GODDARD TOASTMASTERS --- CLUB 3496, AREA 42, DISTRICT 36

The Oracle

Volume 2, Number 1, April 11, 2001 Bigyani Das, Editor

http://snipe.gsfc.nasa.gov/~jeff/TM



The mission of a Toastmasters Club is to provide a mutually supportive and positive learning environment in which every member has the opportunity to develop communication and leadership skills, which in turn foster self confidence and personal growth.

Toastmasters International

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Editorial Bigyani Das, CTM

What is the Goddard Toastmasters Club? Friends, <u>WE</u> are the Goddard Toastmasters Club. The development of the Club, Club Programs, and Club Performance depends on the individual development and commitment of each Club Member. We all became members of the Club with definite goals to become effective leaders and communicators. Once we've earned our CTM and ATM certificates, we might feel that these goals have been achieved and that we don't need Toastmasters anymore. That feeling is not correct.

It's ok to know just enough of the skills of effective communication to perform once or twice successfully. However, to stay effective communicators all the time, to remember effective communication skills during tense negotiations and arguments, we need to practice the skills regularly and that's why we have to be active in our regular Toastmaster meetings and activities.

I request all the members of our Club to remember their Toastmaster promise. In the process of keeping your promise and working toward your own development, you can help our Club grow, not only in size, but also in Performance.

The MOMENT OF TRUTH

Chris Scherer, CTM

The MOMENT OF TRUTH! A skilled Matador, armed with nothing but a red cape and quick reflexes - vs. a charging bull! What's next? This a Moment of Truth as used in the literature!! Keep on reading to find out what happens.

For us chairborne Rangers, it's much less hazardous. Toastmasters International defines a "Moment of Truth" as:

"...an episode when a prospective member or Toastmaster comes in contact with any aspect of the Toastmasters experience, and forms an impression of the Club's quality and service."

This article is derived from the TI Successful Club Series package titled "Moments of Truth", 1993, catalogue No. 290 - A.

Moments of Truth can be grouped into six major categories:

- * First Impressions
- * Membership Orientation
- * Fellowship, Variety, and Communication
- * Program Planning and meeting organization
- * Membership Strength
- * Recognition of Achievements

Each of these categories has six points. To present all of these would be too much for a Newsletter article. (It took 59 MINUTES to present orally at the March 14th meeting - even using some shortcuts of the information from the original package!) But here are some highlights as background.

Each guest should be greeted as he/she comes into the meeting room. All members (not just the Sergeant at Arms) should be able to do this quite well.

Each new member should be assigned a coach (or mentor) to answer their questions and to provide feedback.

A Club should have at least twenty active members (so that roles can be fulfilled without excessive effort on the part of just a few people). From time to time, members need to leave because of moving from the area, retiring, etc. Thus, to keep 20 active members means that each person needs to bring a guest from time to time. Also the Club (with its advantages) needs to be publicized in the area (in our case, the GSFC complex).

Members' achievements (such as earning a CTM) should be formally recognized.

Want to find out more? The whole package (including ten viewgraphs) is available in the Club files. You may even want to present it! (Each presenter will bring in her/his own insights and thus make it a worthwhile experience to the Club.)

So - How did our literary **Moment of Truth** turn out? Bullfights are going out of fashion now, because of respect for the natural world, and concern for animals (all creations of God). Nearly always in actual bullfights, the bull would be attacked by sword-wielding picadors (and other supporting forces). And the bull always LOST!! Not very sporting.

By contrast, in Toastmasters: If we play our own Moments of Truth right, Everyone can Win!!

What's So Funny?

Michael K. Heney

Last fall, I had the privilege of representing Goddard Toastmasters in the Humorous Speech Competition. I surprised myself (and others, I'm sure!) by winning both the Area 42 and Division D contests before finishing out of the money at the District 36 participating in a speech competition, and I had a lot of fun and learned a lot along the

The fun started just after the club contest. I

two speeches that I thought were kind of funny,

and, after some dithering, I went with the older speech. Although I won the club contest, I had a couple of problems – the speech was a bit on the short side, and even worse, I didn't think it was all that funny! It's hard to sell a speech as humorous to an audience when you don't believe it yourself, so (with the concurrence of the club) I decided to switch speeches for the area competition. The second speech – which dealt with the impending birth of what turned out to be my daughter – was really the better speech; I don't know what I was thinking when I decided to go with the other speech to start with.

First stop was the Area 42 contest. My wife Susan and daughter Rachel (who was not quite 3 months old) came to watch – my wife had never seen me speak before. That made things just a touch strange, as the premise of the speech was that Susan was 8 months pregnant, with the baby due real soon. But it really didn't matter – folks doted over the baby appropriately, and there were some familiar faces from Goddard Toastmasters, which made me feel a bit more comfortable.

The evening started off with the table topics competition, which gave me a chance to review my speech and build up a good case of nerves. I had given this speech three times before at the club level – originally as a manual speech, then twice as "practice runs" for the area contest, but this was for real. I spent most of the table topics contest fidgeting with my notes and trying to distract myself with the baby. Finally, the Humorous Speech contest started. There were 5 contestants, and I drew a number in the middle of the pack. Hearing the first couple speeches helped relax me – they were good, and they were FUNNY. Then came my turn. One of the high points of the evening came as I was getting ready – quietly putting my materials away so I'd be free to walk up to the lectern and make a (hopefully) smooth entrance. My wife leaned over to me and asked "don't you want to get your notes ready? I whispered back "No – I don't need 'em". She was incredulous. "You have it MEMORIZED? How long is it?" to which I responded "6 minutes." For some reason, that gave me an extra boost of confidence – I had impressed my wife before I said a single word.

The speech went very well. The audience was laughing out loud – and in the right spots. I didn't muff anything, and my delivery was good, although my body language was a bit stiff. And I finished just as the yellow light came on – right where I wanted to be. I did step on a few laughs – my timing could have bit a touch better, but I was generally pleased with the speech I had given. But there were at least two other speeches that were pretty darn good – I figured I wouldn't come in last, but I didn't know where I'd finish.

The results were announced. To begin, there were two disqualifications for time – one ran to long, one too short. And one of those speeches was one that I thought was a possible winner. I was a bit surprised – I hadn't expected time to be a factor. But there it was. I sat bolt upright when my name was NOT called for the second place trophy – I had won! I'll never know if I gave the best speech that night – but I DID give the best speech that conformed to the rules.

The Division D contest followed a month later. I wasn't able to do much preparation for it – I had a 4-day conference in LA to chair the week before the division contest and that (along with having a new baby) consumed much of my life right about then. I got back home 3 days before the contest, unwound for a few days, and walked through the speech a couple of times the day of the contest. It helped a LOT that the speech was based on actual experience – I would really be telling a story I knew well.

Susan and Rachel didn't go to the Division contest with me – they had heard the speech before, and it was a cold night out. I headed out the door, hoping for a second or third place finish. After all, this was the next level up, and it WAS only my first contest. And I had caught a cold at my conference in LA – I'd be competing with a sore throat.

The Division contest turned out to be a good lesson in the do's and don'ts of contests. In the direction that is given to the contestants before the competition, the point is made that this is, above all else, a SPEECH contest. It's not supposed to be a "tall tale", or a stand-up routine, but a fully developed speech, with an opening, a body, and a closing. I hadn't paid much attention to that – after all, what I had WAS a speech, one that timed out at just about 6 minutes, safely in the middle of the 4:30 to 7:30 allowable range.

I drew third position in the contest. I was surprised at the other speeches that were given. One was really a stand-up routine, the second was a "top-ten list", which I thought crossed the line – flatulence and mucus just don't strike me as appropriate speech content. The audience seemed to agree; the laughter seemed to be more of the nervous / embarrassed sort than amused. I could feel it when my turn came – the audience seemed a bit gun-shy, almost afraid of what might come next. It took about the first 30 seconds for the

crowd to relax – which can seem like forever, but once they did, they opened up, and a wonderful feedback developed between me and them. It was my first real experience with that, and I really enjoyed it. We clicked, and I was able to work off of their reaction and nail the timing of my lines and pauses, which maximized the impact of the speech. One of the speeches after mine turned out to be a "tall tale"; only one of the other 4 speeches was what I'd characterize as an actual speech. So, when all was said and done, we had 2 speeches, one stand up bit, a tall tale, and a top-ten list in a speech contest. There was one time disqualification (too long), and this time I wasn't especially surprised at the end result – given what the contest was supposed to be, I didn't think there was any question that I had given the best SPEECH of the evening, and the judges agreed. And so it was on to the District 36 contest – which is as far as the Humorous Speech competition goes.

The District competition was an entirely different beast. There were a LOT more people there, for one thing. And the level of competition was much stronger. I drew the fourth speaking position out of the 5 contestants. I knew I had my work cut out for me with the first speaker. It didn't get any easier seeing the second or third. By the time my turn came, I had a crowd that had just seen three excellent – and very funny – speeches, and had fairly high standards by that point. The laughs didn't come as easily as they had in the earlier competitions – indeed, the biggest laugh I got was an ad-lib line added on the fly – and the speech just didn't seem to work as well as it had previously. I didn't do a BAD job, but it didn't seem to be a winning effort.

After the last speech, all five contestants were interviewed while the ballots were being counted. It tuns out that we broke into two groups. Three of the contestants were from Advanced Toastmasters clubs, and were contest veterans. Two of us were about halfway through our CTMs, and were participating in our first competition. Not surprisingly, the trophies for first, second, and third places went to the "old pros", and us newbies left empty-handed.

Still, that's as it should be. This was my first competition, after all, and I joined Toastmasters precisely because I didn't have any idea how to speak in public. I'm told that I'm a "natural", which I have a hard time buying. Winning was fun, but losing was better for me. The experience showed me that I CAN be good at speaking, but that I have a lot of room for improvement.

So, what did I learn from all this? For one thing, I learned the truth behind the saying "speak to your audience". In the case of a contest, the audience is the judges, who evaluate your speech on the basis of the contest rules and a set of evaluation guidelines. I believe that a number of contestants took themselves out of the competition by not paying attention to this. And when trying to be funny, this concept becomes even more important. My technique for trying to elicit a laugh is to take the audience to a comfortable, well-known place, and then use an unusual twist or exaggeration to take things in an unexpected direction – while staying within the audience's "comfort zone". And I learned that not everyone will agree that what *I* think is funny really is. One of the early bits of feedback I received was "It was a good speech, but I didn't think it was funny." While the "not funny" part seems to have been a minority opinion, the important thing to me was that the reviewer STILL thought it was a good speech. That more than anything else made my day – because that's what I really joined Toastmaster's for.

Finding the Fire Don Moore, CTM

What makes a good speech? I've been in Toastmasters for nearly six years (and still don't have my CTM). In spite of all the positive feedback, the friendly faces and the immersion in the Toastmasters culture, I still don't really like to speak. But, at least I'm not as terrified as when I first joined. I've learned a few tricks and (hopefully) improved over the years.

No matter which speech I delivered from the knack of a smooth and completely successful all the steps necessary to drive a car cleaning, stoking and setting the draught yourself without lighting the fire. I know I'll never

basic manual, never seemed to quite get the delivery. Sometimes it seemed a bit like taking without starting the motor. Or, it was like of a wood stove and then trying to warm be a great speaker, but I really want to

achieve competency in the technical issues of speaking. Some people, I believe, are naturally good speakers. I am not.

So, last summer my family and I went on vacation in New England, Massachussetts to be more precise. It was an impromptu vacation plucked from the necessity of a trip to that part of the country to collect our daughter from a week-long journalism workshop she had attended. Vacations are sometimes relaxing, sometimes not. Sometimes they live up to your expectations and sometimes they fall far short. The advantage we had in this case was that we had no real expectations (or even anticipations). It was not likely we could be disappointed, only surprised or, at worst, bored.

We had a week and a day to spend at our pleasure so we rented a cottage on the coast near a rocky shore with tiny rooms and a kitchenette. That way, we could save money by cooking our own meals if we chose. The first night, however, we had booked a room in a small motel in Salem, the site of the infamous witch trials in colonial America circa 1692. The city's unpretentious layout, old fashioned streets (definitely not designed for modern traffic) and amazing bounty of old houses intrigued me. These houses were not just old, but ancient by American standards. Salem was a living city, not a fancy, frozen act of restoration like Williamsburg, Virginia, but a functioning, living, breathing city, maybe a bit on the downhill side of it's once thriving past, but alive nevertheless.

We walked the streets and into the houses open to the public. We learned their stories and the history of the city. We learned that it was once a thriving seaport with many well to do and influential people. And of course, we learned about the witch trials of the late seventeenth century. Salem now tries to celebrate its claim to infamy by attaching to itself a rather tacky label "The Witch City", complete with a logo of a stereotypical witch riding before the disk of the moon on a broomstick. This trite image seemed silly to us on us as my wife and daughter and I continued our exploration into the events that shaped that part of our nation's pre-history. In 1692 America was still an English colony.

For the long car trip up to Massachussetts we had borrowed a cassette tape of playwright Arthur Miller's "The Crucible". My wife and I, then later, my daughter (after we picked her up at her workshop) let this rendition of the witch trials unfold in our imaginations. "The Crucible" was a combination of historical fact and the author's commentary on the politics of his time, the mid-1950's or the McCarthy era. The political figures persecuted by Senator McCarthy and his allies were accused, scandalized and discredited, mostly on hearsay much as were the innocent victims of early Salem. The similarities of the Salem witch trials to this political but equally hysterical purging of those perceived as non-cooperative or outcast coined the political term "witch hunt".

The story of the Salem witch trials is one of a diverse collection of mostly ordinary, some extraordinary and some suspicious or simply merely unpopular people from the community at large. They were accused of consorting with the devil. In the McCarthy era the equivalent of consorting with the devil was being a proponent of or sympathizer with Communism. The passion and drama of this play evoked a sense of fear, anger and blatant injustice in us, the listeners.

In Salem we visited sites associated with the trial and its victims. We examined some of the trial papers and even attended a mock trial of the first person, accused, a defiant, attractive woman who was a social outcast. I felt as though I was being pulled back into that time period. I felt its presence and its power. I began to see more and more clearly the dynamics of the situation. I began to understand the betrayal of neighbor against neighbor out of fear, for spite or for personal gain. I began to understand the murky, cloaking fear of the town's people. 'Will I be named next?' Or, 'would I be visited by an evil one.' Or even, 'Will my past sins, which until now seemed so small be enough to condemn me?' Reality and fantasy became mixed.

A small circle of young girls in the community put on a very convincing act, falling into fits when someone "possessed by the devil" came near them. That was sufficient evidence, "spectral evidence", admissible by the court, for condemnation. The intrigue, the fear and later the shame became very palpable. I could feel a sense both of dread and of the terrible wrong done against those accused. Many were women. In all nineteen were mercilessly and cruelly hanged. I was astounded by the raw courage of those that stood up to this charade of evil. Those who remained true and faithful to their convictions paid the full price for their courage. How many people do you know today who would rather go to their deaths, to be publicly strangled, than renounce their good names. The choice was theirs. They could admit guilt and live in shame or die protesting innocence.

Though we spent only the first night in Salem we continued to drive back to that city day after day from the small cottage we'd rented on the coast. This was some distance away but we wanted to learn more. The experience was so intense that it invaded my daily thoughts and eventually even my dreams. From repeated study of the written records of the trial I found to my surprise that it was beginning to effect my patterns of speech.

The week's vacation eventually concluded and we returned home filled with the knowledge and images we had gathered. Shortly thereafter I attended a Toastmasters meeting where the agenda had fallen apart. The TMOD asked for volunteers to give impromptu speeches. I volunteered; something I would not ordinarily have done. But, I wanted to share my recent experiences in Salem with my fellow Toastmasters while it still fresh in my mind. That's when everything seemed to fall into place and I learned an important lesson about speaking. Some people are good technical speakers or just good speakers in general. I call them "naturals". For me, delivering a good speech was all about one very essential ingredient, passion--and the desire to share that burning passion with my Toastmasters family.

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Goddard Toastmasters Wants You! Jeff Bolognese, ATM-B

I want you to be President. President of Goddard Toastmasters, that is. I can already hear you thinking, "I can't do that." Sure you can. Believe it or not, you probably already have what it takes. But what does it take to be the President of Goddard Toastmasters? Take this brief quiz to assess your qualifications.

Does a Presidential candidate have to:

- a) Be a CTM or higher
- b) Have years of TM experience
- c) A bold vision of the future of the club
- d) Have hours of free time each week
- e) Be a few sandwiches short of a picnic

Well, aside from "e", which is debatable, you don't need to have extraordinary skills to be the club President. Here's what I think it takes:

- a) Decent organizational skills
- b) The ability to work with a team and delegate work
- c) A few free hours each month
- d) The desire to make each TM meeting valuable for the membership

Those, in my opinion, are the core skills our club President needs, and just about any member of Toastmasters has those skills, or is working to improve those skills.

So what are the duties of club President? I've distilled them down to three major tasks:

First and foremost, it's the duty of the President, in conjunction with the Vice President of Education, to make sure every TM meeting is worthwhile. Primarily that means getting the meeting schedules filled and making sure that we have a place to meet. The heart of Toastmasters is the regularly scheduled meeting. That is the primary place where we develop our skills and improve ourselves. Each meeting is a training session and an opportunity to take another step closer to achieving our communication and leadership goals. Making each meeting productive is the key to a successful club.

The second, main duty of the President is to coordinate the executive committee. As President you are the leader of a team of officers. A good President delegates work to the appropriate officers and thereby keeps the burden of running the club evenly distributed so that no one person is overwhelmed. That means, for example, when it comes time for membership renewals, the secretary prepares the paperwork for TM, the treasurer collects dues, and the VP of membership reminds folks to get their renewals in promptly.

And finally, the club President, and all the other officers for that matter, needs to lead by example. It's been my experience that the best way to encourage people to participate in club activities is to participate yourself. That doesn't mean taking on all the responsibilities for every meeting. You need to show your fellow members that you aren't asking them to do something that you wouldn't do yourself. Sort of a positive peer pressure that helps to build membership momentum. Besides, the President is still a member of Toastmasters and still working toward personal training goals.

None of these tasks takes superhuman abilities or an inordinate amount of time. What you really need is a desire to make Goddard Toastmasters the best club possible for you and your fellow members. If you have that, all the rest will fall in place. Always remember that the President is part of a team, so you're never working alone.

So, do you want a strong club? Do you want to improve your leadership skills? If so, I want you to be the President!

Treasurer's Report Christopher K. Scherer

The GSFC Club statement dated January 31, 2001 (from the GSFC Credit Union) showed the following:

Savings: \$177.15 Checking: \$195.75

In addition to our Credit Union account, we had a credit from Toastmasters International of \$158.25 (shown on a Nov. 30, 2000 statement from TI).

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Club Leadership Positions

What are they?

They are the positions of **President**, **Vice President of Education**, **Vice President of Membership**, **Vice President of Public Relations**, **Secretary**, **Treasurer and Sergeant At Arms**. The time commitment for all these position varies, but on avaerage 1/2 hours per week.

What do they do?

President: President is the club's chief executive officer, responsible for general supervision and operation of the Club. President presides at Club and executive meetings, directs club for educational growth and leadership needs, establishes long term and short term plans for Club growth.

At Goddard, with 2 meetings per a month, the President makes sure that meeting TMOD positions are filled, members receive the information about meetings, contests in Area, Division level, Training sessions and any other club activities.

Vice President of Education: Plans for successful Club meetings, promotes the Toastmasters educational program to Club members; orients new members, assigns mentors to new members; makes sure of proper evaluation procedure; arranges Speechcraft, Success/Leadership, and Youth Leadership Programs to be conducted; encourages members to participate in other Toastmasters activities and programs; administers speech contests; chairs the Education Committee; presides in the absence of the President etc.

Vice President of Membership: Plans, organizes, and implements a continuous marketing effort, promotes Club membership and membership retention; helps prepare the semiannual membership report; provides recognition of members who contribute to the increase of membership in Toastmasters International; maintains an accurate membership roster and attendance records etc,

Vice President of Public Relations: Develops, implements, and administers a publicity program that maintains a positive image of Toastmasters International for all members, guests and the general public. Prepares news releases, publicizes Club events; develops literature about the Club to the media etc.

Secretary: Responsible for all Club records and correspondence. Keeps the Club Constitution and Bylaws, and all other Club documents, submits updated membership and officer records to World Headquarters; prepares and mails orders for Toastmasters supplies; records and reads minutes of Club and Executive Committee meetings; circulates TIPS, the Supply Catalog, and The Toastmaster magazine during Club meetings etc.

Treasurer: Executes financial policies, procedures, audits and controls. Receives and disburses funds in payment of all obligations; provides the bank with a new signature card; develops budget, presents financial reports and submits Club accounts for audit.

Sergeant At Arms: Serves as master host and makes arrangements for all Club meetings. Makes sure that members and guests are welcomed; arranges room and equipment for each meeting; colects ballots and tallies votes; controls Club property between meetings etc.

Announcements

It's time for officer nominations for the upcoming TM year. We will be voting in our new officers this May for the July 1 beginning of the TM year. If you're interested in serving as an officer, or serving on an officer's committee, please let me know. The upcoming issue of "The Oracle" will have descriptions of some of the offices.

Spring Fun Run is scheduled for May 2nd. Don Moore is getting together a Goddard Toastmasters team to participate in the event. If you're interested, contact Don. If possible we'll try to get some team T-shirts. Design ideas are also welcome. The current date for the fun-run is Wednesday, May 2nd. Remember, you can also walk during the fun-run!

Lastely, our summer picnic is scheduled for June 27th. Bigyani Das and Mike Heney are in charge of organizing this event. If you'd like to help them out, please contact either one of them.

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Reach for the Stars

Congratulations to **Janett Gervin**, **Pat McHale**, **Bigyani Das**, and **Don Moore** for getting their CTM certificates.

Welcome New Members:

Goddard Toastmasters Club welcomes Stephen Palm.



Congratulations:

Congratulations to **Paul McCeney** for winning the Second Place in the Area 42 International Speech Contest.

Congratulations to **Jeff Bolognese** for winning the Area 42 Evaluation Contest.

News:

On March 23rd Friday night Area 42 held its International Speech and Evaluation contests. Paul McCeney represented our club in the speech contest, and Jeff Bolognese

competed in the evaluation portion. When all the dust had settled in the speech contest, Paul took home the 2nd place trophy, with Denny Derr from Parliament TM winning 1st place. In the evaluation contest, Denny took second place (she was busy that night), and Jeff will represent the Area at the Division D evaluation contest.

Congratulations to Paul and Jeff. Mike Heney and Bigyani Das helped out as timer and judge, respectively. Extra special thanks to our area governer, Ray Chin, for putting together a contest that actually finished ahead of schedule!

March Meeting Minutes:

On March 8th meeting Toastmaster of the Day was Jeff Bolognese. Kathleen Fernandez gave a very important Thought for the Day on the utilization of Time. Don Moore gave the word of the Day as "symbiosis", the meaning of which is interdependent relationships. Mike Heney presented his 9th speech from the Basic Manual on "Let Dennis Fly". "Moments of Truth" was presented by Chris Scherer as a better Club Series activity. General Evaluater Paul McCiney lead the Evaluation session with Bigyani Das evaluating Mike Heney's speech. It was a great meeting.

Mike Heney was TMOD of March 28th meeting. Bill Pullen gave the Word of the Day as "volunteer" and the Thought of the Day was given by Don Moore. Bigyani Das gave the first speech from the Advanced Manual on Public Relations. The topic of the speech was "Experiences Expressions". with Martha O'Bryan presented the speech "Creating the Best Club Climate" from the "Successful Club Series". Kathleen Fernandez was the Table Topic Master who led a very interesting table topic discussion on various issues related to Education. Paul McCiney talked on the Public Education System and its effectivity. Pat McHale talked on School Voucher system. Regina Cody talked on Teacher's Salary and Carolyn Ng talked on the Methods of Discipline at schools.

Paul McCeney was selected as the best table topic correspondent.

President: Every 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the Jeffrey Bolognese **Meeting Dates:** VP, Education: Mike Heney Month VP, Membership: Carl Taylor Place: Bldg. 28, Rm E210 (90% of the time) Bigyani Das 11:30am-1:00pm **VP, Public Relations:** Time: Any officer or the WWW at: **Treasurer:** Chris Scherer Contacts: Regina Cody http://snipe.gsfc.nasa.gov/~jeff/TM **Secretary: SGT at Arms:** Don Moore