



On the Horizon

New Horizons Toastmasters Club Newsletter
January-March 2008

Club Number 312, Area 27,
Division B, District 60, Region VI

Julia Savitch explains

How you too can be funny

There's one place where humor is always welcome and appreciated – at your local Toastmasters club.

You must have noticed that the person who wins Table Topics most often is the one who makes everyone laugh. It's the same with prepared speeches. When audience members laugh, they remember. Something stirs their emotions and impacts them strongly and they remember the humorous performance as the one that stood out. They reflect this in their "Best Prepared Speech" votes.

Whether your entire speech is humorous or your aim is to enliven a serious message by incorporating an appropriate joke or two, funny moments will help you attract and keep the audience's attention and put you in the winner's circle. As a bonus, the humor will help make your message "stick" after the speech is done.

When our *On the Horizon* editor asked me to share with you any knowledge I have about incorporating humor and speeches, I was puzzled at first. I had never thought of the process of humor writing. Nor had I considered any rules that might apply. I just acted intuitively. Now, after careful analysis of my own approach, I think I can provide you with a few words of advice. The following points and recommendations ought to be

Cont. page 4

It's easy to see in Fred Jones's physical appearance the amount of time he puts into the sport of indoor rowing. You can see it in the barrel chest (which would look good on a man half his age) or, maybe, it's in the confident air he always has about him.

Fred, a former club president and avid Toastmaster, recently participated in the 2008 World Indoor Rowing Championships, known as C.R.A.S.H.-B. Sprints. It all happened at Boston University's Agganis Centre, Boston, Massachusetts, in February. Fred (that's him in the picture below) says that...but let's let him tell it.

Row, row, row your...way to stardom



By Fred Jones

The weekend (February 22-23) started off slowly. My 15-year-old daughter, Alexis, and I arrived at the Pearson International Airport in Toronto on Saturday morning around 6:50 a.m. only to find our flight cancelled. We managed to get on 'standby' despite being told nothing was available that day. Fortunately one person didn't show plus there was one empty seat, so we arrived in Boston around 6 p.m., missing the prepared luncheon.

Cont. page 2

Fred Jones

He rowed, rowed, rowed his boat (boat #10) to a fourth place finish

Cont. from Page 1

Despite suffering from a head cold from the previous Thursday, I performed okay in the race. I came in fourth in the 65 – 69 age group. The top three in the group were about 15 seconds ahead of my group.

There was no way I could catch them. The high-ranking Germans were well coached. I could hear their coach

Sunday evening how well I had performed – 4th place! From the first part of the race until about 300 meters, I was in 7th place. I moved up to 6th place when that rower lost speed with about 300 meters remaining. Then I moved up to 5th place with less than 100 meters to go when I passed that rower. By putting on a spurt in the last few meters of the race, I

hundred meters. When you're in a race, you only concentrate on your race plan and are not aware of what's happening on the other machines. Only while watching the replay did I realize how exciting it was taking 4th place. Watching the replay you see that all participants in my group are ordered. You also see two others in fourth and fifth place. These two

Want to see more C.R.A.S.H.-B. highlights? You can find race videos and photographs on the same site. Any one of the videos will give you a good idea of what a race is about. Try watching race number 4 with the German coach pushing his participant to the end. Most of the videos show only one row of machines. My group was on the



Wikipedia On indoor rowing

The modern rowing machine has been around for about one hundred years. The machine formerly used linear pneumatic resistance to do its job, but some 25 years ago the air resistant rowing machine was introduced. Then, in 1988, a hydraulic flywheel rowing machine was released. Many modern rowing-machine designs are hybrids of these earlier designs.

The most common rowing-machine consists of a flywheel connected to a chain and handle. The rower pushes his body backwards with the legs, then pivots his back, and pulls on the handle, causing the flywheel to spin. The flywheel has an applied braking mechanism intended to simulate the feel of an oar moving through water. Depending on the machine, the rower either moves back and forth as part of the rowing action, or the rower remains stationary and the flywheel mechanism moves.

Indoor rowing is one of the most challenging forms of exercise as it works most major muscular areas of the body. It is also an excellent cardiovascular exercise.

In addition to the high levels of fitness attained, rowing is an intense calorie burner. Though rowers with less ability and training will burn fewer calories, the sport is excellent for losing weight.

Indoor rowing has historically been used for fitness, training and self-improvement rather than as an independent form of competition. Most major competitions include many categories based on age as well as weight. While the fastest times are generally achieved by rowers between 20 and 40 years old, teenagers and rowers over 90 are common.

To give you some idea of the speed of the rowing, here are the times for the top five placers in the 65-69 age group:

Christian Sommer, 65, Concept2 Team Germany, 06:46.9

Horst Paelzer, 65, Concept2 Team Germany, 06:54.8

Elliott Eisenbud, 65, C.S.U. Sacramento, 06:59.7

Fred Jones, 65, Ancient Mariner, 07:14.2

Lowell Caylor, 66, unaffiliated, 07:14.5

shouting encouragement to them, in German, throughout the race. The first place winner, Christian Sommer, broke his own world record for his age group.

I was in a group of four vying for fourth to seventh place. I didn't realize until I arrived home on

managed to pass Lowell Caylor to 4th place by 0.3 of a second, blink of an eye.

The race is replayed at: <http://www.c2forum.com/replays/index.php?file=racedata2008/Cheat03>.

Watching it, you see my boat move up in the last few

participants were in another age group (55 – 59) so their time counts for that group, not in the 65 – 69 category.

My time, 7 minutes 14.2 seconds, is almost 2 seconds faster than the race I did three weeks earlier at the Canadian Indoor Rowing Championships.

right side of the arena. The machine I rode does not appear on the videos. But you can feel the intensity when watching the German win the race for the 55-59 age group at: <http://www.concept2.com/us/training/racing/crashb/videos2008.asp?race=4>.



Double whammy at the Area contest

Stetter and Savitch win big

Toastmasters Josef Stetter and Julia Savitch did us proud on Thursday, March 6, in a committee room at Mel Lastman Square. They represented the New Horizons Toastmasters Club at the Area level of the 2008 International Speech and Evaluation contests – and won.

Josef Stetter



DTM Josef Stetter gave a lively performance in the speech contest, at times proselytizing like a fundamentalist preacher, mimicking the antics of a hamster in its cage, and finally leaping frog-like to get the jump on the competition.

Josef, a long-time member of our club, a former VP of Public Relations and Area Governor, will meet yet another roster of talent in the Division level of the speech contest on Tuesday, March 25 at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine (CCNM), 1255 Sheppard Avenue East, in Toronto.

Julia Savitch



ACS Julia Savitch took on the evaluation of a guest speaker's speech with bravado, forcefully leaving the other two competitors in the dust with five strong points in its favor and three others that the speaker might use next time for a better job.

Julia, who noted that she hardly every wins the "best evaluator" award at club meetings, said she took on the contest challenge to improve her evaluation performances. She'll meet other Area winners for another go-round at CCNM, located at the corner of Sheppard Avenue East and Leslie Street, in Toronto.

Message from the Club Contest Chair

Erin McLaughlin, club secretary, was the brains behind the successful club International Speech and Evaluation Contest on March 5. The club executive wants to encourage you all to take on roles like this when the opportunities knock. As Erin says, it was great experience and, really, not much different than any other Toastmasters role you might routinely take.

Fellow Toastmasters,

I was eagerly looking forward to the Evaluation and International Speech Contests scheduled for March 5 since I would serve as the Club Contest Chair. It would be my first time participating in a Toastmaster's contest in any capacity. So far, I haven't even been a spectator.

In the days leading up to the event, I learned a lot about the different components of the contests and how best to piece them together. Really, serving as Club Contest Chair is not any different from serving in any other Toastmasters role. You take it one step at a time. You read the rules and objectives and do the research. Toastmasters International provides information in abundance and, then, there's a wealth of Internet materials from various Toastmasters clubs. Also, you go to the most valuable resource of all -- those club members who have filled the role before. I can't express enough how helpful other club members were.

It was Toastmasters 'business as usual' as I started to get the hang of it, though at a slightly higher level. Each project in Toastmasters, whether it is a speech or a leadership project, focuses on one or two discrete skills, maybe skills that build incrementally on others. A contest, however, demands that you exercise, all at once, all of the skills required by a competent speaker or leader. This is the purpose of a contest: To challenge us to pull together all of the skills that we have learned in Toastmasters. This is as true for coordinators of the contests as it is for the contestants.

One of the biggest challenges to serving as Club Contest Chair is to deal with contingencies. The morning of the contest, I was dealt one I didn't expect: I came down with the flu. I couldn't attend the meeting so I had to hand everything over to someone else. Toastmaster Matt Calaminici generously stepped into the role.

I have heard that our club contest ran smoothly and that the evaluations and speeches were of the highest calibre. New Horizons was also well-represented at the Area level on March 6, our representatives winning in each category. They now move on to the Division level.

This year's club contest is over. Even though I was unable to chair the actual club event, I got more out of it than expected. I am looking forward to doing more and, eventually, attending my first Toastmasters club contest.

*Erin McLaughlin,
2008 Club Contest Chair*



Toastmasters in a pinch!

The true Toastmaster is one who is there in a pinch to take on a challenge and help out. Here we have two such Toastmasters. Matt Calaminici (right) gamely accepted the role of Club Contest Chair when

the designated chair became ill. Matt presents a token of appreciation to Mary Szatcher, of Toast of the Town Toastmasters, who just as gamely agreed to be 'target speaker' for our club's Evaluation Contest. Thanks to both.

Photo by Yassamin Gharai

New home: The New Horizons Toastmasters Club will be getting one. In the fall of 2008, construction will begin on the 'new' Edithvale Community Centre. Images of the proposed new centre are posted on the wall on the first floor near the office. Our new meeting location will be impressive: Open spaces, an elevator, a green roof, a dance studio, a gym, meeting rooms, air conditioning. Summer meetings will be a lot cooler; winter meetings more comfortable. More good news! The new centre will be built at the corner of Edithvale and Finch avenues. The current building will not be demolished until the new building is complete. Before our next meeting, go to the first floor and have a look at the plans for the new building. Permit yourself to be impressed!

Clower power: As speakers and Toastmasters, we could all learn from Jerry Clower, that popular American country comedian best known for his stories of the rural south. He parlayed his "funny-ness" into a 27-year career as a professional entertainer. It's said that most of Clower's stories really happened, but their humor owed a lot to his flair for embellishment. "I don't tell funny stories," he often said. "I tell stories funny."

The New Horizons Toastmasters Club meets nearly every Wednesday between 7:05-9:00 P.M. at the Edithville Community Centre, 7 Edithville Drive (south side of Finch Avenue West, between Yonge and Bathurst streets) in North York. Guests are welcome. Please drop in.

Questions or contributions for *On the Horizon*? Contact the editor, Clarie Martin: clariemartin@yahoo.com.

New Horizons executive:

President: Erna Brusch
 VP of Education: Yassamin Gharai
 VP of Membership: Vadim Katcherovski
 VP of Public Relations: Clarie Martin (assisted by Yollanda Zhang and Sylvia Ley)
 Secretary: Erin McLaughlin
 Treasurer: Julia He
 Sergeant-at-Arms: Le Vu
 Immediate Past President: Fred Jones

Julia Savitch explains

How you too can be funny

Cont. from Page 1

helpful to any of my fellow Toastmasters who want to be "funny" or, at least, a little bit funnier.

Do the research

Use the Internet to find jokes that relate to your speech's topic. It's the fastest and most efficient way. All you have to do is 'google' the word "jokes" or, more specifically, "jokes on doctors", "jokes about cooking", etc. You will get a lot of material to choose from. You simply decide which jokes best suit your topic.

I suggest you begin your speech with a joke to "wake up" the audience, to catch their attention. And use another joke at the end to emphasize your point or points, thus making your final words memorable.

Another excellent place to include a good joke is the moment of transition, that point where your speech moves from one point to another. Try for a laugh, also, when your speech becomes heavy or technical and your audience's concentration appears compromised. A joke allows a tired mind to "take a break" and prepare itself for the next piece of information.

Watch for humor in your life

When you prepare to talk about your experiences or those of others, remember the moments and situations that made you laugh. You may even find humor in situations that seemed not at all funny to you at the time.

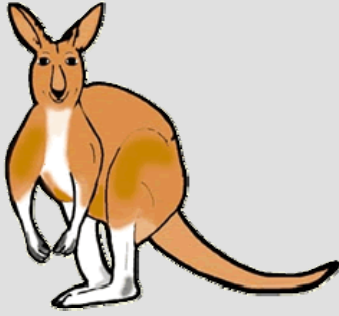
By looking at scary or embarrassing or upsetting events through someone else's eyes, you may yet see humor in them. From the perspective of an outsider, the situation might have been hilarious.

Don't be afraid to poke fun at yourself, at your own ineptitude and blunders. It takes courage to laugh at ourselves. When we do it often brings respect and elicits the sympathy of others. Often, the only thing stopping people from being funny is that they won't allow themselves to be funny.

Exaggerate the truth

You have collected funny material for your speech from external sources and from life.

Cont. on Page 5



The Final Word

David Griffiths

Aussie continues ‘blind date’ in Toronto

In our last issue, David Griffiths, an Australian toastmaster and member of the Parramatta Toastmasters Club, described his visit to Toronto. David had some kind words to say about us and followed it up with a few words of advice should any of our members range the world in search of Toastmasters clubs. Below David continues his description of the “blind date” that took him to Club #312.

As I entered, Chairperson Yanjin Zhang had the floor so I quietly found a seat. VP of Education Yassamin Gharai noted minor changes to the program and introduced the Head Table. “Word of the Day” followed; this is an item I have seen before. Clarie Martin, after a brief explanation, encouraged members and guests to use the word(s) during the evening.

Table Topics Master Julia He conducted a “rolling topics” session. Each speaker used a word from the previous speaker’s presentation.

Following the introduction of guests and a break, Toastmaster Dennis Pabonita initiated the speaking program. Each speaker worked from an advanced manual.

Le Vu’s speech told the story of Irish coffee from its beginnings at the Buena Vista Café to her own St Patrick’s Day celebrations. Clarie Martin recounted tales that included Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II’s marriage and ‘Newfoundland elephants’. Julia Savitch explained her distaste for food preparation.

General Evaluator Michelle Wei led the

evaluation program. Evaluators were given two minutes for their assignments, rather than three.

At the conclusion of the meeting, I addressed the group and we also took time for photographs. And just when I thought the evening was coming to a close, Club President Erna Bruschi mentioned that the executive committee had planned to meet afterwards at a local restaurant. Perhaps, I would like to come along and join them for a bite and a beer?

The plan had promise. I went along. It would give me an opportunity to find out more about the club and its operation.

With weekly two-hour meetings, New Horizons members spend a lot more time at Toastmasters than we do at Parramatta. Shorter meetings also give a greater proportion of time over to the prepared speaking program and, consequently, members of the club achieve educational awards much quicker.

Although the club has a long history, most members present had been at the club since 2005. In fact, of the 29 active members listed, only three joined before then, and none prior to 2002. Nevertheless, the club still has members at all levels of achievement, from CC (Competent Communicator) to DTM (Distinguished Toastmaster).

Although New Horizons operates differently, the basic concepts are universal. Club members work hard behind the scenes to make each meeting a success.

Julia Savitch explains

How you too can be funny

Cont. from Page 4

It’s time now to consider delivery. One technique that I’ve found infallible is the use of exaggeration.

Let’s suppose that, in your speech, you intend to complain about your date spending too much time during a romantic evening talking about his ex-girlfriend. Exaggerate by including a numeric value large enough to reflect the comedic aspect of the situation: “For three hours I *enjoyed* my date’s account of his previous relationship.” Don’t forget to vocally emphasize the words “for three hours” as you provide a sufficiently disgusted or anguished expression that your audience will understand perfectly.

Act out the part

Make sure you convey your jokes as expressively and dynamically as possible. It has always worked for me.

Imagine yourself, as you speak, in the situation you describe. Transmit the emotions. Use appropriate gestures and expressions. Mimic all participants. Again, exaggerate so even audience members in distant corners of the room feel and appreciate your humor.

Use stereotypical characters for added impact. If you imitate an old lady, make your voice creak, allow your hands to shake, and shuffle your feet. Even if you believe you have no acting abilities, you will surprise yourself by deliberately working on a joke’s delivery.

Follow-up a joke physically

When you have delivered your punch line, retain that facial expression and body position for a bit in the pause that follows.

For example, the joke concluded with someone being surprised or shocked. Let that goggled-eyed, open-mouthed expression stand for a few moments; permit that palms-wide-open bodily stance to prevail for some seconds after you’ve said the words. This allows the audience time to fully digest your joke, to appreciate all the humor of the situation.

I’ve noticed that people who get the joke right away often re-start their laughter when they notice your “frozen” state: it reminds them of the punch line all over again.