer.

“In neither of my past positions did I ever feel that being a female was an advantage or disadvantage,” she notes. “I appreciate that I was treated simply as a soldier.”

In fact, while she does point to one key female mentor she’s had, she says the rest have been men.

“In my first assignment, my company commander was female and a great leader. She was a pilot, which is what I wanted to be. Seeing her having succeeded as a pilot was inspiring to me. All of my mentors since then have been male. My most important and trusted mentor has been my father.”

In the 1980s, she decided to join the Reserve Officers Training Corps—mainly to help pay for college. Her father was



surprised at first, but then very supportive. “I never discussed serving in the military with my father,” she recalls. “I think he was more surprised than anyone that I decided to join. But once I did and pursued a career similar to his, he provided a great deal of encouragement and mentorship, and still does.”

“Warm, But A Warrior”

Yeager says she strives to embody Army values, such as loyalty, duty, and respect, and to serve as a role model for all soldiers. Indeed, she’s earned the respect and admiration of peers, subordinates, and superiors alike, judging from press reports of her promotion. Her colleague Lt. Col. Jonathan Shiroma told *USA Today* that Yeager’s appointment was an “exciting time for the California National Guard. She’s been a battalion commander, a brigade commander, and now a division commander. She’s earned it.”

It’s clear that many women service members find particular inspiration in her story.

At her historic installation as 40th Infantry Division commander in Los Alamitos, California, Capt. Gerrelaine Alcorido, a public affairs officer, told the *Los Angeles Times* that she had been thinking of leaving the service after 14 years but reconsidered after seeing Yeager’s success. “She’s ... shown that the military has really opened up doors for women in the last 10 years,” says Alcorido. “She has this smile and warmth in her eyes, but she’s also a warrior.”

It’s not often that a person is described as being both “warm” and a “warrior,” but Yeager seems to fit the bill. This rare mix of qualities appears grounded in her education. Along with a bachelor’s in psychology from the University of California, Irvine, she holds a master’s degree in marriage and family therapy from Chapman University in Orange, California, and a second master’s in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Being a military commander does demand toughness, yet a dose of psychological insight never hurts.

LAURA YEAGER LEADERSHIP TIMELINE

Highlights from the military career of Maj. Gen. Laura Yeager:

1989—Completed training as a military helicopter pilot.

2010—Named deputy commander of 40th Combat Aviation Brigade, the first woman to hold the role.

2011—Deployed to Taji, Iraq, with her brigade to support U.S. combat operations.

2017—Named first female commander of Texas-based Joint Task Force North, helping fight drug trafficking and other international organized crime.

2019—Became first woman to lead a U.S. Army infantry division, taking command of the 40th Infantry Division.

“Leadership is all about people, so I have found my education to be relevant,” says Yeager. “Understanding what motivates people, whether they are your friends or your enemies, can be very useful when thinking strategically.”

Additionally, her background in counseling and therapy has strengthened her consideration for military families. Supporting family and communities is crucial to any military mission, Yeager explains.

“Understanding what motivates people, whether they are your friends or your enemies, can be very useful when thinking strategically.”

—MAJ. GEN. LAURA YEAGER

Yeager is married to retired Lt. Col. Curtis Yeager, and the couple have four adult sons. She says her years in the National Guard, and earlier in her career in the Army Reserve, has allowed her to achieve a healthy work-life balance, given the ability to be based at home much of the time.

The Toastmasters Factor

As Yeager’s career progressed, more opportunities arose for public speaking.

That motivated her to join Toastmasters. She earned the Competent Communicator designation as a member of the Grizzly Gabbers, a Toastmasters club based in Sacramento and sponsored by the California National Guard. She was active in the club between 2015 and 2019.

It seems speaking in front of an audience should be no big deal for a combat helicopter pilot. Yet Yeager doesn’t take the speaking challenge lightly. She fully understands the nervousness that accompanies public speaking for most people, civilians and soldiers alike.

“I absolutely can relate to that anxiety. The more I care about doing a good job on a presentation, the more anxiety I feel.”

Yeager has also come to appreciate how Toastmasters training, besides its role in developing good public speakers, improves communication in general.

“Being able to effectively communicate is an essential skill in the military that we do prioritize,” says Yeager. “The best way to improve is through repetition and by getting constructive feedback, which are opportunities provided by Toastmasters.” **T**

Mitch Mirkin lives in Baltimore, Maryland, and is the senior editor and writer for the nationwide health research program of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. He is a member and past president of Randallstown Network Toastmasters in Baltimore.

Member Achievements

Toastmasters skills help members with big life changes and overcoming challenges.

Luciana Hermida



Chester Speaking Club • Chester, England, United Kingdom

Artist Shines on BBC

As a visual artist, I find that expressing myself with words has always been a challenge—speaking is extremely difficult, even overwhelming. My decision to join Toastmasters was mainly to gain confidence to speak in front of people.

Months before I joined Toastmasters, I applied to be on an arts show called “Home is Where the Art Is” for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). Artists from Northern England were invited to apply to participate in a national TV broadcasted series. Three artists on each episode had to compete to win a commission requested by a buyer. By the time I was selected for the show I had already joined Toastmasters—such a coincidence!

Throughout the show I had to speak several times, from presenting myself in my studio through talking about my art and my ideas for the pitch day with the buyer. The biggest day for me during the recording of the show was the pitching day. I had to confidently show my work and sell my idea. Toastmasters helped me because through the meetings and participating in Table Topics, I gained the confidence to speak. I also learned from more experienced speakers that to make a speech successful—apart from giving it a clear structure—you need to inspire others, focusing on the audience and not just yourself.

Thanks to my newfound ability to inspire others, I made it to the final show, and created artwork for the buyer! I think art doesn't differ much from public speaking. You must learn the basics, but after that, it is mainly about throwing yourself out there in order to grow. Growing through the actual experience and above all, not being afraid of being wrong. There is still a lot for me to learn through speaking, but next on my achievement list is to present my art and explain what fuels it in order to inspire others.



Erik Anderson



Airport Business Center • Healdsburg, California, U.S.

Remastering Confidence

In 2001, while working as a wind turbine technician, I drove off a steep mountainside near Bakersfield, California. The truck rolled, and I was ejected from the vehicle. My partner and I hiked to find help, and the paramedics transported me to the hospital. My brain was swelling from a ruptured carotid artery and blood clots in the artery, giving me an 80% chance of dying and likely brain damage if I even survived. After emergency surgery, where one-third of my skull was removed to relieve the increasing pressure in my brain, I was put in a medically induced coma. Once the pressure normalized, the portion of my skull was replaced, and it grew back into my skull with scarring.

Even after 11 months of neurological rehabilitation, I was unable to work. I started ballroom dance lessons to improve my mental faculties, and it was there that an instructor told me about Toastmasters. I had a noticeable speech impediment and was having difficulty finding and using the right vocabulary to express myself but thought Toastmasters would help me improve that.

As expected, giving speeches was difficult as I struggled to find the words to say. But I really liked the growth environment and kept going. After my first year, I was asked to be sergeant at arms, and though I felt overwhelmed, I knew it would be a good opportunity. I held the position for two years and recently became club president.

Now I have been working in a new career in sales for over a year and a half and am in my second year of my public health bachelor's degree. I'm also still dancing and seeking out more growth opportunities to continue to increase and improve my ability to think and function. My speech impediment is no longer a problem, and it is much easier for me to find and use fluent vocabulary to express myself. I do not know what I'll do next in Toastmasters, but becoming an area director sounds appealing.



Deborah Thomson

Golden Gate Toastmasters Club • Washington D.C., U.S.



From Hospital Scrubs to Business Suits

As a veterinarian in San Francisco, California, I joined Toastmasters to speak for my voiceless patients—the animals—because effective communication is critical for all.

Veterinary students spend four years learning veterinary terminology, which feels like learning a new language. We become immersed in it and have to practice our skills for every species on the planet except humans. This new language and my career consumed my life. After years of surrounding myself with medical and veterinary students, I abruptly met the “real world” when speaking to animal owners in the appointment room who didn’t know the medical and clinical terms I was using. Knowing I had to find a better way to relate to my patients’ owners, I joined Toastmasters.

Later, when contemplating a career change from clinical medicine to public policy, I didn’t actively think about using the skills I gained at Toastmasters. However, as I was finishing an interview in Washington, D.C., I realized the Toastmasters’ skills of leadership, active listening, and clear communication have given me an edge on career advancement and on life.

Now, I am representing my profession at the government level in Washington, D.C., and am thrilled with the potential for the future! As a legislative fellow, I work in a congressional office and focus on science policy issues involving One Health—the combination of environmental, animal, and human health. From hospital scrubs to business suits, I am forever a Toastmaster. I look forward to the future lessons, connections, and laughs while in D.C. and beyond!

John Hart

Testament Toastmasters • Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada



The Day I Should Have Died, I Found My Voice

By Danie Botha of Testament Toastmasters

While standing next to a high-voltage transformer outside Churchill, Manitoba, Canada, determining the amount of movement in the permafrost, John Hart’s long measuring stick accidentally touched an overhead power line, sending a lethal current of 138,000 volts through his body.

It didn’t kill him, but it did set him ablaze. Within days following the September 1994 accident, John’s right arm and leg were amputated, followed by three months in a burn unit, and a further three months of rehabilitation. Nine months later, John was back at work.

In the first 13 years following his accident, John was often asked to speak at burn survivor conventions. He did the best he could but never felt at ease, so he joined Testament Toastmasters in 2007 to gain confidence. Over the years he grew his speaking and communication skills. John has now been the spokesperson for the annual Mamingwey Burn Survivor Conference for several years, served as an emcee at local and national conferences, and given hundreds of health and safety talks for Manitoba Hydro—the electric power and natural gas utility in Manitoba.

People who meet John, at Toastmasters or anywhere, tend to notice his enigmatic smile first, not the fact that he shakes hands using his left hand because his right hand is a prosthesis. He is always cheerful and smiling, despite all the odds stacked against him and all the trauma he’s been through.

John says it best: “I cannot see myself frowning. I’ve always had a smile—even before the accident. While I was lying there next to the transformer, I kept asking myself, ‘Now what am I going to do? I have a wife and four young kids.’ I guess I decided that day, without realizing it then, for the sake of my family, the smile will have to stay, representing my attitude. How else will we survive?” 📺



Do you have a Toastmasters success story you’d like to share about yourself or another member? Write it in fewer than 300 words and send with a high-resolution photo to submissions@toastmasters.org.

Introducing Your Club Path Master

The Vice President Education—
advisor, scheduler, celebrator of achievement.

BY CRAIG HARRISON, DTM

The Toastmasters experience offers many paths to success. How do members select the best paths for their goals, ambitions, and dreams? So many choices. Who has a road map? Who knows, from experience, how each member can understand, engage in, excel at, and ultimately leverage their Toastmasters learning?

The door to finding the right answers opens to the club vice president education (VPE), who serves as the path master to all members on their journey to transformation. The role of VPE calls for someone who is readily available with answers and insight, as well as a healthy dose of inspiration.

The VPE's primary job is to promote continuing education for all members. The club's success—and future—depends on members meeting their educational goals with a high degree of satisfaction, proficiency, and confidence.

Club members rely on the VPE to schedule speeches, verify and track the completion of Pathways projects, and manage speech contests and the club's mentor program. The VPE has in-depth

knowledge of programs as well as big-picture Toastmasters experience and is an excellent resource for club members and prospects.

A Favorite Officer Role

Helping members navigate Pathways is one of the VPE's most challenging tasks, especially since the program becomes Toastmasters' sole education curriculum on July 1, 2020, the day after the traditional program expires. Members who joined before Pathways launched in their district have the option of finishing work in the traditional program (but only until June 30, 2020) or working in Pathways or doing both. New members, and those who joined after their district adopted Pathways, are working in Pathways only.

Ultimately, the VPE wears many hats: program expert, advisor, listener, statistician, scheduler, and celebrator of member achievements. Despite the work it requires, many members say it's one of the best club officer roles.

"This was my favorite role, hands down," says Muhammad Zain Al Abiding, a member of Wroclavian Speakers in Wroclaw, Poland, and a two-time DTM. "I love when I see the progress in members and know I had a hand in it," he told the *Toastmaster* magazine last June, in an article about officer roles.

Corinna Koehler, a member of the San Diego Toastmasters 7 club, also knows the role well. She was club VPE in the last half of 2018-2019 and the first half of 2019-2020. To do the job



well, she says, VPEs need to stay on top of every task, and answer member messages and questions promptly. Her club meets weekly, and Koehler has made a point to post an online recap of the meeting's highlights the next day, as well as to provide an agenda for the next meeting. She also tries to schedule member speakers as far as two months in advance.

"I would say being well organized is key for the VPE role," she notes. "You can't let emails sit in your box for 10 days." Koehler says she has also sharpened her own leadership skills. "The biggest thing for me has been learning to delegate, to realize it's perfectly okay to ask for help."

I asked Amelia Abad, DTM, a past District 46 leader and co-founder of Queens Best Toastmasters in Queens, New York, the key to her club's success since chartering in 2013. The group's roster averages close to 50 members a year. What's the key to its success? The club has made a high priority of staying up to date with member goals and progress.

"We implemented educational coordinators to share the responsibility for guiding members along their chosen paths," Abad explained, echoing Koehler's nod to delegation. In a large club, coordinators stay abreast of subsets of members, based on their goals.

A bonus to this approach: Over time, coordinators become officers, coaches, and mentors to carry on the tradition of accountability and success.

Staying on Track

In Pathways Base Camp, VPEs are encouraged to confirm members' approval requests promptly to avoid delays in momentum and harness their enthusiasm to move forward in the program.

Just as individual members need to know, at any time, their status on the road to achievement, club VPEs and their club leadership teams benefit from tracking progress against club and district goals. Quantitative data helps your VPE benchmark



success, providing context and comparison to other clubs engaged in the pursuit of excellence. To this end, tools like the Toastmasters Dashboard Report (dashboards.toastmasters.org) provide information on the club's progress in the Distinguished Club Program (DCP).

One of the commonalities of human motivation in any field is this—efforts that are recognized and rewarded are repeated. Once you've motivated members to pursue their own self-paced educational agenda, and nurtured them along the way, their perseverance will ultimately yield achievement. One of the VPE's key roles for these individuals, and for your club's culture, is to amply recognize and reward them on their achievements.

Recognition is often done both publicly and privately. Publicly, it reinforces the learning environment that is your club. It provides incentive to all, and sometimes stokes the competitive fires of other members to follow suit. And it leads the way to learning for all. VPEs regularly use ceremonies to acknowledge member milestones. Through timely recognition, momentum is maintained, esteem is boosted, and all are bolstered by the win-win of individual and club goals being attained.

Whether you are bestowing a certificate, pin, or plaque, the achieving member and the club will bask in the afterglow of a job well done, a goal attained, a milestone achieved, and the chance to set new and even more ambitious goals.

Encourage the S-T-R-E-T-C-H

Another secret to the success of the best VPEs around the world is to see over the horizon as members start to achieve their current goals. Now is the time to re-partner with them for a logical next goal, perhaps even parlaying past achievements to stretch for something more consequential or impactful.

Even veteran members with multiple DTMs should be challenged to do more and dig deeper or seek bigger ponds to flex their ever-expanding communication and leadership skills.

To keep those veteran members involved, consider these among many ways they can apply their skills and develop dexterity with new ones:

- ▶ Coordinate an open house.
- ▶ Start a club.
- ▶ Mentor a new (or advanced) member.
- ▶ Conduct a Speechcraft or Youth Leadership Program.
- ▶ Accept a six- or 12-month role in your district, from among dozens available annually.
- ▶ Join or help launch a district speakers bureau.
- ▶ Chair a speech contest.
- ▶ Join your district's conference leadership team.

Leave No Toastmaster Behind

Don't let your veteran members of all ages grow stagnant. Find new and creative challenges to keep them engaged and learning, and enhance your club in the process. Veterans can be recruited to assist the VPE in setting the culture, establishing and maintaining standards, and transferring their accrued knowledge to help the next waves of members through coaching or mentoring.

When each one teaches one, the whole club assists its VPE in charting a pathway to excellence. **TI**

Craig Harrison, DTM, a past district governor, is a charter member of *Silicon Valley ImprovMasters* in San Jose, California. He is a professional keynote speaker, trainer, consultant, and principal of the training firm www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com.

VPE Resources

- ▶ Log into Leadership Central for tools and resources at www.toastmasters.org/leadership-central/club-officer-tools.
- ▶ For meeting organization, try scheduling software offered through www.Easy-Speak.org and www.ToastmastersClubs.org.
- ▶ Find meeting agenda information at www.toastmasters.org/resources/club-meeting-agendas.
- ▶ VPEs and members can view a new onboarding experience for selecting paths and getting into Base Camp at bit.ly/TI_Onboarding.
- ▶ **Pathways Achievement Chart**, for easy path tracking and for display at club meetings to keep members informed.
- ▶ **Pathways Achievement Tracker**, a record-keeping tool with pages for recording members' paths, completed speeches and meeting roles.
- ▶ **Recognition pins**

Charts, trackers, and pins are available at www.toastmasters.org/PathwaysStrong.

Tips for Time Management

Not enough hours in the day?
Make time for what's important.

BY LAURA AMANN

As the new year unveils in many parts of the world, it's a natural time to evaluate the past year and make goals or resolutions for the coming one. However, for many of us, almost inevitably, life starts up again, and we find ourselves six months down the road spinning in the same wheel.

If you want to make time for what's important to you, not just what you have to do, read on. We've gathered tips from time-management experts and narrowed down some techniques to help you find a little extra time to use as you wish.

- ▶ **Create a time audit.** For a week or two, record every 30/60 minutes of your day to see where time goes. Are you spending more time than you thought on certain tasks? It's often very enlightening to see how much time you're on your phone or watching TV. (For more on this, including a time log spreadsheet, visit Laura Vanderkam's website, specifically, www.lauravanderkam.com/manage-your-time.)
- ▶ **Try a power hour.** Author Gretchen Rubin suggests making a list of small tasks that are easily procrastinated and taking an hour to knock through them. For instance, cleaning out a cluttered drawer, answering old emails, sorting a teetering pile of papers.
- ▶ **Batch similar tasks together.** Set a time to just answer emails or make phone calls. Combine errands so you're not going out more than you need to.
- ▶ **Rate your tasks based on importance or difficulty and organize**



your day accordingly. Many people recommend doing your most important or most dreaded task first to gain momentum and give you a sense of accomplishment even if the rest of the day is unproductive. (Mark Twain is alleged to have said: "If it's your job to eat a frog, it's best to do it first thing in the morning. And if it's your job to eat two frogs, it's best to eat the biggest one first.")

- ▶ **Create routines.** You gain freedom by establishing structure to your day—such as having morning, evening, and end-of-day routines (where you take 15 minutes to plan out your next day). Knowing what you're going to do when means you're less apt to forget something and better able to plan.
- ▶ **Set time limits to get things done.** Give yourself a chunk of time with no distractions. Or use the Pomodoro technique where you set a timer and break down tasks into 25-minute intervals followed by a short break. Each interval is known as a pomodoro (the Italian word for tomato) after the tomato-shaped timer the technique's creator developed.
- ▶ **Similarly, challenge yourself to put a time limit on tasks.** Give yourself 10 minutes to write a memo at work or 15 minutes to clean the kitchen after dinner. Often, a task ends up taking however much time you have, rather than how long it should take.

If you're having trouble prioritizing your life, or you want to challenge yourself to try something new, here are two techniques to try.

Write a list of things you want to try in the coming year. You could rank it based on your age or the year (20 for 2020!). The ideas can be as big or small as you want, such as run a 5K, host a dinner party, take a writing class, go camping, make your bed every day, find a great pair of black pants. Post the list in a place where you can see it often and look for opportunities to tackle your list throughout the year.

Write your obituary. Although it may seem morbid, it's an effective exercise to help you think through what you want to be known for. Similarly, you could write a toast you imagine someone giving you in five years. What do you want people to say about you? What will you have accomplished? What do you want to be most proud of? A similar task is to write next year's work performance review or write your family's holiday newsletter. Any of these exercises are a good way to analyze your priorities and think about not only how you want to live your life, but what you want to accomplish. **T**

Laura Amann is associate editor of the *Toastmaster magazine*.



The Magic of Walt Disney's Words

How a masterful communicator built an entertainment empire.

BY BETH BLACK

"To all who come to this happy place, welcome. Disneyland is your land. Here age relives fond memories of the past ... and here youth may savor the challenge and promise of the future."

—Walt Disney, Disneyland
Opening Dedication Speech (1955)

In 1955, Walt Disney stood proudly before a huge crowd and cameras at the opening of his "Happiest Place on Earth" in Anaheim, California, and shared the poetic Disneyland dedication message still popular with fans today. Those who watched his TV appearances came to know Disney as a gifted speaker. But his communication skills extended far beyond public speaking and accomplished more than simply entertaining the public. Walt Disney and his brother Roy built an entertainment empire that would eventually reach across cultural and language barriers to connect with audiences around the world. Whether or not they used words, the Disney brothers knew how to master a message.

A Master of Visual Communication

Perhaps it was his beginning as an animator. Walt Disney understood the power of visual communication. He also knew the glory of comedy, and it was his mission in life to bring more laughter into the world. When the seven dwarves sang with soap bubbles, audiences roared, and when Bambi wobbled his first steps, they fell in love while laughing again. This primal mode of communication started the company and found huge audiences. The popularity thrilled Walt, who said, "I don't make pictures just to make money. I make money to make more pictures."

Watch some early Disney animated films, and you'll see how the characters' visual expressions of basic human emotions, such as joy, sadness, fear, courage, and anger, help tell the story. These emotions were drawn clearly in animal and fantasy characters.

Years before modern Disney movies like *Beauty and the Beast* graced the silver

screen, the *Toastmaster* magazine in 1957 published an article titled, "They Speak a Universal Language." It described Disney's animation artists studying body language and then applying what they saw to their drawings—depicting animal characters communicating via "pantomime." The article recommended that Toastmasters try to "find value in the Disney technique of communication in the study of his star characters and the potency of their gestures..."

While body language still sends messages faster than words, we now take a more discerning view of the volumes we speak beyond our vocabulary:

Nonverbal Communication: Communication without words, including clothing, hair, proximity to the audience, and yes, body language. It can also be sound, which is why Toastmasters practice vocal variety.

Body Language: A type of nonverbal communication that includes facial expressions, hand gestures, movement, and poses of the head, legs, and arms.



There are 12 Disney theme parks around the world, including Disneyland Paris, 20 miles outside the city hosting the 2020 Toastmasters International Convention.

In any speech—or movie—nonverbal communication helps you understand what’s really going on.

Likewise, purposeful nonverbal communication can help public speakers add depth to words. Think of all the ways you could say, “I love to read,” varying your body language to change your meaning.

Guests at any of the dozen or so Disney parks around the world will meet costumed characters who greet them with pantomime. Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Goofy, Snow White, and others communicate to park guests silently, in a language understood without words. Some “human” characters are allowed to speak, but they all take advantage of body language to make their greetings and friendly messages easily understood.

Early on, the Disney leaders understood the value of focused corporate communication and crafted a specific vocabulary for employees. One example is their use of “cast members” to denote employees, a term that supports their sense of being “onstage” all over the parks.

It was Walt Disney’s mission to bring more laughter into the world.

Disney’s special vocabulary includes words that keep up with technical advances. One example is “audio-animatronics,” which began with the Imagineers and then evolved to become a generic term. These help Disney keep its unique niche in global entertainment and media markets.

Walt Disney: A Magical Speaker and Leader

Walt’s friendly persona welcomed viewers to many episodes of his long-running TV anthology, known for several years as *The Wonderful World of Disney*. He crafted his

TOASTMASTERS CLUBS AT DISNEY

David Harrison is a financial analyst at the Walt Disney Travel Company in Orlando, Florida. A self-proclaimed introvert, he credits his membership in the Celebration Speakeasy Toastmasters club, open only to Disney employees, with helping him build the confidence to communicate beyond reciting spreadsheet numbers. “Quite honestly, I needed to develop my skills and knowledge in communication and leadership to help advance in my Disney career,” he says.

Harrison’s Toastmasters membership has resulted in several recognition awards and work promotions. “Skills developed in Toastmasters of actively listening, motivating, and inspiring team members to work together toward a successful outcome have been the keystone of my professional success,” he says.

In Glendale, California, ToastMousters Club President Melissa Kurtz, a line producer for Disney, says her membership in this corporate club has helped grow her confidence when speaking to large groups. ToastMousters club members benefit by building Disney team spirit while developing their skills with Table Topics questions, such as, “If you could choose to be a Disney hero for a day, who would it be and what would you do?” In true Disney—and Toastmasters—fashion, the club is a warm, welcoming, and fun experience for participants. Kurtz says, “I like that we are low-pressure and encouraging, creating a comfortable, safe space for people to break out of their shell and step up to share their stories with the group.”

Clearly, Toastmasters skills work well for Disney and other corporations that share values of improved communication and leadership. As Toastmasters founder Ralph Smedley said, “We learn best in moments of enjoyment.”

messages carefully, always leading with a warm and lighthearted geniality developed over decades of public speeches, TV appearances, and writing. He considered himself to be part of the *show*, and the public was his audience. When he needed investors in Disneyland, he cleverly used TV speeches describing his plans for this world-class theme park to generate public interest and support.

Author and Disney expert Bill Capodagli put it all together when he wrote, “Walt Disney was a dreamer and a visionary, but more importantly, he was a communicator. He could relate to bank presidents as well as the folks cleaning the parking lots.”

He was also a world-class motivational speaker. Walt famously said, “Somehow I can’t believe that there are any heights that can’t be scaled by a man who knows

the secrets of making dreams come true. This special secret, it seems to me, can be summarized in four Cs. They are curiosity, confidence, courage, and constancy, and the greatest of all is confidence.”

Today, speakers and leaders often pull from the ample list of quotes that came out of Walt’s public speaking career. Toastmasters can still learn how to focus communication with a clear goal in mind—a dream—and in doing so, sprinkle magic into every message.

Beth Black is a freelance writer and editor who lives in Orange County, California. Learn more about her at PracticalPoet.com.

Read the original 1957 article in the *Toastmaster* magazine at bit.ly/TI_1957

New Habits, New Life

Looking to make some changes? Start small. Start now. Repeat.

BY PEGGY BEACH, DTM

Starting a new habit or kicking an old one is deceptively difficult. We may have every intention of flossing our teeth before bed or going for a run twice a week, but we often lose momentum after a few days and revert to our old routines.

Many people join Toastmasters enthusiastically resolving to practice their speeches for 15 minutes a day—only to find themselves cramming the morning of the speech. Yet habits have the power to change our lives. Small tasks add up to big accomplishments. As the writer Annie Dillard put it, “How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.”

Scientists have studied habits for years, trying to uncover the secret to making or breaking them. Dr. Wendy Wood, provost professor of psychology and business at University of Southern California and the author of *Good Habits, Bad Habits*, says most

people feel they need to be either highly motivated or exert a lot of willpower to form a new habit.

However, motivation and willpower can only get us so far. “People are pretty good at starting habits and have the best intentions,” she says. “Many of us join gyms intending to work out more, put ourselves on financial budgets intending to spend less, or vow to leave our cell phones away from the dinner table to spend more time with our families.”

It’s the ability to *follow through* and *persist* in new habits that are most important in starting or changing a habit. “Habits don’t work just by people making a conscious decision to change,” Wood says. “They form only slowly as we learn by doing.”

If you’re hoping to make some changes, we’ve rounded up the following tips, which have consistently been shown to be effective in helping people develop a new habit.

Get Enough Sleep

Don’t underestimate the importance of sleep when looking to improve any aspect of your life. It’s hard to have the willpower to tackle anything when you’re too tired.





Gretchen Rubin, author of *Better Than Before: What I Learned About Making and Breaking Habits*, found that a lack of sleep leads to a host of challenges, including mood, memory, pain sensitivity, and immune function. A lack of sleep can also cause weight gain and procrastination. In fact, many people cite the simple reason of being too tired as a reason for delaying a project.

Start Small and Start Now

As the saying goes, Rome was not built in a day. (In fact, experts speculate it took about 1,000 years.) Trying to rush through something is one of the quickest ways to get discouraged and quit. It's also tempting to tie in the beginning (or end) of a new habit to a calendar date or seasonal event. In reality, that has no effect on the success of a project. Don't wait for the new year or a birthday or a new season. Just take the first step.

Having a plan is key to a new successful habit.

Rather than being overwhelmed by the anticipated goal, focus on short-term goals. Professors often use this same tactic by encouraging their graduate students to write a small amount on their thesis every day to keep the project from becoming overwhelming. Similarly, if you want to run

a marathon, start by running a 5K. If you want to earn your DTM, try putting a Toastmasters project on your daily to-do list, challenging yourself to give one speech a month, or scheduling time to seek advice from fellow Toastmasters to make it a more manageable project.

This advice works even when the habit is something difficult to measure in a conventional way. Angel Guerrero, DTM, wanted to become a more active listener. "I work with a lot of senior citizens," says the longtime member of Carolina Christian Toastmasters in Greensboro, North Carolina. "They come from a generation of being polite and respecting one another. I would speak so much, and they just sat there smiling."

Don't underestimate the importance of convenience when trying to form a new habit.

Guerrero started out by "mirroring" the person. "[I started to notice] if they were sad, mad, happy, etc. I would empathize with them by moving closer or sitting back to show that my actions were part of the conversation," he says. He then learned to ask open-ended questions so the person would offer more details, which provided him with a better understanding of what the person meant. He also started to repeat what they said to make sure he got the point, punchline, details, etc. By doing all of this, he says he finally learned what he had been missing out on in their conversation.

Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

Habits expert Rubin found that about 40% of our behaviors are repeated daily (i.e., habitually): Many of us wake up at the same time, have the same morning and bedtime routine, and check email at the same time. We become comfortable, which makes it harder to change.

"We form habits by acting," says university professor and author Dr. Wood. "Our brains start to form habits when we repeat the same actions over and over. Once we have repeated it enough, it becomes our automatic, go-to response." For instance, Wood's neighbor was a professional cyclist who would go riding with her. The two would start out at a slow pace, but then the professional cyclist would speed up. "When I asked her why, she said that she couldn't help it. On a cycle, speed was what she had practiced, and it was hard for her to stay at my pace. We just repeat what we have practiced in the past."

If you want to add a habit into your life, such as journaling, exercising, or practicing speeches, you may need to adjust a routine to find the time for the new one. Studies indicate that it



takes about two to four months of doing something consistently to form or break a habit.

Change the Circumstance or Location

Don't underestimate the importance of convenience when trying to form a new habit. Wood cites a survey that found people who joined a gym close to their house were five times more likely to go than people who had to travel longer distances (more than 5 miles/8 kilometers). "When it's easy, we do it more often."

"Habits don't work just by people making a conscious decision to change. They form only slowly as we learn by doing."

—DR. WENDY WOOD

Simply moving or avoiding the physical location of something can have a powerful impact on our behavior. If you need to remember to take a pill each day, place it by your toothbrush, for example. If you want to stop eating fast food, change travel routes to avoid passing your favorite restaurants. Paying attention to the environment around you and changing what you can is one of the best ways to sustain a new behavior over time.

Life changes make for the perfect opportunity to add a new habit. "When we move, start a new job, or have a change in family circumstances (new child, new relationship), we have a sort of window of opportunity to make new decisions and practice new habits," says Wood. "We no longer perceive old cues to repeat old actions."

Set a Schedule, Find a Partner

A few years ago, Karin Wiberg, a member of Cardinal Toastmasters, in Raleigh, North Carolina, shifted her business focus to

helping people write books. "I wanted to blog regularly. Developing an editorial plan was helpful in building a blogging habit, but even more helpful was hiring an editor to proof my posts before they went out," she says. "I knew I had someone waiting on me, and I also knew I had a backstop to catch any egregious errors. This reduced my need to get it perfect."

Having a plan is key to a new successful habit. "Habits grow strongest and fastest when they're repeated in predictable ways, and for most of us, putting an activity on a schedule tends to lock us into doing it," says author Rubin.

Having an accountability partner is also important for many people. Wiberg not only has an editor to help her in business, she also schedules time with her husband to work out together five to six times a week. "I've realized I am most successful creating new habits when I create some sort of external structure and accountability," she admits.

Continuing their good habits has been beneficial to Guerrero and Wiberg in their Toastmasters careers.

In addition to committing to a blogging habit, Wiberg rejoined Toastmasters. "Almost right away I volunteered to be an officer because I knew that committing to a leadership role would make me show up every week. Consistency in showing up has helped raise my comfort level in speaking," she says.

Guerrero says that cultivating the habit of active listening has helped him be more authentic and empathic. "Instead of talking so much myself, I let other people talk more," he says. "My presentations are more interactive, and it's fun to let the audience get involved instead of just listening to me." **T**

Peggy Beach, DTM, is a freelance writer and editor in Raleigh, North Carolina. She is a past District 37 governor and is vice president education at both Hi-Rise Toastmasters in Raleigh, and Top Triangle Toastmasters in Morrisville, North Carolina. You can reach her at writereitorpeggybeach@gmail.com.

Meet the Six New Accredited Speakers

Professional speakers earn elevated credentials with this coveted designation.

BY LAURA MISHKIND

The Accredited Speaker Program showcases some of the most accomplished Toastmasters. It is designed for professional speakers and signifies the highest level of subject expertise and public speaking mastery recognized by Toastmasters International.

To be considered, candidates must demonstrate that they have given at least 25 speaking engagements to non-Toastmasters and submit a speech video to be reviewed by a panel of judges for Level 1. Successful speakers advance to Level 2—a live presentation at the Toastmasters International Convention.

Not all applicants earn the prestigious designation; in fact, only 87 candidates have received it since the program began in 1981. However, in 2019, in a unique turn of events, all six Level 2 applicants received the accreditation.

Paul Artale, DTM

As a motivational speaker, Paul Artale, Ph.D., helps people and organizations overcome challenges so they can break through barriers and perform at their peak. It's a practice that Artale, who was born with a physical challenge, has long followed.



Despite being born with short forearms and missing fingers on both hands, Artale achieved his dream of playing American football in college.

Originally from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Artale moved to America to earn a doctorate in higher education and joined Toastmasters. "I joined to refine material for my motivational speeches and simplify complicated research topics," he explains. "The more immersed I became in my Ph.D., the more I spoke." He realized he wanted to empower others through professional speaking, which set him on his path toward a new dream.

In 2009, Artale amassed all the speaking engagements required by the Accredited Speaker Program but didn't apply. In 2018, he passed Level 1 but deferred Level 2 as he was a semifinalist in the

International Speech Contest at the convention. Then in 2019, he moved forward and earned the designation. "If I look at the number of paid engagements and the increase in my business from 2018 to 2019, it is significant," he says. "I credit the Accredited Speaker Program for helping me find the discipline to launch myself forward."

Yelena Balabanova, DTM

Yelena Balabanova, Ph.D., began playing piano at age 4 in Kharkov, Ukraine, and discovered her passion for music at 12. She went on to become an award-winning Steinway Artist and an inspirational speaker



CALLING ALL FUTURE ACCREDITED SPEAKERS

Are you currently a paid, professional speaker? Toastmasters invites you to apply for the esteemed Accredited Speaker designation. If you want to build status and increase your visibility as a speaker, this designation can help you with that goal.

To apply, submit your application to World Headquarters between January 1 and February 1. More information is available on the Toastmasters website at www.toastmasters.org/AccreditedSpeakers.



Paul Artale



Yelena Balabanova



Michael Bayer



Sima Dahl



Thomas Iland



Greg Van Borssum

and earned a doctorate of musical arts degree. Balabanova has performed recitals and presented workshops on peak performance, artistry, and creativity internationally. She also founded the International Conservatory Studio in 2001, now located in Seattle, Washington, where pianists of all ages and experience levels receive personalized instruction and coaching.

Balabanova knows overnight success is unlikely. When she first heard about the Accredited Speaker Program, she never imagined she could accomplish the feat. “My biggest challenge is that English

is my second language,” she explains. “I had to work extra hard to turn my accent from an obstacle to an asset.” Balabanova became receptive to the critiques from her mentors and followed much of the advice she received—two of the most important things she feels other speakers should do.

She hopes to share messages of unlocking creative potential in teams and individuals, training for peak performance, effective techniques for overcoming the fear of failure, and practice skills for improvement in any activity.

“Those skills lead to lifetime success for every person.”

Michael Bayer

Shortly after becoming a finalist in the 1998 World Championship of Public Speaking, Michael Bayer of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, was downsized from his job and began considering new career opportunities. “After my experience as a finalist,



I wondered if I was good enough to do [public speaking] for a living,” he says. “With the support of my wife and family, I started my professional speaking career.”

Drawing on his 31 years of experience in change-management leadership, his three college degrees, and LEAN Black Belt certification, Bayer turned his expertise into a successful business speaking career. Ultimately, he became a LEAN management consultant, focusing on health care. “LEAN focuses on eliminating waste from processes,” Bayer explains. “It creates a culture of continuous improvement that results in improved customer satisfactions and improved profitability.”

The best piece of advice he has for anyone interested in pursuing the designation? Read the rules, follow them to a letter, and find an Accredited Speaker Program mentor to review everything you submit.

Sima Dahl, DTM

Chicago, Illinois native Sima Dahl is an international keynote speaker and consultant who teaches people how to increase what she calls Sway Factor™—the degree to which a person’s abilities are in demand, a



concept she developed during her years as an award-winning marketer. She speaks to audiences on leadership skills, personal branding, and social selling.

“To forge a strong personal brand, decide how you want to be known,” she says. “Otherwise, people will decide for you. If you want to be known as a speaker—full-time, part-time, or just for fun—it’s your job to let people know.” Now that Dahl has earned the Accredited Speaker designation, she is working on her first Sway Factor book and digital courses. Ultimately, Dahl wants to teach as many people as she can how to stand out, stay relevant, and generate demand for who they are and what they do.

Thomas Iland, DTM

When Thomas Iland of Valencia, California, was diagnosed with autism

MEET ALL THE ACCREDITED SPEAKERS

To learn more about the newest Accredited Speakers and see who else has the designation, visit www.toastmasters.org/AccreditedSpeakers. These speakers are often able to tailor their sessions for your needs, making them perfect to invite to your district conference or other events.

at age 13, it dramatically changed the way he saw himself and his life. He better understood his actions and began to speak up for himself and set personal goals.



He studied accounting in college and earned his certified public accountant license. But after seven years of corporate accounting, he grew unhappy. Knowing he wanted to make an impact in the world and share his story of growing up with autism, he resigned to pursue a public speaking career.

Since then, Iland has spoken on the TEDx stage and at the United Nations on World Autism Day. He is an author and emerging leader in the autism community. He first applied for the Accredited Speaker designation in 2018 and didn’t pass, but he used the judges’ feedback to improve. In 2019, he resubmitted his application and achieved the accreditation. “I’m big on breaking barriers, disproving stereotypes, and realizing my full and true potential,” Iland explains. “I wanted to show that someone with a social-communication disorder could master the art of public speaking, which is essentially socializing and communicating!”

Iland’s new goal is to put a dent in the high unemployment rate of people with autism. He plans to consult for corporate clients to discuss the benefits and manage the perceived risks of hiring more people with autism and other disabilities.

Greg Van Borssum

By 2014, Greg Van Borssum of Killcare Beach, New South Wales, Australia, knew

12 people who died by suicide and was struggling with his own depression. He had been working as the principal fight choreographer and weapons advisor on the movie *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Film production stopped, and Van Borssum took a construction job to continue to bring in an income.



After a coworker took his own life at the construction site, Van Borssum knew he needed to speak out to help others battling the struggles he was also facing. He decided to make a difference and joined Toastmasters to become a speaker and hopefully save and change lives. Van Borssum became an ambassador for Lifeline and Suicide Prevention Australia and spoke at national conventions, charities, and community events.

Eventually, *Mad Max* was back on track, but when filming ended, Van Borssum left his Hollywood career to speak internationally about suicide prevention, mental health, and leadership. He wrote two books and started a company called GVB Mind Warriors, which focuses on inspiring others and sharing steps to help people better their lives.

He knew the Accredited Speaker designation would elevate his existing credibility and capabilities. “I wanted to be taken seriously and this seemed a true pathway to become recognized in professional circles as someone who has worked hard to master the craft,” he says, adding, “Any life saved is another family who can continue to smile.”

Laura Mishkind is editorial coordinator for the *Toastmaster magazine*.



Now's the Time to Set Some Goals

Don't just make resolutions this year, develop a plan.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

The new year has its many traditions, doesn't it? And among them is the task of reviewing and setting goals. I have found that setting goals is easy. In fact, I am a master at it. Achieving them is a completely different matter.

When I don't achieve a goal, I try to stop and ask myself: Why didn't I? And what could I do differently the next time? I have realized that I, personally, need a short-term, hard deadline—something that can't be changed. Here is an example of a hard deadline: If my club is aiming for President's Distinguished status, the deadline is June 30. July 1 is too late.

Many times, the reason I fail is that I am simply not dedicated to achieving that goal. For example, I enjoy speaking and speech writing. Cleaning out my closet? Not so much. Faced with the choice of practicing a speech or going through boxes, which do you think I will choose? I need to find a way to motivate myself to pull out those bins.

Each of us is wired in our own way. The key is knowing what motivates us and then developing goals that take advantage of those motivations—including goals for Toastmasters.

I mentioned a Toastmasters-related deadline earlier. As we're halfway through the Toastmasters year, now is a great time to review and set your Toastmasters goals for the next six months. What are you going to achieve by June 30?

Let's look at some of the goals you could consider.

As a club, you should assess where you are with respect to the Distinguished Club Program (DCP) levels. What can

you realistically achieve? And then look at what, with some stretching, you can achieve beyond that. Maybe you need to push yourself to achieve a higher goal. You still have time to comfortably go beyond your current trajectory. (To learn more about the DCP, go to www.toastmasters.org/Distinguished-Club.)

Now let's look at some possible personal Toastmasters goals.

Educational goals. How are you progressing in the Pathways learning experience? Which level (out of five) in your current Pathways path will you achieve? Will you complete a path? Will you then start a new one? If so, which level will you achieve in it? Remember: Beginning July 1, the Pathways and traditional education programs will no longer exist concurrently; Pathways will be the only program available to members. (To learn more about Pathways, visit www.toastmasters.org/Pathways.)

Leadership goals. Will you serve as a club officer? Will you apply to be an area director for the next term? Will you complete a High Performance Leadership project? Will you sponsor a new club? These are just some of the leadership opportunities available within the Toastmasters program.

Contest goals. Has your club held its International Speech Contest? Are you planning to compete this year? If so, now is a great time to start working on your speech. (See www.toastmasters.org/Speech-Contests for more information.)

You probably have skill-level goals too. Perhaps you want to become better in

speech writing or vocal variety. Or you might want to become the best presenter in your department at work. As for me, I have a goal to develop training products for my client base. Toastmasters gives me an opportunity to test out segments to see if they are effective. What skills and products do you want to develop?

When setting your goals, keep in mind that you have until June 30 to earn the Distinguished Toastmaster award in the traditional education program. Beginning July 1, you won't have that option: The DTM will only be offered in Pathways. (Visit www.toastmasters.org/Distinguished-Toastmaster to learn about DTM requirements in the traditional program and in Pathways.)

One of my club members is at the Advanced Communicator Bronze/Advanced Leadership Bronze award levels and is working diligently to make DTM. Does she have a long way to go? Yes. But is it doable with a stretch? Absolutely. It may be for you, as well. Go for it.

Yes, January is a great time to review your goals, especially those related to Toastmasters. And June 30 is the perfect target date. Goal-setting is good, but only as a starting point for goal achievement. Toastmasters has provided the deadline. You provide the motivation.

What will you achieve in the next six months? **T**

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach from Las Vegas and a member of *Ahead of the Curve Toastmasters*. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.

Tomorrow, tomorrow ...

It's the bane of our existence—and the one thing that keeps us from going absolutely, completely nuts.

BY JOHN CADLEY



Well, well—January again. I've written many times about this auspicious month, the time of "new beginnings" and "fresh starts." If you follow this column you know I'm a bit jaded about all that—how I, in fact, view New Year's resolutions as a sign of pathology bordering on the delusional. This is obvious from the first day of the new year, when all the people who have resolved to lose weight and get in shape lie motionless on giant couches, watch sports, and stuff themselves with snacks. They've gained five pounds before they even get into their new fashion-forward workout wear—if it still fits.

I've pondered this disconnect between intentions and actions for years, and I have come to the conclusion that it is not our fault. The problem lies in a single word that describes one of the most dangerous concepts in human behavior—"tomorrow." We over-eat on January 1 because we believe we can start losing weight ... tomorrow. And when tomorrow comes, we go to the gym and work out, and we wake up the next day and can barely get out of bed because of the aching muscles we haven't used in 14 years. So, we decide to rest for a day and start again ... tomorrow. And we do, until something comes up and we can't make it to the gym that day, but we definitely will ... tomorrow. And so it goes, until "tomorrow" becomes the death knell for all our brave and noble intentions.

The irony, as we all know, is that there is no "tomorrow." It's just a mental dumping ground for the things we don't want to do today. You can't do anything

tomorrow. You can only wait until tomorrow becomes today and then you're right back where you started from. I can understand the temptation to avoid life's daily unpleasanties. But it can so easily backfire. Just consider the gentleman who put off making out his will until tomorrow and got run over by a bus today. Not only did he die tragically, he also left behind a string of relatives who will curse his name in perpetuity for denying them the cash they thought they had coming.

You can't do anything tomorrow. You can only wait until tomorrow becomes today and then you're right back where you started.

So, what if we had no concept of "tomorrow"? How would your life be different if today was the only time you had? Well, for one thing you'd be sleepy. You would have to get out of bed earlier, with just enough time for one cup of coffee instead of two. Then you'd grab your to-do list, race to the car, and drive a little too fast (and sleep-deprived) to get to your job on time so you can get everything done *today*.

While you're working, you'll be thinking about how much you can get done on your lunch hour, which means you'll be distracted and probably make a mistake, so instead of billing your best client \$20,000, you send him an invoice for \$200,000 and get a chewing out from

your boss that leaves single marks on your eyebrows.

The work day ends, and you see there are still seven things to do with only six more hours until midnight—the end of *today*. No time to waste. You hit the grocery store, the cleaners, and the gas station, then head to the mall for the cashmere sweaters, which are 50% off *today only!* It's 8:45 p.m. and you have one last thing to do—get to the pharmacy, which closes at 9 p.m. You hit the highway and get stopped for speeding. By the time the officer fills out the ticket, the pharmacy is closed, which wouldn't be so bad except you needed to get a lotion to relieve the terrible itching from some mysterious rash you've developed.

It's now 9:20 p.m. and you head for home, tired, stressed, sleep-deprived, and looking forward to another night scratching yourself like a dog with fleas. You reach for your comfort food—Rocky Road ice cream—and realize it's your third carton this week. And then you think ... *Wouldn't it be great if I didn't have to do everything today, if there was some way to postpone a few things? Yeah, if only ...*

All of which leads to the unavoidable conclusion that if tomorrow didn't exist we would have to invent it—which we did. Otherwise, we'd all be sleep-deprived ice cream addicts looking desperately for a back scratcher. **T**

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

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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

You might know Bo as the creator of FreeToastHost, the host of the Toastmasters Podcast, or the Founder of eBookIt.com. Or perhaps you never heard of the guy. Either way, you will enjoy his latest book, *Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring*.

What is a "normal childhood?" Does it include almost being murdered by your sister with an ax? Speeding around town in the back of a station wagon because your mom is chasing an "alien spaceship"? Being busted by the police for intent to light a pond on fire? Tackling your mom to the ground and wrestling a knife out of her hand because she was trying to kill your dad? While my stories may be unique, readers will be able to relate to the broader themes that are part of a normal childhood such as sibling rivalry, eccentric parents, doing stupid things, and frequently preventing one's parents from literally murdering each other.

Although some of the subject matter is not something one would generally laugh at, you have my permission to laugh. Social rules don't apply here; my rules do. It works for me, and who knows, after reading the stories from my past, you might be inspired to see your own screwed up past in a more humorous light.

Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring by Bo Bennett is available in ebook, paperback, and audio, at 

We are happy to speak with you about your publishing needs.
Call us at 978-440-8364 or visit us at <http://www.eBookIt.com>.

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