

# TOASTMASTER®

October 2010

## Standing on Top of the World

Canadian Toastmaster  
climbs Mount Everest

## Speaking About Sports

## Leadership Lessons from Coaches







## Keeping Your Promise

✦ I recited the Toastmasters Promise when I was inducted into the membership of the Swan Valley Toastmasters Club more than 27 years ago. And then I filed it away.

On my visit to the District 81 spring conference in St. Lucia, in the Caribbean, I was amazed and inspired when the general membership stood *en masse* and recited this promise at the Opening Ceremony. I also felt self-conscious that I was unable to recite the promise along with them. Right then, I committed to revisiting – and memorizing – the promise when I arrived home.

A few days later, with the Toastmasters Promise in front of me, I thought, “How can I best fulfill my Toastmasters promise?” And then it came to me: I could bring the Promise to the forefront of our great organization in this column space! (You can read it on the opposite page, in a box on the Table of Contents page. It will remain there this year, so you can be reminded of it in every issue of the magazine.)

As I reread and ponder each line of this promise, I realize that this pledge we take as we join our clubs leads us to become engaged students of the Toastmasters communication and leadership programs. We promise to do our homework. We promise to encourage our fellow learners. We promise to play fair and to rise to the challenge when someone sees something great in us. We promise to engage in our experiential learning program. We promise to include others in our learning and hold them to a level that they are worthy of achieving. And I especially love the part of the promise where we commit to having fun while learning at each meeting!

Toastmasters International is fortunate enough to have people knock on our doors searching for leadership, listening, thinking and speaking skills. Millions of people worldwide have found what they came looking for. I hope that is true for you as well. I believe we are able to meet these diverse needs because each of us fulfills our promise to ourselves and one another.

My fervent hope is that each one of us identifies our fear and moves boldly into it. This is the very spot where true learning takes place. Make a commitment to your personal greatness by looking for new lessons to learn and supporting the learning of others.

Greatness is keeping our promise to ourselves and to each other. I am confident that as we fulfill our promise, we will catch glimpses of the greatness in ourselves and others. That is the reward in our programs. Be bold and grow this year. Keep your Toastmasters Promise!

Pat Johnson, DTM  
International President

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By Craig Harrison, DTM

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#### A Toastmaster's Promise

As a member of Toastmasters International and my club, I promise...

- To attend club meetings regularly;
- To prepare all of my speech and leadership projects to the best of my ability, basing them on projects in the *Competent Communication* manual, *Advanced Communication* manuals or *Competent Leadership* manual;
- To prepare for and fulfill meeting assignments;
- To provide fellow members with helpful, constructive evaluations;
- To help the club maintain the positive, friendly environment necessary for all members to learn and grow;
- To serve my club as an officer when called upon to do so;
- To treat my fellow club members and our guests with respect and courtesy;
- To bring guest to club meetings so they can see the benefits Toastmasters membership offers;
- To adhere to the guidelines and rules for all Toastmasters educational and recognition programs;
- To maintain honest and highly ethical standards during the conduct of all Toastmasters activities.



# The Traveling *Toastmaster*

Picture yourself here! Bring the *Toastmaster* magazine with you as you travel and pose with it in your exciting surroundings. E-mail the high-resolution image to [photos@toastmasters.org](mailto:photos@toastmasters.org). Bon Voyage!



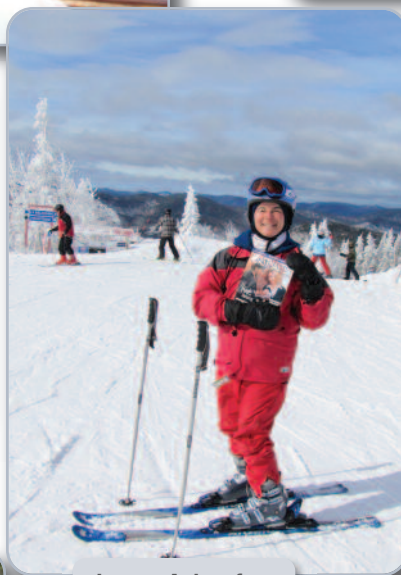
Xiuli Wang, a member of Memorial City and Katy clubs in Katy, Texas, visits Santorini Island, Greece.



Terry D.Kozlyk of Silver Springs club in Calgary, Canada, visits McDowell Mountain Regional Park in Arizona.



Akiko Ando and Sachi Nagano, of Kochi Toastmasters club in Japan, stand in front of Ikuta-Jinja shrine in Kobe, Japan.



Joanne Anka of Carlingwood Toastmasters in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, at the top of Mont-Saint-Anne in Quebec, Canada.



Sharon Hoffman of Southside Toastmasters in Jacksonville, Florida, patiently waits to see whales off the coast of the Commonwealth of Dominica, an island nation in the Caribbean Sea.



Kong Ngee of Sibu Toastmasters club discovers a waterfall in Kapit, Malaysia, while hiking with fellow Toastmasters.



Anthony and Loretta Marcus of St. George Toastmasters in Sydney, Australia, visit the Taj Hotel in Mumbai, India.



## Two South African Toastmasters volunteer at historic soccer event.

# Teamwork at World Cup

✦ The eyes of the world were upon South Africa this summer for the 2010 FIFA World Cup. This historic event was the first Cup on the African continent.

In nine different cities around the country, more than 3 million people gathered to celebrate and cheer on their teams. Two South African Toastmasters, Alistair Lawton and Romano Verspaille, share their World Cup experiences and how their Toastmasters skills served them well:

### Alistair Lawton

A member of Good Hope Toastmasters in Cape Town, Lawton served as a volunteer during the Cup. He said his Toastmasters training helped him perform well in a 30-minute panel interview that he had to pass to be selected as a volunteer. To put this into context, 75,500 people applied to be volunteers, and only 17,500 were chosen.

"Toastmasters has given me the confidence and ability to talk to complete strangers with the greatest of ease," says Lawton, who is proudly South African and wanted to do his part to make this event a success. "I knew I had to communicate my passion in order to be chosen."

One of his volunteer roles was particularly meaningful to him: Lawton helped out at the Disabled Parking area at the Cape Town Stadium. As the survivor of a serious car accident 12 years ago, he feels strongly about assisting those who are "less-abled."

Lawton works in his family's business, Quadrata Cape, which

supplies tiles to architects and property developers. He says he enjoyed befriending strangers at the World Cup, joking with them and making them feel special. "A stranger is a friend you haven't yet met," says Lawton, who met people from many different countries during the tournament.

Leadership skills developed in Toastmasters also came in handy. Lawton headed up a team of volunteers – and had to do so efficiently: Time was of the essence with such an elaborately orchestrated international event. He had to tactfully assert his authority with spectators, motorists and even the drivers for high-ranking government officials – who sometimes chose to park illegally!

### Romano Verspaille

Verspaille says he also drew strongly on his leadership skills. A member of Midrand Toastmasters club in Gauteng, he is a freelance tour operator for Tourvest Inbound Operations. During the Cup, he was part of a team assisting guests of eight different World Cup sponsors – 60,000 people in all.

Verspaille says he couldn't have become a tour guide in the first place if not for Toastmasters. When he joined the Midrand club, he was eager to develop new communication skills – but found himself terrified to give his Ice Breaker.

"How could I possibly talk to a busload of tourists, microphone in hand, with a trembling voice and shaking legs?" he recalls thinking.

It took a long time, but with the encouragement of his club members




Alistair Lawton

Verspaille managed to overcome his fear. "I now know how to talk to people as if they were my friends," he says.

Table Topics training, in particular, proved invaluable, since critical-thinking and time-management skills are so important for a tour guide – especially when schedules and itineraries are swapped at the last moment. One day, he took 20 people on a shopping trip and came back with 26.

To Verspaille, being part of a World Cup group was similar to being part of a Toastmasters team.

"It's all about teamwork and helping one another to grow," he says. "Believe me, in the end it pays off." 

**Aletta Rochat, ACB, ALB**, is a member of Cape Town Toastmasters in Cape Town, South Africa, and the Public Relations Officer for District 74. Reach her at [pr@toastmasters74.org](mailto:pr@toastmasters74.org).

**Karate champion Clint Cora  
inspires others with his positive  
actions and personal strength.**

# Motivated by Martial Arts

**O**n a trip to the movie theater when he was 11 years old, Clint Cora saw a film that would change his life. “I was awe-struck by a Chinese-language version of a film starring Bruce Lee,” says the Toastmaster, who is a motivational speaker, author and Karate World Champion. “I had no idea that Asians could be that powerful.”

Prior to his introduction to martial arts, Cora led a timid life cowering on the playground. “I wasn’t an athletic kid,” he says. “I was small, Asian and geeky. Once when we were playing football in gym class, someone passed me the ball and I ran in the wrong direction. Unfortunately, my lack of physical skills and ethnic background made me a target for bullies.”

Inspired by Bruce Lee kicking it up on the big screen, Cora jumped onto the mat himself and started martial arts training. The lessons quickly taught him confidence, discipline and perseverance, and the bullying stopped.

“My classmates found out I was taking karate, and they asked me to show them some moves. They left me alone after I floored them with some fancy kicks that none of them could replicate,” recalls Cora, a black belt and former member of the Canadian national karate team. He won his first karate world championship in 1999, when he was 38, and has since won 15 more world titles.

In 2006, after 20 years in the pharmaceutical business, Cora decided to become a professional

speaker. He joined Toastmasters and soon found that his martial arts training helped considerably. “I wasn’t shy or afraid to get in front of people, because I’d been in competitions for years, screaming my face off, and as a result I had developed vocal variety,” he says. “What Toastmasters did for me, however, was refine my speaking skills, and I’ve also benefited greatly from the invaluable networking opportunities.”

## Full Speed Ahead

As soon as he joined Toastmasters, Cora moved quickly, giving 60 speeches during his first year and achieving his DTM in 22 months. His home club is Comfortably Speaking in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, but he travels often and has given 75 speeches at clubs throughout Canada and other countries.

David Denov is a third-degree black belt who won a National Black-belt League (NBL) world championship in 2006. He has known Cora for more than 20 years and wasn’t surprised by his colleague’s commitment to Toastmasters. “Clint is an exceptional martial artist with a remarkable work ethic,” says Denov. “Because he understands that you get out of something what you put in, he was bound to be successful with speaking.”

Cora is author of the book *The Life Champion in You: How You Can Overcome Challenges and Achieve Enormous Personal Success*, and as a professional speaker his topics focus on motivation and

diversity. When he covers the subject of motivation and reaching goals, he shares his personal struggles and triumphs stemming from an especially difficult time in his life. “When I was 23, my mother took her own life by ingesting three vials of sleeping pills,” he says. “Suicide was virtually unheard of in the Asian community and brought with it a lot of shame.” Rather than consider himself a victim, Cora resisted depression and “made a commitment to be successful and make good decisions for myself.”

When people hear Cora’s story, they are often surprised at his optimistic outlook. “Many people thought I would end up on a dark road to chronic, clinical depression, but that didn’t occur,” he says. “I believe my positive outlook and the actions I took after my mother’s death helped prevent me from going down that dark road, and I share those life skills in my speeches.”

Andrew Mallouk of the Orangeville Toastmasters club in Ontario, Canada, says, “Clint recovered from a seemingly hopeless situation as a suicide survivor and became a world karate champion and gifted speaker who is doing a great service by sharing his message of experience, strength and hope.”

Toastmasters has played a key role in Cora’s personal growth and success, says Joe Vanderkooi, DTM, a member of the Mississauga Valley Toastmasters in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

“Until Clint spent a few years in Toastmasters, he had never shared





with anyone other than close friends the painful stories that shaped his childhood,” says Vanderkooi. “It wasn’t until the Toastmasters experience gave him increased self-confidence that Clint was able to put together a keynote speech based on these experiences.”

### Living a Positive Life

Cora’s motivation presentations always stress two main points: the importance of making a committed decision to live a positive life, and the value of expanding your comfort zones.

“When someone commits suicide it affects everyone in the family, and one of the unfortunate things that happens is that people feel that the incident means they’re jinxed, but that isn’t true,” says Cora. “Your past does not equal your future. If

you make a committed decision to live a positive life, rather than just wishing you could, you *will* live a fulfilling life. We all have the potential within ourselves; it’s just a matter of bringing it out.”

To grow as a person and achieve your dreams you also need to get out of your comfort zone – a point that Cora demonstrates by using martial arts moves and props, such as his *bo* staff, during his speeches. Today he wields the wooden pole with speed and precision, but once had difficulty handling it.


“Half of my competition in martial arts has been in weaponry, and I use my karate *bo* staff to talk about the fact that if anyone wants to grow on a personal or professional level, they have to get off that proverbial comfortable living room sofa and get uncomfortable to learn new skills,”

says Cora, who also produces a motivational Web TV program. “When I first started working with the *bo* staff, I was really clumsy, and I would smash myself in the face and limbs. The more I worked with it, the more comfortable I became until I finally mastered it. This is how it works when you are trying to achieve any goal.”

Heather Smedley is a member of the Grand River Toastmasters and TopDrawer Toastmasters in Cambridge, Ontario. She has heard Cora speak several times, including in June 2009, when he delivered a presentation to the Brant Toastmasters club in Brantford, Ontario. “Clint’s Champion keynote presentation demonstrating his positive outlook, enthusiasm and energy is extremely inspiring,” she says. “He effectively uses the [*bo* staff] prop for several purposes: to establish curiosity (what is he going to use that for?), credibility (world champion, huh?), and to break the ice (anybody want to give it a try?).”

Vanderkooi, the Mississauga Valley member, agrees that the *bo* staff is a powerful part of the presentation. “Every speech needs a strong visual image to stick in people’s minds,” he says. “When you remember that strong image of Clint with his staff, you remember Clint and his message.”

Cora, who experienced racism as a child, also speaks about handling diversity. “The most successful people are those who have good people skills and are well-versed working with individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds,” he says

For more information about Clint Cora, visit [www.clintcora.com](http://www.clintcora.com). 

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Jacques Curtis



Mike Meier



Jim Mecir

**Communication and leadership skills help athletes reach their next goals.**

# Speaking About Sports

By Paul Sterman

**W**hen it comes to sports, Toastmasters International could field an all-star team. A number of current Toastmasters have prominent backgrounds in athletics – members from all over the world, in sports that range from major league baseball and professional rugby to extreme running and international table tennis.

Athletes have drawn on Toastmasters training to help them transition into post-sports careers. For some, that has meant pursuing opportunities as professional speakers; others have used their leadership and communication skills for coaching, training, refereeing or other endeavors.

When athletes retire, they often face a scary period of change. Most have been competing in a sport they excelled at since they were very young – and now that comfort zone is gone.

“Life after sports is always a huge concern for athletes, even the ones who are financially secure,” says Adam Palfrey, a Toastmaster in Australia and a former professional rugby player.

Palfrey, who ran a sports management company in England for seven years, notes that many former athletes hope to hit the speaking circuit or work as a sports broadcaster. They would be wise to take the art of communication seriously, he adds, because developing such skills could mean the difference



between success and failure. An athlete can't coast on his reputation alone.

"Sports fans are fickle, so a great athletic career can be forgotten very quickly if you are unable to produce an enjoyable and professional after-dinner speech that people pay a lot of money to hear," says Palfrey, a member of the Riverside Toastmasters club in Bulimba, Queensland, Australia.

The same is true for athletes-turned-broadcasters. "The athlete is given only a few chances, and the way he or she performs will determine whether an offer of long-term work is presented," Palfrey says. "The general public wants to watch their sports heroes, but they also want to hear them impart knowledge and stories."

### Motivating Others

Byron Embry joined Toastmasters at the tail end of his professional baseball career. He flourished as a member of the Pikes Peak club in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and the experienced inspired him to become a motivational speaker. (See page 12 for a profile of Embry.) And for former NBA basketball player Mark Eaton, Toastmasters served as a launching pad for a career in professional speaking. The



Norman Bücher

former All-Star center became a successful entrepreneur after he retired in 1994; in 2005, he joined the Park City Toastmasters in Park City, Utah.

**"I don't run 100 Kilometers. I run one kilometer 100 times."**

**– Norman Bücher, extreme runner**

The club helped him develop the confidence and techniques to become a sought-after speaker. In fact, Eaton, who played 12 seasons for the Utah Jazz, presented an education session at the 2010 Toastmasters International Convention in Palm Desert, California.

Steve Fraser, a 1984 Olympic gold medalist in Greco-Roman wrestling, joined Toastmasters on the heels of his Olympics triumph, and he helped start a club at the Domino's Pizza corporation, where he worked in a series of leadership and management positions. "Toastmasters was great for me, because I was just coming off of winning the Olympic gold medal and was thrust into the speaking world," he says.

Fraser still draws on his communication and leadership skills, serving as the U.S. Olympic men's coach in Greco-Roman wrestling. It's a job he's held the past 15 years.

Here are the stories of other Toastmasters with a strong sports connection:

### Mike Meier, Table Tennis Umpire

How does Toastmasters relate to table tennis? Just ask Mike Meier, a veteran umpire in the sport. In Toastmasters, he notes, you learn to communicate with poise – to speak calmly, clearly and off the cuff – all of which are useful qualities in his role.

"At professional tournaments, I have to be able to handle angry coaches, disputing players and loud fans, while on the outside seeming cool, calm and collected," says Meier. "The minute a player or coach sees that I am nervous or lacking confidence, he could try to take advantage of me, which could unfortunately put *me* in the spotlight, instead of them."

He gives an example: One time after a match, the well-known coach of a particular player accused Meier of showing favoritism toward the player's opponent. "By showing the coach, through my body language as well as my words, that I



Adam Palfrey

strive to always treat players equally, the issue quickly dissolved,” he says.

As a graduate student from 2005–2007 at Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth, Texas, Meier played on the school’s table tennis team – a powerhouse in the collegiate world. The squad is the seven-time reigning champion of the National Collegiate Table Tennis Association. Meier also became an umpire, and after umpiring tournaments in the United States for five years, he recently qualified to officiate at tournaments around the world.

Meier revels in cross-cultural experiences. For the past several years he’s been a member of the Texas Wesleyan Spellbinders club; however, earlier this year, he began a teaching job in Korea and joined the Seoul Advanced Toastmasters club. (He also joined a table tennis club in Korea and plays several days a week.)

As he officiates in tournaments throughout the world, Meier says he continues to benefit immensely from his Toastmasters training. “It allows me to apply all I’ve learned [about umpiring] in a proper, professional manner,” he says.

### **Adam Palfrey, Former Professional Rugby Player**

As a young man, Adam Palfrey earned a rugby scholarship to Cambridge University in England, one of the most prestigious universities in the world. After graduating and working two years as a chartered surveyor (someone who deals with various property-related issues), he played professional rugby in England.

**“The general public wants to watch their sports heroes, but they also want to hear them impart knowledge and stories.”**

**– Adam Palfrey, Australian Toastmaster and former professional rugby player**

When he left the sport in 2000, Palfrey and a business partner formed a sports management company. Working with athletes on advancing their careers, he saw first-hand what enabled them to flourish – on the field and off.

“It’s not just the athletes with the ability who progress – it’s the athletes who can also communicate effectively with their teams, with their peers in the sport, with their coaching staff and management,” Palfrey notes. “Those are the ones who see their careers develop faster than others.”

Sponsors are key players in the big-money, high-stakes world of sports. When he worked in sports management, Palfrey recalls, large sponsoring organizations

requested athletes who not only had good reputations but who could “communicate effectively with the media and during sponsorship events.”

“The skills that Toastmasters provides would have been invaluable to me during my career,” he adds, “and I regret that no one was able to point me in the direction of my local club.”

It’s never too late to join, however, and last year Palfrey became a member of the Riverside Toastmasters in Bulimba. He says Toastmasters enabled him to learn the fundamentals of crafting and delivering a good speech. “It allowed me to then practice those skills in a safe environment, with a fantastic group of people, all willing to share and provide feedback.”

Even better, such growth is paying off professionally. Palfrey now runs a national training business in Australia called Yellow Rocket Performance, and much of the company’s emphasis is teaching communication skills to employees.

### **Norman Bücher, Extreme Runner**

What, you might ask, is an extreme runner? Here’s one definition: someone who runs 14 marathons in 14 days. Which is exactly what Norman Bücher did.

The German man completed the seemingly inhuman task this past May. Just to boggle the mind further, consider this: He did it in one of the world’s most difficult stretches of land – the parched Atacama Desert in Chile.

It’s one of Bücher’s many running feats in recent

years, including the completion a 100-mile run in India’s Himalayan peaks – an annual event so arduous that it typically only draws about 75 international runners.

A resident of Waldbronn, a town in the southwestern part of Germany (in the country’s

Black Forest), Bücher joined Toastmasters three years ago so he could speak to audiences about his extreme adventures. He felt so good about his experience with Karlsruher Redecub – a German-speaking club in Karlsruhe, Germany – that he quit his job as a consultant to become a professional speaker.

“Toastmasters took away my fear of speaking in front of people,” Bücher says. “I gained confidence – not only from giving speeches to the club, but also by filling in the club meeting roles.”

Bücher gives presentations about his endeavors, using video and photographs to highlight the stunning locales where he runs. He also delivers motivational speeches,



applying life lessons from his athletic achievements. Speaking to companies, college students and other groups, he talks about developing mental strength and pushing through personal barriers to overcome challenges.

If a goal seems too overwhelming, Bücher notes, just take it one step at a time – literally, in his case. “I don’t run 100 kilometers,” he says. “I run one kilometer 100 times.”

Julia von Oertzen, a fellow member of Karlsruher Redecub, says there’s a great benefit to having Bücher in the club: “We get to hear all his motivational speeches for free!”

### **Jim Mecir, Former Professional Baseball Player**

A daily ritual occurs after the approximately 160 major league baseball games that are played during a season: A circle of reporters gathers around the lockers of players, asking questions about the game. Handling this kind of communication – interviews with the media – was no problem for Jim Mecir, who played professional baseball for 11 seasons. The gatherings were small, the questions were brief, he usually knew the reporters and he knew baseball like the back of his hand.

“I could do that all day,” says Mecir, a successful relief pitcher for several teams, including the Oakland Athletics.

But once he retired from the sport, it was a whole different ballgame. The thought of giving a speech or a job presentation was daunting. Mecir joined Toastmasters to gain the communication skills to help him in his post-sports career. So far the effort is paying off.

“I’m definitely more comfortable,” says Mecir, a member of the Long Grove/Lake Zurich club in Lake Zurich, Illinois. “It’s getting a lot easier.”

When he retired from major league baseball in 2005, the ex-pitcher planned to work as a physical education teacher. However, the global financial crisis forced him to revisit that idea. To better support his wife and three kids, Mecir needed to pursue higher-paying work, possibly in business or sales, which he knew would require strong communication skills.

One of Mecir’s relatives was a Toastmaster who urged him to give the program a try. So he joined the Long Grove/Lake Zurich club. Mecir gave a recent speech called, “Where is the Parenting Handbook?” that dealt with the often-befuddling process of raising kids.

“I think my writing skills, as far as preparing a speech, are better,” he says, adding that he’s also become more comfortable speaking without notes.

### **Jacques Curtis and His Shaw University Basketball Team**

“There’s nothing worse than seeing an athlete being interviewed on TV and they can’t communicate,” says Jacques Curtis, the women’s basketball coach at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina.

In a nutshell, that’s why Curtis started a Toastmasters club for his team. His players speak at fundraisers, interact with school officials and members of the public, and

**“One of the key things I tell [my athletes] is if you want to interview for a job, you have to know how to have a conversation with the person interviewing you.”**

**– Jacques Curtis, college basketball coach**

are interviewed by local media (especially since the team is very good, having won several championships in recent years). Curtis wanted the athletes to feel confident in such settings.


“I wanted them to represent themselves well,” adds the coach, who has led the women’s basketball squad for 10 seasons.

Curtis started the team’s Legacy of Champions club four years ago. All of his Shaw players are required to attend the Sunday evening meetings. At first, many of the players were resistant to this idea; however, they soon embraced the Toastmasters program.

“The Toastmasters club has done a lot for them,” he says. “I’ve seen them really grow, in their confidence and in their interactions with people.

“They’re a lot more comfortable, a lot more engaging.”

His enthusiasm for Toastmasters comes from personal experience. Curtis joined the Cardinal Toastmasters in Raleigh in 2006, and found that the club significantly improved his own abilities as a communicator – a crucial quality for a coach.

Curtis stresses to his players that, by improving their speaking, leadership and impromptu thinking skills, Toastmasters will help them in real-world situations after they graduate. “One of the key things I tell them,” he says, “is that if you want to interview for a job, you have to know how to have a conversation with the person interviewing you.” 

**Paul Sterman** is an associate editor of the *Toastmaster* magazine and a member of Le Gourmet Toastmasters in Costa Mesa, California.

**Former professional baseball player  
and stutterer leads by example.**

# Pitching a Message of Hope

**B**yron Embry has a message: “Your handicap may just be your greatest asset.” He should know. Embry grew up poor and had a severe stuttering problem. As a result, he endured cruel taunts from others. His determination to overcome such drawbacks led him to tackle his speech problems head-on, become a professional baseball player and eventually flourish as a motivational speaker. Along the way, Toastmasters played a key role.

“At a time when I believed my limitations, this organization taught me to believe in my God-given abilities instead,” says Embry, a member of Pikes Peak Toastmasters in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and a professional baseball pitcher for 12 seasons. He was a finalist in the 2009 World Championship of Public Speaking.

As a black child of a single mother in Richmond, Kentucky, Embry grew up in poverty. “There were poor folks and then there was *po’ folk*. We were *po’*,” he says. “Poor is when you’ve got nothing; *po’* is when you’ve not only got nothing, but you owe everybody else money.”

This painful reality was coupled with the physical challenge that brought him much ridicule: His stuttering. Putting a sentence together and then uttering it aloud was not only excruciating but humiliating, as people quickly lost patience with his slow and often incomprehensible speech.

Embry saw his childhood dream of being a television weatherman swiftly shot down by a schoolmate who told him, “By the time you spit

out the words ‘A storm is coming,’ people’s house would have already been blown down!” To avoid further public embarrassment, the young man turned inward, keeping to a small group of friends. He couldn’t ask a girl to the high school prom without stuttering, so he didn’t go.

## Finding Solace in Sports

Consulting one professional after another, his mother despaired that nothing seemed to help. To protect her son from the rough and rugged, she encouraged art, literature and music. Instead, Byron gravitated toward sports. “Baseball was the one place I felt secure,” he says. He embraced the game and soon found he was quite good at pitching.

Embry perfected his fastball while attending Indian Hills Community College in Centerville, Iowa. He enrolled in Professor Enfus McMurray’s freshman speech course, but stopped attending after he failed his first two speeches.

“One day at baseball practice I looked up to see Professor McMurray walking toward me,” Embry recalls. “She’d come to tell me I was failing.” The professor listened intently as her student complained that speech class was pointless for someone with his impediment. Her reply stopped him in his tracks. “You don’t have a speech impediment; you have an excuse.” In that pivotal moment, she expressed belief in a young man who had a challenge that could be overcome with hard work. To his surprise, she told Byron he would have to attend Toastmasters to pass her class.

“Speaking for Table Topics was sheer torture...for everybody in the room,” says Embry, “but it gave me the confidence I needed to finish the course, and eventually I graduated.”

After commencement services, Professor McMurray approached Embry with a hug and encouragement. “You will be a star one day off the field,” she told him. The words were quickly forgotten, landing somewhere in the back of his mind. America’s favorite pastime had become his obsession.

In 1997, the Atlanta Braves recognized Embry’s pitching talent and signed him right out of college. His career with the Braves was interrupted by elbow surgery and he later wound up with the Kansas City Royals organization. There his fastball topped out at 100 mph – an elite speed for a pitcher – and he had the opportunity to go toe to toe with Roger Clemens, his childhood baseball hero.

Ten years into his pitching career, Embry faced a third elbow surgery and began to wonder what life after baseball would look like. By this time he had married, and he and his wife, Kelly, had two young daughters to support. One afternoon, while working out at the gym, he saw a poster promoting Toastmasters. Despite the painful memories of Table Topics, he decided to give it a try. “I gave my Ice Breaker on January 16, 2008,” he says. As he spoke to the club about his life experiences – the poverty, the stuttering, the professional baseball career – several of





the audience members sat with their mouths wide open the entire six minutes, Embry recalls.

### Throwing a Career Curveball

Several months later, he joined the Pikes Peak club. He was assigned a mentor, and as he gained experience, speaking became second nature. Byron began to seriously contemplate leaving baseball to become a motivational speaker, despite objections from friends and family members. Even so, Embry stepped off the baseball field and into the world of motivational speaking. His Toastmasters mentor, Tom Lachocki, says it was a natural transition from successful athlete to successful speaker.

"Having been a pro athlete, Byron understands the serious dedication and effort it takes to achieve excellence," says Lachocki. "There's no better qualification to achieve something than to have already experienced it."

He adds that Embry isn't afraid to be honest when dealing with emotional subject matter. "He

shows a great deal of courage," says Lachocki. "Byron can speak on very personal topics and still has the strength to display deep emotions without diminishing the delivery. The effect is that his audience feels every word much more intensely."

Says Embry: "Baseball gave me the confidence to stand in front of huge crowds. Toastmasters afforded me the confidence to *speak* to those crowds."

He developed a presentation for schools based on the true story of Emmett Till, a black teenage boy hung in 1955 for whistling at a white woman in the heat of America's racial unrest. The speech, "The Whistle that Changed America: The Murder of Emmett Till," launched his speaking career.

In 2009 Byron started his company, Closing Remarks. The name originated from his experiences as a "closer," which is a particular type of relief pitcher.

"As a closer, you come in when the game is on the line," explains Embry. "A closer makes certain that


his team comes out ahead. Closing Remarks reflects my mentality in speaking to organizations that are in a pinch. The heat is on and they need someone to pull them out of a close situation. Instead of throwing baseballs, I throw words of inspiration and encouragement."

### Aiming for a World Championship

In the spring of 2009 Embry attended a Toastmasters club as a guest speaker. A member was practicing her speech for the International Speech Contest and Byron instantly realized this was something he wanted to participate in. Entering the contest himself, he subsequently won competitions at the club, area, division and district levels. In August 2009, he found himself standing on the stage in Mashantucket, Connecticut, with nine other finalists in the World Championship of Public Speaking. It was the culmination of a dream born from much encouragement from others.

Embry is a passionate advocate of Toastmasters, noting how the program helped him overcome powerful doubts and opened up a whole new world.

"Toastmasters took my handicap and made it my greatest asset," he says. "Speaking professionally is not merely the source of my income but the source of my *joy*, the source of my life's purpose."

"Anyone dreaming of pursuing a career in speaking, or of just becoming a better communicator, should not allow anyone to tell you that you can't do it," he adds. "You have an entire story to tell and no one can tell it quite like you. Toastmasters can give you the tools to tell it effectively and powerfully." 

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***"It's not the mountain we  
conquer; it's ourselves."***

**– Sir Edmund Hillary**

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# STANDING ON TOP OF THE WORLD

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## Canadian Toastmaster climbs Mount Everest.

**By Suzanne Frey**

**O**n May 25, 2008, Alan Mallory, a Toastmaster from Barrie, Ontario, Canada, stood on the summit of the world's highest mountain and thought, "I can't wait to get down."

It was a clear day with an incredible view of the neighboring Himalayan peaks. But the temperature was minus 40 degrees and he was exhausted and cold, mindful of the fact that reaching the summit was only half the battle. He still had to get down safely.

Alan, 23, was accompanied on the narrow and steep summit by his father, Dan, and his older brother, Adam, 25. Before heading down, he did what any serious mountaineer would do: He posed for pictures, exposed his bare hands to the cold wind and filmed the view. He also did what most mountaineers would *not*

**Laura Mallory  
climbs the  
Khumbu  
Icefall in her  
route up  
Everest.**



do: He dug deep into his backpack for his club's 3-by-4-foot Toastmasters banner, tried to unfurl it in howling winds so the text would be visible, and posed for more photos. (See cover image.)

"If only you knew how long we stood there, in the freezing cold at the elevation of a jet-liner's cruising altitude, trying to shoot this banner before the wind unfurled it again," chuckled Dan, Alan's dad. "Most people stay a few minutes on the summit; we must have stayed 40 minutes."

Climbing Mount Everest is an incredible physical and



Alan Mallory (right) with dad Dan, brother Adam and sister Laura with Mount Everest in the background.



**“We are an ordinary family who had a collective and daring dream.”**

**– Alan Mallory**

mental challenge. No rescue is possible at its higher elevations, so climbers must bring emergency gear. Space is limited in a backpack that averages 50 pounds in weight and includes precious oxygen tanks to help with breathing in the thin air. As a result, climbers go to extreme lengths to shave off ounces, including removing labels from clothing and cutting toothbrushes in half. The Port Credit Toastmasters banner took up valuable space and weight in Alan’s pack. Why did he bring it? “It was left in my bag, and on summit day I thought I might as well bring it,” he says with a shrug.

The Toastmasters banner must have brought good luck to Alan, his brother and father. They all returned safely to base camp, but not without a scare: Alan had forgotten to turn off his oxygen while at the summit, and as a result ran out of air when he needed it during a crucial point in the descent. He started to panic when after borrowing an oxygen cylinder from a Sherpa, he still

couldn’t breathe, and feared the onset of cerebral edema, a potentially fatal condition in which blood leaks into the brain. Too weak to hold onto the rope, he risked falling off the 7,000-foot vertical drop on either side of the summit ridge.

Fortunately, his dad found that the oxygen valve had been accidentally closed, and when opened, Alan could breathe – and move – again.

### **More Family Feats**

Alan’s younger sister Laura, then a 20-year-old student at the University of Western Ontario, accompanied her father and brothers to Everest and fully intended to join them on the summit. But illness delayed Laura’s summit





◀ **Dan, Alan and Adam Mallory share the summit of Mount Everest with Buddhist prayer flags.**

the youngest Canadian woman ever to summit Mount Everest. In addition, the Mallorys became the first family of four to make it to the top of the world.

Alan's mother, Barbara, had also ventured with her family all the way to Everest base camp, but fell during a training climb and tore her Achilles tendon. She returned home to Barrie, Ontario, where she supported her family by posting blogs on their progress.

Alan, drawing on his Toastmasters skills, now gives presentations about the Everest experience. He uses the

**“Anyone can dream. Anyone can turn their dreams into reality. Just because something is improbable doesn’t mean it’s impossible.”**

**– Alan Mallory**

family's adventure to inspire others to achieve their own goals. Says fellow Port Credit club member and former District Governor Janice Weir, DTM: “Alan’s journey is a perfect metaphor for Toastmasters itself: reaching for the top, scaling new heights, getting out of your comfort zone, and then feeling on top of the world when you achieve your goals.”

At 29,035 feet (8,850 meters) elevation, Mount Everest has long been the object of inexplicable passion for climbers. Since Edmund Hillary first climbed it in 1953, this peak has been the subject of movies and books, as well as the site of many tragedies. Approximately 180

people have died trying to scale its icy slopes. Rock falls, avalanches and crevasses, altitude sickness and weakness brought on by inability to eat, are among many challenges that test climbers’ limits on Everest. Yet they pay approximately \$65,000 per person for the opportunity to do so. They endure months of painful acclimatization training – all for a chance to enter what’s commonly known as the “Death Zone” and for a few brief moments stand on top of the world.

Why do they do it? It was British mountaineer George Mallory (who reportedly reached the summit of Everest before Edmund Hillary did, but died on the descent), who famously said, “If you have to ask the question, you won’t understand the answer.”

For the Mallorys (no relation to George Mallory), it all started with an idea proposed by Alan’s dad over dinner: “Who wants to climb Mount Everest?” While most families would laugh this off, the Mallory family did not. Besides sharing a surname with George Mallory, this family thrives on adrenaline. Instead of lounging on beaches, the Mallorys spent holidays camping and climbing, and trained together for the Everest climb by entering endurance races.

“We are an ordinary family who had a collective and daring dream,” Alan

says. “We followed through and we made that dream come true.”

As the family contemplated its Everest plans, Alan graduated from Queens University in Kingston, Ontario, and started his job as a mechanical engineer. An athlete and avid outdoors adventure seeker, he was an experienced climber who had already reached the summit of Alaska’s challenging Mount McKinley. To climb Everest, he had to request a leave of absence for two and a half months from his new job. His employer not only granted his request; the company, an engineering company called Hatch, sponsored a portion of the trip.



### Making Memories ... and Conversation

In hindsight, was it all worth it? "This experience changed my life," Alan says. "The memories still make us smile, even while we shake our heads in amazement. It sure gives us something to talk about at the dinner table."

Alan also acknowledges that the family's Everest adventure "opened a lot of doors for me." Having joined a Toastmasters club while still in college, he is the family's spokesman, fielding requests from all over the world to share their adventure with a wide range of audiences. Complete with extraordinary photos and video clips, Alan's presentations highlight "how goal-setting, teamwork and pushing beyond perceived limitations can help audience members achieve their dreams."

Alan joined Toastmasters because he felt he needed better communication skills in his future career as an engineer. "I like to try new things, to get involved and get better at what I'm doing," he says. After graduation, he moved to Mississauga, Ontario, and joined the Port Credit Toastmasters club. A job transfer brought him to his current club, To the Point Toastmasters, in Kincardine, Ontario. "Toastmasters skills help you out with everything in life," he says.


His employer, Hatch, has hired Alan to speak at many of its corporate events and sponsors several Toastmasters clubs as a result of Alan promoting the benefits of membership.

Past District Governor Weir says Alan is "an excellent and captivating orator. He is modest and unpretentious; listening to him tell his Everest story is like listening to a friend tell you about his weekend."

Would Alan return to Mount Everest or another 8,000-meter peak? He laughs. "No, I'm not going anywhere near there; it's just too painful." But he's grateful for the experience: "I enjoy the challenge of doing something not many people have done."

His next challenge? Marriage. Alan tied the knot in August.

"That's going to be a harder challenge than climbing Everest."

You can read more about the Mallory family's Everest adventure at [www.malloryexpedition.com](http://www.malloryexpedition.com). 

**Suzanne Frey** is the editor of the *Toastmaster* magazine and a member of Unimasters Toastmasters club in Lake Forest, California.

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**Former hoops coach teaches peers about communication and leadership.**

# Coaching Confidence

Celia Slater teaches an annual class for college athletic coaches called “Find Your Own Voice.” The class helps the coaches develop self-confidence as communicators. She makes sure to also tell the class about Toastmasters – what it is, how it works and, most importantly, why they should join.

“Toastmasters changed my life,” she says. “It helped me regain my confidence. I really give Toastmasters the credit for that, and I love to share what they did for me by pay-

various topics.

She selects scenarios relevant to the coaching, such as speaking to an athlete’s parents or to the president of the university.

Slater teaches the course as part of her job as executive director of the WinStar Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides skills training to coaches and athletes in the United States. Chief among those skills: communication and leadership.

**“You have to be able to communicate effectively with everything you do, from talking to parents to talking to athletic directors to talking to student athletes.”**

**– CELIA SLATER**

ing it forward – by sharing my story with these coaches.”

Slater, a former member of the Lamplighters Toastmasters club in Wilmington, North Carolina, even leads the class in activities patterned after Table Topics. Group members speak extemporaneously about

The coaches and students represent a range of sports at the youth, high school and college levels. The colleges are from all different divisions in the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Coaches, says Slater, have many opportunities to lead. “You have to

be able to communicate effectively with everything you do, from talking to parents to talking to athletic directors to talking to student athletes,” she notes. “You’re making this first impression and you have to get it right.”

## Starring on the Court

As a young woman, Slater was a star athlete. She led her high school basketball team in Florida to three state championships and then was a varsity player at Florida State University, winning the Most Valuable Player award her senior year.

She then found success as a coach. She became the first head coach of the women’s basketball team at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, and later headed up the women’s team at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida.

But Slater’s career stalled and she left the coaching profession to work in athletics administration. In 2003 she joined the Lamplighters club.

“I came to Toastmasters at a time when my confidence was at an all-time low,” Slater says. “My coaching



**Celia Slater was honored last year by Saint Leo University in Florida.**



career had ended and at the same time, I had the dream to form a women's coaches academy to help train coaches in communication and all skills beyond the X's and O's. Right then I had to get my confidence back if I was going to be in a leadership role and make my dream come to fruition.

"I can confidently say that joining Toastmasters helped me enhance my leadership abilities."

As a novice Toastmaster, Slater found giving speeches excruciating. In fact, when launching WinStar, she could barely speak in front of a room full of people. But by practicing in her club, the ex-athlete steadily boosted her skills and comfort level. In 2004, she gave an acceptance speech when her alma mater, Florida State, presented her with an award as a "Champion Beyond the Game."

"That was nerve-wracking to have to give that speech, so I practiced it in front of my Toastmasters club, and they were great in helping me," says Slater, who was in Lamplighters for about two and a half years before moving to Florida.

"I really loved my club," she adds. "I looked forward to going every week."


### Making WinStar Work

The Toastmasters training paid off, giving Slater the confidence and communication skills to lead the WinStar Foundation. Where she once struggled mightily to speak to audiences, now she gives speeches all the time, traveling throughout the country and delivering keynote presentations, teaching classes and running workshops for coaches and athletes.

"I wouldn't have people calling me and asking me to speak to

them," Slater notes, "if I hadn't taken the step to join Toastmasters."

Ann Salerno has witnessed the dramatic growth in her colleague. "Initially, Celia was very nervous and uncertain about speaking," says Salerno, director of education for the NCAA Women Coaches Academy, one of the programs that WinStar runs. "Because of Toastmasters, she gained confidence and poise – she is an engaging and inspiring speaker!"

The coaches and athletes, Salerno adds, respond positively to Slater's speeches: "They trust her. Celia is authentic and professional, caring and compassionate – and tough. She motivates them and expects them to do their best." 

**Paul Sterman** is an associate editor for the *Toastmaster* magazine and a member of Le Gourmet Toastmasters in Costa Mesa, California.

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Teaching athletes to find their A-games  
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# Leadership Lessons from Coaches

By Craig Harrison, DTM

**T**he modern-day sports coach must be a skilled leader and communicator. During any given season, a coach is expected to recruit, inspire, motivate, instruct, discipline and counsel players of different ages, skill levels and backgrounds.

The successful coach also melds individuals into a competitive team and models proper behavior to help athletes come of age as players and young adults. It takes listening as well as speaking skills, strategy and a dash of salesmanship, as well as an appreciation of both psychology and kinesiology.

Sean Tarrant, DTM, is the head football coach of the Westside Christian Academy Warriors in Detroit, Michigan. The communication and leadership skills he honed in Toastmasters have served him very well as a football coach: During the 2009 season, Tarrant's team was ranked number four in the United States in Division 2 private high schools.



When Tarrant speaks to his players, he does more than diagram Xs and Os on a whiteboard (defensive and offensive

players in a diagram). "I'm teaching my players to make better decisions, on and off the field," he says. Known as "Coach T," Tarrant also models good behavior and thinking skills to his athletes. "There is a correct way to think," he notes. "There are choices in how you speak and how you act. I help young people improve both."

## A Coach with Credibility

Tarrant, 44, joined Talu Toastmasters in Moberly, Missouri, many years ago





Tom Richardson, Toastmasters Past International President (1988-89), is a football coach at Zionsville High School in Zionsville, Indiana. He works with the varsity defensive linemen, including (from left to right) seniors Andrew Wilson, Adam Wertz and Logan Aven.



while serving time in the Moberly Correctional Center. He has credibility with the current generation of student-athletes: He's made mistakes and accounted for them, overcome personal hardships and now models success for others. Besides serving as Westside Christian's football coach, Tarrant is also the school's dean of students and its athletic director.

Most recently, Tarrant was a member of the Oak Park Toastmasters in Oak Park, Michigan. The coach draws on his life experience and newfound confidence from Toastmasters to help others with public speaking. By his own count he has given thousands of speeches. He frequents rehabilitation centers and homeless shelters, has

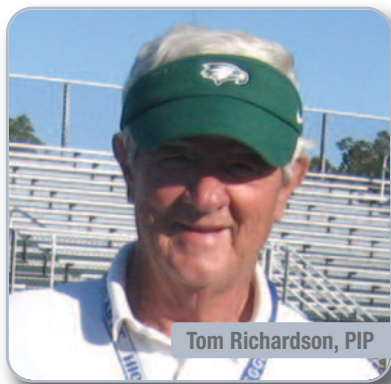
toured with rapper T.I. and also speaks directly to youth through a mentoring program.

"I see all mistakes made in one's life as learning experiences," says the father of six.

### **Toastmasters PIP Guides Young Men on Gridiron**

Tom Richardson, who was Toastmasters International President in 1988-89, has coached sports for more than 25 years. After playing football at the University of Tennessee, he coached football, basketball and track at high schools in Tennessee and Florida. He then worked as an insurance executive for a number of years – and, having retired, is again coaching high school football.





Richardson, a DTM, says his Toastmasters training formed the foundation for his coaching, noting that he uses his communication and leadership

skills every day in working with football players. As the defensive line coach, he guides 10 young men who play a specific position on the field, and he must communicate clearly and effectively, whether teaching them proper techniques or motivating them to perform to their maximum ability.

"You look at nonjudgmental ways to discuss with the players what they're doing, but you also want to get the message across when change needs to be made," says the longtime Toastmaster, who is in his 13th year of coaching football at Zionsville High School in Zionsville, Indiana. He does the job on a volunteer basis.

Just as in Toastmasters, "When we see players doing things right, we tell them so," adds Richardson, who runs a company that coaches executives in speaking and communication. "That builds their confidence. And if they're not doing things right, we give them constructive feedback. We ask, 'How can you make that better?'"

A member of the 2000 Toastmasters club in Indianapolis, Indiana, Richardson also trains the entire varsity team mentally – in sports-psychology. This includes

athletes interact with player-agents, general managers and owners. Each form of communication requires different skills, tone, language and credibility.

"When you're coaching it's impossible *not* to communicate," says Bill Cole, a peak performance and sport psychology consultant in San Jose, California. "You're communicating whether you know it or not." He gives this example: "When a coach has his or her arms folded while observing players practicing, it's sending a message of disapproval or skepticism, whether intended or not." He explains that congruency between words and tone, verbal language and body language, is imperative.

Cole has worked with athletes, parents and coaches in more than 55 sports. Whether working with the top water skier in Mexico, the Israeli Davis Cup tennis team or the coach of the Irish National Cricket team, Cole blends sports psychology with the language of success to coach clients to greatness.

### Shifting into Neutral

Coaches aren't the only ones who set the tone for games and matches. Treve Taylor, a 32-year Toastmaster in South Africa, has been an official for the sport of swimming for many years. He also trains other officials. When officiating, he remains neutral and exudes impartiality, referring to swimmers only by their lane numbers. Yet when training other officials, he takes dry material

and "applies the skills of vocal variety, body language and eye contact to enhance the presentation."

As president of the Durban Club in Durban Natal, South Africa, Taylor developed these talents in Toastmasters. "Due to my Toastmasters experience, I was installed as a trainer for new

officials over people with more [officiating] experience than I had, but weaker communication skills," he notes.

### The Man In Charge

Jim Tunney's communication and leadership skills were pivotal to his career as a National Football League (NFL) referee. "You have to demonstrate through your posture, through your voice, through your actions and what you do on and off the field, that you are somebody who is in charge," says Tunney, who refereed in the NFL for 31 years and has been nominated for the league's Hall of Fame.

How good were Tunney's communication skills? After retiring from the NFL in 1991, he went on to serve as president of the National Speakers Association.

**"You have to demonstrate through your posture, through your voice, through your actions and what you do on and off the field, that you are somebody who is in charge."**

**- RETIRED NFL REFEREE JIM TUNNEY**

such methods as visualization and self-talk, to increase confidence and positive attitude. He says he first drew on these strategies in Toastmasters, when he was competing in the World Championship of Public Speaking in 1974. (He was a finalist that year.)

Richardson still draws on these motivational methods in his own athletic pursuits: He holds the Indiana state record in his age bracket for competitive power lifting (a type of weightlifting) and is working toward earning his purple belt in Kempo karate.

### Using Different Skill Sets

Coaches of student-athletes communicate with players, parents, referees and trainers; coaches of professional





## The Quintessential Coach

**W**hen John Wooden died this past June, the world lost one of its greatest coaches – and a man celebrated just as widely for his principles and teachings. His insights on leadership, motivation, communication and ethics influenced countless people through the years. In an interview for the October 2008 issue of the *Toastmaster* magazine, Wooden was asked how Toastmasters leaders should best motivate their teams. He said that making people feel appreciated is always important. “One of the greatest motivating tools we have is a pat on the back,” he said. “It doesn’t have to be a physical pat – it could be a smile, a nod. Everyone likes to be complimented in one way or another.” “Another technique is listening,” he added. “A leader must listen to those under their supervision.... We don’t know a thing that we haven’t learned from somebody else in one way or another.”

Coach Wooden was a captivating speaker – and many of his greatest speeches were delivered to his basketball teams. The Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame, in New Castle, Indiana, features a video presentation showing a speech Wooden gave to one of his teams at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he won an unprecedented 10 U.S. college basketball championships. The following excerpt illustrates what made him such a wise and inspiring coach:

“Please let me have your attention, young men. I would like to say a few words about this coming season. We all want it to be very successful, but for our success to become a reality you must accept my concept of what success truly is.

True success in basketball shouldn’t be based on individual statistics or the percentage of victories, any more than success in life should be based on material possessions or the position of power and prestige.... You cannot be truly successful without peace of mind, that only comes from knowing you made the effort to become the best that you are capable of becoming. You and only you will know whether you have done that. You can fool others. But you cannot fool yourself.

We must not become too concerned about the things over which we have no control, but we must make every effort to utilize to the best of our ability the things over which we have control.

Everyone is different. There will always be others who are bigger or stronger, or quicker, or better jumpers, or better in some other areas, but there are other qualities in which you can be second to none.

Among these are: your dedication to the development of your own potential.”


The resident of Pebble Beach, California, says an official must maintain a calm demeanor in the face of hostility from players or coaches. “How you handle confrontation with a player on the field or with a coach is very important,” says Tunney. “If you allow that to shake what you believe in, it shows up in your body language. People say, ‘This guy is not sure of himself. He doesn’t know what he’s doing!’”

### The Work Before The Work

Fans often marvel at how calm, cool and collected coaches can appear on the sidelines, during the heat of battle. Just as in Toastmasters, preparation is key. Coaches have done their work already, preparing their teams for the competition and for performing at their optimal level. The legendary college basketball coach John Wooden, who died earlier this year at the age of 99, put it well: “Failure to prepare is preparing to fail.” He believed preparation

was so fundamental to success that the very first lessons he taught his players were how to carefully lace up their sneakers and properly put on socks to avoid blisters.

### Game On!

As communicators and leaders, coaches play a unique role in forming character in their players. By patiently teaching and nurturing their athletes, and communicating clearly with them, they can create Hall of Fame players and world-class citizens. As Toastmasters, you can use your skills to impact others, as well. The ball is in your court! 

**Craig Harrison, DTM**, is a member of Toastmasters Leadership club in Oakland, California. He is a professional speaker and author of the *Good, Better... Best!* series of books. For more information visit [www.speakandleadwithconfidence.com](http://www.speakandleadwithconfidence.com).

## Early-morning club achieves President's Distinguished 11 years in a row.

By Jill Whitmore, CC, CL

# Rise and Shine

**E**very Friday morning, Curtis Short's alarm goes off at 4:30 a.m., reminding him it's time to get up. His first reaction that moment is bleary-eyed confusion. Then his mind begins to make sense of things. "Oh yeah, it's Friday – Toastmasters. Maybe I can just skip it this time . . . . No, I signed up as an evaluator; I am committed."

Indeed, it takes a strong sense of commitment to belong to the Yawn Patrol club in Eugene, Oregon. Our group meets at 6:15 a.m. every Friday. Though it may be a struggle when the alarm clock first blares, attending the meetings is always worth the effort.

"By 5:30 a.m. or so, I'm helping to set up the meeting room and the blood is by now pumping through my veins," says Short. "I'm alive and can hardly wait for the meeting to start."

Such enthusiasm helps explain why our club inspires great loyalty and success among its members.

Yawn Patrol has achieved the President's Distinguished Club Award for the past 11 years in a row.

This is an accomplishment we are very proud of. According to Toastmasters International World Headquarters, only one percent of the organization's more than 12,500 clubs around the world have achieved the President's Distinguished award consecutively since 2003–2004.

Perhaps the greatest reason for Yawn Patrol's success is the club culture, which celebrates discipline and goal-setting while also fostering a caring, tight-knit atmosphere.

"I believe the time that the meetings are held – 6:15 a.m. – defines the membership," says Richard Blackstone, a member since 2004. "People who attend meetings at 6 a.m. are serious about their growth; they are goal-oriented and they know how to seek out positive support for what they are doing. No one is here by coincidence."

Focusing on speeches and projects in the Toastmasters communication and leadership manuals gives members goals to achieve with each club meeting. Jon Davies, a staff psychologist at the University of Oregon, says he's seen the benefits of Toastmasters in his work.

"My presentation skills have greatly improved and I no longer sit in terror when I present at conferences," he says. "Not a week goes by where I don't share an important point I learned at Yawn Patrol with my clients, trainees or colleagues."

Yawn Patrol members push each other – but with encouragement and support.

"My fellow club members challenge me and they make me excel, even though I still have not achieved anywhere near perfection," says Short, a former club president. "By the time 7:45 a.m. comes and the meeting ends, I am like a lion ready



◀ The Yawn Patrol Toastmasters, of Eugene, Oregon, has consistently earned President's Distinguished. Some of the club members are (standing, from left to right): Guy Avenell, Richard Blackstone, Anne Summers, John Fentress, Jhea-Whan Hong, MAx Fabry and Jaehyung Oh; seated is Jed Reay.



to take on any adversity that life can throw at me.”

Yawn Patrol member Teo Wences, a real estate agent in Eugene, was once asked by a family member if she had to attend that Friday’s club meeting. “I don’t *have* to go,” Wences replied. “I *love* to go and feel loved there.”

### Learning From Life Experiences

The speeches given by our fellow club members teach and inspire us.

Whether we are hearing about a member embarking on a new career venture, learning how a man found the path to recovery from alcoholism or listening to the reflections of a middle-aged person who lost his spouse, we are being touched by the life experiences of others. We grow as people because of it.

“In this day and age a lot of people are waking up to the understanding that personal growth is really what life is about,” says member Cristi Cubito.

Another positive aspect of Yawn Patrol is the diversity of the membership. Three of our most active members were born outside the United States – in Poland, Korea and Mexico. This gives our meetings an international flavor. There is also a diversity of experience. While there is a nucleus of Toastmasters veterans, new members start every month.

“It seems that club members invite new people who can easily

## Why You Should Care About the Distinguished Club Program

By Joe McCleskey

If you’ve been a member for more than a few months, chances are you’ve heard of the Distinguished Club Program, or DCP. You may also know that each year, clubs that perform well in the DCP are recognized for their efforts and can proudly display a Distinguished, Select Distinguished or President’s Distinguished ribbon on their club banner. But what’s in it for you, the individual member?

Here’s why focusing on your club’s performance in the DCP should matter to every Toastmasters member:

- **The DCP promotes club quality.** Clubs that perform well in the DCP provide a higher-quality club experience for all of its members. Each aspect of the DCP, from membership to education awards to club officer training, is designed to enhance and reinforce the enjoyment and supportive atmosphere for each member, every time the club meets.
- **The DCP ensures productive meetings.** Focusing on the educational goals of the DCP will keep members moving through the education program. When people earn communication and leadership awards, they gain much more than just a certificate or points toward the DCP; they gain the satisfaction and confidence that comes from completing a goal. They also provide an inspirational example for other club members, who can see the transformation that has occurred as a direct result of Toastmasters training. Other aspects of the DCP help keep meetings productive, too. Keeping club membership at or above 20, for example, will fill club meeting roles and maintain the energy level needed for a successful meeting.
- **The DCP provides structure and guidance.** Clubs that perform well in the DCP always know who should be doing what and when they should be doing it. The club officer training requirements of the DCP, for example, help to ensure that club business is conducted fairly, efficiently and in accordance with Toastmasters policy. Similarly, the educational goals of the DCP provide direction and incentive for all members to achieve individually as well as collectively.
- **The DCP increases the enthusiasm of the club.** The goal is not for clubs to compete against one another; it’s for all clubs to strive to achieve the same standards of excellence. Nonetheless, striving for achievement in the DCP is a way to engage the spirit of friendly competition that can help motivate club members to perform their duties with gusto.

So remember: When you work hard to help your club achieve in the DCP, you’re not only helping your club – you’re helping yourself as well.

**Joe McCleskey** is the Manager of Educational Development at Toastmasters World Headquarters in Rancho Santa Margarita, California.

# Overcoming Adversity

By Stuart Gorin, DTM

**How a determined club attained President's Distinguished status.**

It has not been easy for the Viera/Suntree Toastmasters club in Melbourne, Florida. Reduced to near-vagabond status since chartering, the club has moved its meeting site from one restaurant to a second one, then to a third, then to a Red Cross building, followed by a health center, a community center, a senior center, back to the community center, and then to its current location at a different health center.

The last two locations were during the past year alone.

To further frustrate matters, during the past year the club president was unavailable months at a time due to critical work assignments; the vice president education resigned after losing a job and having to work evenings at a second one; the replacement vice president education resigned for family reasons; the vice president membership was out of action for two months following a bike-auto accident; the vice president public relations resigned due to work travel commitments; and the treasurer was unable to attend numerous meetings. Several new club members also disappeared shortly after joining, for reasons of their own.

Yet despite all the tribulations, the 6-year-old club prevailed and prospered – earning President's Distinguished status for a second year in a row. This is thanks to a small core group of dedicated members who conducted effective and fun meetings, held an Open House and other special events, and focused on completing Distinguished Club Plan requirements.

Other Toastmasters clubs can take heart. Despite the economy, rising unemployment, personal health issues and family needs, success is a real possibility through dedication to Toastmasters principles and programs. Just ask the Viera/Suntree club.

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benefit from Toastmasters," says member Ruth Kuehl.

Yawn Patrol, which was founded in 1964, has 30 members. They range in age from people in their late 20s to those in their 70s. With such a diverse group, not everyone's opinion is the same on every issue. But all members are listened to and every viewpoint is respected.

"I feel our group is enriched by the diversity and the differences between us, and how we treat those differences with respect," says member Brooks Morse.

Perhaps one reason the club has such a positive, nurturing environment, notes Jon Davies, is that its members include counselors, social workers, psychologists and doctors.

## Sharing the Stage

Members are quick to volunteer for the different meeting roles and are willing to fill in when last-minute changes affect the schedule. Additionally, Yawn Patrol makes sure there is no competition for speaking time: The stage is large enough for

everyone. The club ensures that new members get plenty of opportunities to build their skills, receive valuable feedback and receive recognition for their commitment and contributions. The Bob Hunt Memorial Award, named for a former club leader, is an annual honor that acknowledges one member's contributions to the club that exceeds expectations.

Humor is also ingrained into the Yawn Patrol meetings. It's shown in the banter among club members as well as the prepared humorous speeches. For example, Ken Harris recently delivered a side-splitting speech about boldly assuming all household duties after he was laid off from work. He took us through a day of washing clothes and fixing a spaghetti dinner. However, things became harried as Ken spilled spaghetti sauce – and slipped in it. Which was precisely when his wife returned home and said, "What's for dinner, honey?"

While new members are attracted to Yawn Patrol to improve their

public speaking, they stay because of the emotional connections and relationships they form. Members are warm, inviting and accepting.

"I keep returning for the people," says Morse. "Yawn Patrol feels like a healthy, functional family."

Davies, the university psychologist, says being part of the club broadens his perspective and benefits him in many ways: "Most importantly, I feel a greater sense of purpose in my life. I feel a close bond with the other members, and I am personally touched and enriched by the stories I hear."

Regardless of the reason for Yawn Patrol's success, it's clear that the members are just thankful for the opportunity to laugh, learn and grow together. We all look forward to another 11 years of being a President's Distinguished Club. ■

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**David Cameron:**

# A Speaker in His Prime

**O**n a sunny spring day in 2010, David Cameron stood behind a lectern in the garden of 10 Downing Street in London, England, and addressed a crowd of reporters. The weather reflected his upbeat mood as he held his first press conference as prime minister of Great Britain. At age 43, he's the youngest to serve in that position in 200 years.

Public speaking plays an important role in any politician's success, but in Cameron's case it was particularly striking. Five years before he became prime minister, he made a speech that catapulted him from a little-known Member of Parliament (MP) to the leadership of his party, putting him well on the pathway toward leadership of his country. In many ways this was the speech that made him prime minister.

In his early political career, Cameron struggled, and part of the problem was his oratory. Despite a gift for finding a well-turned phrase,

Cameron could appear wooden when speaking to a crowd. His delivery lacked spontaneity and life.

Cameron knew he needed to improve his speechmaking if he hoped to advance in politics. One way he honed his skill was to participate in the weekly parliamentary ritual known as the Prime Minister's Questions. As British Toastmaster Freddie Daniells, of the Excalibur and Holborn Speakers clubs explains: "The prime minister of the day has to answer questions put to him by the leader of the opposing parties and other MPs.

**How a single speech propelled one man to the top of British politics.**

**By William H. Stevenson, III**

Needless to say, this can turn into a session of political points scoring. [Former Prime Minister] Tony Blair was judged as being very good at this. However, David Cameron was often judged to have gotten the better of Blair and was seen as very strong against Blair's successor, Gordon Brown."

In the fall of 2005, Cameron made a bid for the leadership of the Conservative Party, which that year had once again suffered defeat at the polls. The showcase event of the leadership campaign was the party conference where each

candidate would deliver a 20-minute speech. Cameron made a bold decision: He would give a speech equal parts persuasive and inspirational, outlining a radical plan for the future of his party. Although not a leading contender, he did not appear nervous or intimidated when he took the stage. Speaking without notes, Cameron began by complimenting the master of ceremonies:

**“When the Conservative Party members voted for a new leader, they chose Cameron by more than a 2-to-1 margin.”**

*“Sayeeda, I have to say that was a magnificent opening speech. [Applause.] When Michael Howard first met you he came back and said to me, ‘When that woman gets into Parliament, she’ll wipe the floor with the rest of you.’ [Laughter.] And that may be true but we need you there.”*

Texts of Cameron’s speech usually omit his opening remarks, evidently deeming them insignificant. In fact, these first few minutes are a crucial part of the speech. Speakers who seek to persuade must gain the goodwill of their audiences; if they fail to do this, nothing they say will have much effect. In his opening sentences, Cameron combines a compliment, a bit of self-deprecating humor and a subtle appeal to the women voters. He then praises the former party leaders, pouring balm on the wounds inflicted by a series of bruising electoral losses: *“Being Leader of the Opposition is one of the most difficult jobs in government. And this party owes a huge debt of gratitude to the three people who have given it their all and worked their hearts out over the last eight years.”*

Becoming increasingly animated, Cameron named each leader,

mentioned something the leader did for the party and thanked them, prompting fresh applause. He ended his introductory remarks with a touch of humor that not only made his listeners feel good about themselves but also sounded the theme of being open to new ideas: *“If there is out there an 82-year-old, or a 42-year-old, or a 22-year-old, who at any stage of this speech*

*wants to shout nonsense, you just go for it. [Laughter.] Because, I’ll tell you something about this party; we’re not frightened of debate, we don’t mind having an argument, and we believe in free speech. [Applause; comments of “hear, hear!”] But I would be grateful if you wouldn’t shout nonsense the whole way through.” [Laughter.]*

British communications researcher and speech coach Max Atkinson identifies several of Cameron’s strengths on display in this opening section. “He has a good command of all the main rhetorical techniques that trigger applause,” remarks Atkinson. “And the ability to speak without using scripts or an Autocue. He seems to be more comfortable using humor than most contemporary British politicians.”

Pleasantries over, Cameron launches into the main body of his speech, starting with a somber description of his party’s plight. *“We meet in the shadow of a third consecutive election defeat, defeated by a government that has complicated the tax system, dumbed down the education system, demoralized the health system and bankrupted the pension system . . . And still we*

*were defeated.”* Cameron does not evade the situation – he confronts it, repeatedly using the word “defeat” to hammer home the point. Cameron wants to make sure everyone understands the gravity of the present situation so they will be receptive to his plan for the future.

But he doesn’t dwell long in the shadows, moving quickly to the light with an upbeat assessment of his party, speaking in the first person for maximum effect. *“I joined this party because I love my country . . . This is the only party that understands, and is proud of, what we have been and who we are.”*

Should they stand idly by and hope the other party self-destructs? *“I think that’s a pathetic way for a great party to behave,”* says Cameron. *“I don’t want to hang around and wait till something turns up. Do you?”* Should they move the party to the right? *“I say that will turn us into a fringe party, never able to challenge for government again,”* declares Cameron. *“I don’t want to let that happen to this party. Do you?”* At the end of each question the audience chimes in with an increasingly voluminous “No!” Rhetorical questions are one of the most effective tools in oratory. “If you say something that gets an audience wondering or anticipating what’s coming next,” Atkinson explains, “you’re likely to increase their attentiveness and involvement.” Cameron is a master of this technique.

Having gotten his listeners to agree on what they should *not* do, Cameron then tells them what he thinks they *should* do. “We have to change and modernize our culture and attitudes and identity,” he states.

Throughout his speech, Cameron not only speaks but acts with passion and energy, walking back and forth on the stage, gesturing, making eye



contact, engaging his audience. Building to a climax, he ends his speech with stirring rhetoric: *"So let's build together a new generation of Conservatives... Let the message go out from this conference: A modern, compassionate conservatism is right for our times, right for our party and right for our country... If we fight for it with every ounce of passion, vigor and energy from now until the next election, nothing, and no one, can stop us."*

Cameron received a standing ovation that lasted for three minutes, and he was immediately hailed as the man of the hour. When the Conservative Party members voted for a new leader, they chose Cameron by more than a 2-to-1 margin.


Toastmasters in London express different opinions of the speech. Freddie Daniells considers it one of Cameron's finest. "The best speakers

are those that make you feel like they are having a personal conversation with you despite there being hundreds in the audience," says Daniells. "I believe that his early speeches [like this 2005 one] were excellent examples of this."

Jessica Bass of the London Athenians club was not impressed with the speech but admires Cameron's use of language. "Despite his [distinguished] education," she says, "he prefers to follow George Orwell's advice: 'Never use a long word where a short one will do.'" James McGinty, a member of the Chelmsford Speakers club, thought Cameron's gestures could have been improved but that he did nearly everything else right. "There was very clever use of repetition and rhythmic couplets," he says. "He does make good use of his voice and uses the pause extremely well."

Furthermore, adds McGinty, "He absolutely oozes sincerity. If the audience feels that you believe in your own message, they are going to be more inclined to believe it."

Four years would pass and another hard election campaign would be waged before David Cameron received the call to lead his nation. But his speech at the 2005 Conservative Convention might justly be regarded as the speech that made him prime minister.

Cameron's Conservative Conference speech may be viewed at: <http://bbc.in/aRUVCP>. 

**William H. Stevenson, III**, is a freelance writer in Huntsville, Alabama. He has been a member of three Toastmasters clubs in the Huntsville area. Contact him at [whsteve3@aol.com](mailto:whsteve3@aol.com).

# Wish You Were FUNNIER?

**Dear Fellow Toastmaster:**

Do you wish you were **funnier**? Do you believe that "funny people" **think differently**?

The truth is... funny people *do* think differently. Truer still; **you will never be funnier unless you change the way you think**. That is exactly what *Get More Laughs By Next Week™* will do for you. I Darrentee it.

Would a step-by-step process for getting laughs be helpful?

I never got laughs. I was quiet and shy and had severe stage fright. It was quite an epiphany for me when I discovered the simple exercises comedians use to develop material. A whole new world opened up for me when I was shown that humor was a *learned skill*, as opposed to a trait one must be born with.

Naturally, I did things the hard way, so it took me years of struggle and tens of thousands of dollars to uncover the steps that would take me from bumbling amateur to sought-after professional. This is a *proven* system. I've been teaching this process for more than ten years.

Stage time,

*Darren*

**Darren LaCroix**  
2001 World Champion of Public Speaking

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**Sweden's monarch toasts his daughter at royal wedding.**

**By Daniel Bengtsson**

# A King Speaks From the Heart

✠ It's not often that you hear the King of your country deliver a wedding speech. But when Swedish Crown Princess Victoria married Daniel Westling on June 19, the King of Sweden demonstrated how powerful a speech can be when it comes from the heart.

As the head of state, the King's words represent Sweden publicly, but his words at this wedding were directed only to the two families involved. As a public person, King Carl XVI Gustaf has so many things to be aware of; many duties and many speeches. This makes it hard to believe that he actually writes his own speeches most of the time. However, the speech during the

wedding banquet was different: It was about his daughter, Victoria.

The speech could be divided into three distinct parts: two personal pieces surrounding a formal section. I would say the first part was a bit of a surprise, a piece of gold many audience members and television viewers did not expect. The King alluded to his own marriage, to Queen Silvia, and did it so vividly that I was captivated by his imagery. (This day was the King and Queen's 34th wedding anniversary, and they had married in this same church – Storkyrkan Cathedral in Stockholm, Sweden.)

*"We as parents take joy in the affection by which you look at*

*each other,"* said King Gustaf. *"But – as so many parents before us have experienced – the joy of seeing one's children standing on their own to build their families is also spiced with a touch of grief. I wish that you also one day will be able to experience such happiness that we feel today."*

The emotion expressed in the second part of the speech was different from the first. The King spoke about royal traditions and duties in a way that seemed to lack the true passion that existed when he spoke about his marriage. Addressing Victoria, he said, *"You are the successor to the throne of Sweden. It is a mission that comes*

**Sweden's new prince wins praise for wedding speech.**

**By Paul Sterman**

# A Royal Performance

✠ Over the summer, Sweden hosted the wedding of Swedish Crown Princess Victoria and Daniel Westling, the biggest European royal wedding since Prince Charles married Lady Diana.

More than 1,000 guests, including politicians, rulers and dignitaries from across the world, filled Stockholm's Storkyrkan Cathedral. Almost five million viewers across Europe tuned in to the pageantry-filled spectacle as well.

The June 19 nuptials reflected the lavish rituals of royalty, but it also reminded us of the power of public speaking. Westling's words, in

particular, had a dramatic impact, underscoring how a speech can shape the image of a public figure.

To fully understand the impression he made, one must have a sense of context: When he and Crown Princess Victoria met more than eight years ago, much was made of Westling's background. To the Swedish public and media, he didn't seem like monarch material. He was Victoria's fitness trainer, sported long hair, dressed in casual clothes and spoke with a thick, rural accent that was reportedly mocked by members of the Crown Princess's inner circle.

Consequently, when the wedding day rolled around, observers were curious about how the "commoner" – as he was referred to – would perform in this storybook setting.

Quite well, as it turned out. Confident and impeccably groomed, he stood and addressed his wife at the banquet following the wedding ceremony: "I love you, Victoria, and I am proud that we are here together, and I am so happy to be your husband."

The heartfelt declaration brought tears to his bride's eyes. Speaking without notes and alternating fluently between Swedish and English, the new prince told a story of how





◀ King Carl Gustaf of Sweden (far right) speaks to Crown Princess Victoria and Daniel Westling on their wedding day.

with duties and responsibilities . . . . One day you will – because it is so stated in our Constitution – succeed me as the head of state of Sweden.” This middle section was very formal and did not show much emotion.

Suddenly, in the third part, the tone returned to that of a father addressing his daughter. I was spell-bound by the speech once again as the King told us about his and the Queen’s thoughts about true love, and how Victoria’s choices for

marriage didn’t need to be confined to other royalty. “No one should believe anything else than that my highest wish has always been – and is – to see you happy,” he said. “It has therefore always been self-evident to your mother the Queen and me, that you . . . should have the freedom to choose your life’s companion as your heart desires.”

The King’s tone was compassionate and his body language animated. The nation was captivated.

Victoria had once spent a whole night writing, before leaving the next day on an official trip to China. “When I got up, I found 30 beautiful letters, addressed to me, one for each day she would be away,” he recalled.

The 37-year-old also added levity to the occasion. Playfully alluding to his personal transformation, he quipped, “Once upon a time, the young man was – perhaps not a frog, [as] in the beginning of the fairy tale, but he was certainly not a prince.”

### An Excellent Evaluation

Prince Daniel won high praise for his graceful speech. Katti Sandberg, one of the top public-speaking consultants in Sweden, said his remarks were skilled and poignant.

“He spoke without notes and was very emotional,” she told *The Local*, an English-language newspaper in Sweden. “Not using a script makes it feel like it comes from the

heart. We Swedes are not used to such emotional speeches – and that made the effect even greater. But it is risky, as there’s always a danger that you’ll lose [your composure].

“It was also impressive how easily he switched between English and Swedish,” she added.

Sandberg said Prince Daniel’s speech, delivered on such a grand stage, gave a big boost to his public image. “We Swedes have not seen much of Daniel. Now we got to know him a bit,” she said. “The speech was an answer to the question, ‘Can he do it?’”

The Swedish media heartily embraced Victoria’s betrothed. “Sweden takes Daniel to its heart after speech,” gushed a headline in *The Local*. The Web site of one of Sweden’s largest tabloids, *Aftonbladet*, could barely contain its enthusiasm, describing Westling’s speech as, “the moment he became our darling prince.”

I have seen King Gustaf give many speeches, and I have never seen him deliver one this well. I wondered, What is the difference between this speech and all his others? There was no change from his usual techniques and only a slight change in his vocal quality, but not enough to produce this kind of impact. It suddenly struck me that he was speaking from his heart.

The King’s speech demonstrated how important it is to put a personal touch on what you say. It doesn’t matter whether you’re speaking at a royal wedding or a community event: True, heartfelt emotion adds an extra dimension and lifts a speech to the skies, even for the experienced speaker. **T**

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Apparently, Daniel isn’t the only one in the Westling family with rhetorical skills. His father was also applauded for the speech he gave at the royal wedding. Olle Westling spoke movingly of the special bond he and his son share: Olle donated one of his kidneys to Daniel last year.

“As a 16-year-old, you discovered just how important health is,” he told his son.

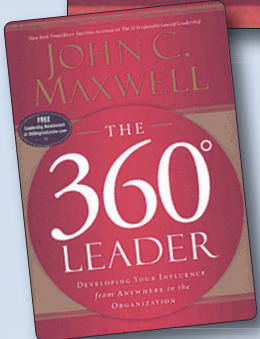
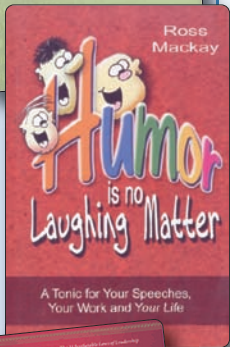
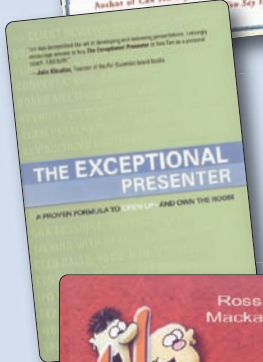
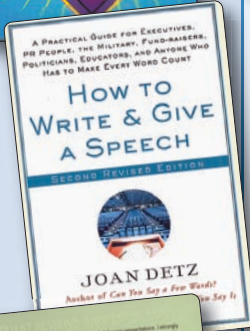
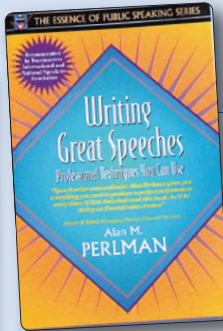
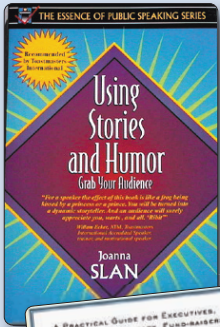
Like Daniel, Olle also tossed in a few light-hearted remarks. He pointed out that it’s not every day your son begins dating the heir to the Swedish throne.

“We were very happy when Daniel met a girl and wanted to bring her home to meet the family,” said Westling. “We hadn’t banked on it being this particular girl.” **T**

**Paul Sterman** is an associate editor of the *Toastmaster* magazine and a member of Le Gourmet Toastmasters in Costa Mesa, California.

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