



On the Horizon

New Horizons Toastmasters Club Newsletter
September-December 2007

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

Improving evaluations

Suggestions to help you help others

“Oh, how we blush when thanked or praised,
And say, “There’s nothing to it.
Don’t mention it.”
And yet just see how disappointed we would be
If people didn’t do it.”

-- Edgar Bernhard,
from “Speaking on the Spot”

See “Improving” Pg. 3



Yipes!

Respectable speechmakers at the New Horizons Toastmasters Club showed again that they can let their hair down and have a good time come Halloween.

Give your speech a musical spin

Motivational speaker John Watkis swears by the ‘eight essential elements’ of music

John Watkis seems an unlikely source of information about good speechmaking. He’s not even a Toastmaster! He’s Jamaican-born, a fact that makes you think immediately of a strong patois consisting of lots of colourful island phrases such as “irie, mon” and “no sok wit’ it”. However, Watkis is eminently articulate. Besides, he’s casual and relaxed to a fault. And he knows music.

Watkis, in fact, has this idea that the “eight essential elements” of music should be utilized in speechmaking to make speeches infinitely more memorable. He suggests

that any speaker who accepts his theory and follows his instructions will see their words fall upon the ears of their audiences as the songs of the sirens upon those of Odysseus.

All music, insists the speechmaker and speechwriter, is an exercise in ‘remembering/repeating/responding’ and speeches, too, can be written in this manner.

For more about ‘the chorus, the hook, the bridge’ and other highlights of Watkis’s speech, see Pg. 2.

John Watkis

Speechwriter rhapsodizes about songs and speeches that “stick in your head”



John Watkis

Toronto-based motivational speaker John Watkis, speaking before an audience of some 25 or 30 people at Centennial College’s Centre of Creative Communication campus on Carlaw Avenue on November 14, gave plenty of examples of famous speeches that have effectively used a musical approach to speech craft.

There’s one that goes like this: “I have a dream...” (Martin Luther King). Another that begins “Ask not what...” (John Fitzgerald Kennedy). A third that harmonizes with “We will fight on the beaches... (Sir Winston Churchill).

These great speeches and others like them, said Watkis, are remembered because they “stick in your head” for the same reasons that the best songs do. They contain some or all of the ‘eight essential elements’ of music: (1) chorus (2) hook (3) verse (4) mood (5) musical interlude (6) rhythm (7) expression and (8) the bridge.

In “How to make a speech sound like music to your ears”, Watkis laced his talk

with music and song and his own brand of upbeat humour, thrilling the group of would-be speechmakers.

Most of them were professional communicators, members of the Alliance of Independent Practitioners (AIP), which organized the event. AIP is a branch of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC/Toronto).

Watkis talked first about the chorus. A chorus in a song “sticks in your head” and so does the ‘chorus’ in Martin Luthor King’s speech, mentioned above, because it is repeated.

King’s chorus, says Watkis, is not the “dream” phrase at all; it is the theme, and that theme is freedom. In his 17-minute speech, King repeated related words such as “free, freedom, liberty” about 30 times.

Watkis could provide no formula for creating a “hook” in speech or song. He said the hook occurs and “it just sticks”. Consider the hook for the song “Lady Marmalade”: ‘Voulez-vous coucher avec moi?’ People who don’t even speak French readily chant it.

Read my lips: No new taxes...” from the famous speech by former President George Bush is a hook though, perhaps, the speaker wishes it hadn’t been so effective. “If the glove doesn’t fit...” is another hook made famous by Chicago lawyer Johnny Cochrane in a memorable court case. “Never in the course of history...” another begins, courtesy of Churchill.

“Opposites” or opposing terms in a sentence, says Watkis,

“Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness.”

–Rev. Martin Luther King

create effective hooks. Triads make useful hooks as well. “Anything you can say ‘in threes’ is more memorable.” He noted Churchill’s use of “blood, sweat and tears”, over someone’s objection that “toil” was also included. Watkis said, however, that we generally

“We shall fight on the beaches; we shall fight on the landing strips; we shall fight in the fields and in the streets; we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.”

–Sir Winston Churchill

remember the three.

“Read my lips...” is likely remembered because it is a cliché, said Watkis, and advised speakers not to be afraid of using tried and true expressions, just use them memorably.

Verses, said Watkis, clarify the choruses in song and speech. In a speech, make sure you have adequate verses because “your chorus controls your content.”

The musical interlude, he said, is “where the singer breathes and takes a break.” You need that in a speech, too, because it tells the audience that a transition is

happening. Interludes may be short, he said, but they let listeners know the speech is moving from ‘a’ to ‘b’ to ‘c’.

Don’t neglect mood, said Watkis, playing a bit of Henri Mancini’s “Pink Panther” to make his point. “Always consider what mood you want to put your audience in. Sometimes it’s good to start off with a bang, but sometimes it’s better to create mood.”

Watkis advised that rhythm is

essential in music and there is rhythm in speeches. “People say, ‘Use short sentences’. ‘Don’t have any more than 18 words in a sentence.’ As long as it makes sense, have long sentences, monosyllabic, multi-syllabic. Vary the pace.”

Watkis advised people to “sound natural” in a speech. In writing a speech, he said, “think as if you’re writing dialog in a film because you are writing a dialogue.”

Referring to expression, Watkis noted that in a speech you want to have “ma”, a word described as being “from the Orient”. “Ma” indicates a pause. “Ma is what happens when you take a rest.”

He advised speakers to be aware of the speed with which they express themselves and slow down sometimes, even stop. “When you stop, people are thinking, “What’s next?””

Watkis, lastly, stressed the importance of the bridge, “the highest point of the song”. “The bridge,” he said, “drives it (your point) home. Every successful speech needs a bridge.”

See “John”, Pg. 5

“Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.”

–Pres. John Fitzgerald Kennedy

Improving evaluations

Suggestions to help you help others

Edgar Bernhard's take on flattery seems to relate to a problem we, as evaluators, often face. Most of us find it easier to praise speakers than to publicly – or even privately – present our reproof to them.

However, as sweet as the pleasantries may be, as tantalizingly as they may fall upon the ears of the speakers, as secure as we may feel within ourselves for proffering them, they are probably the least useful elements in any evaluation.

How do we ensure that our evaluations are the best they can be? How do we avoid over-indulging our speakers or overwhelming them with negatives? It is a delicate proposition at the best of times, akin to walking on thin ice. We put a tremulous toe here and a cautious heel there looking for a secure foothold, one that will not shatter the fragile veneer of our being and throw us mercilessly into the frosty drink, along with the tender sensibilities of those who dare speak publicly.

By
Clarie Martin

At the New Horizons Toastmasters Club, despite our trepidations, we celebrate every speech and each speechmaker by evaluating their efforts. These evaluations are not criticisms; they are not even *critiques* (which seems a polite way of saying the same thing). Our evaluations, we insist, are aids we offer our fellow speakers to encourage them and help them improve.

Ideally, whether the evaluations are large, formal presentations or quickly written notes or a brief one-on-one conversation, they ought to follow this format: One or two comments about the preceding speech that are positive, upbeat and congratulatory and, then, an observation or two that the evaluator believes would have made the speech better, if applied. If you wish to wrap up an evaluation with a single, capsulated statement, that's okay, too. Make it

positive though, perhaps even funny. ("I look forward to your next speech... particularly if you incorporate my suggestions.")

At our club meetings, we evaluate speeches verbally and in writing. Verbal evaluations occur soon after the speeches are given, in front of the speakers and the rest of the audience by designated evaluators. These evaluations last usually about two minutes each and are given, preferably, by more experienced speakers or by the speakers' peers. They are accomplished with varying degrees of success. Aiming to highlight successful evaluations, our club conducts a vote that establishes the best evaluation during a meeting.

Written evaluations are extensive private notes made in the appropriate speaker's manuals during speech performances. New Horizons also permits everyone at a meeting to present speakers with short, written, personal evaluations. For this purpose, meeting organizers give slips of paper to everyone prior to a meeting.

See *"Improving"* Pg. 4

Recent mini-evaluations

- "Clarie, you met your first and second objectives. You may engage audience by having more eye contacting with them."
- You are a great storyteller, always a pleasure to listen to. You did a good job of stringing your stories together but I had a hard time finding the theme to your collection of stories, so I felt a little lost. I enjoyed the humour."
- "We all have laughter to co-operate with your speech. Thank you for your effective humour speech."
- "Funny stories! Liked the delivery. The only issues: 1) playing with your pocket change; 2) having your back to me. I could not hear your voice well and missed some arts."
- "Spoke well. Humorous. Entertain audience with personal experience."
- "Great idea to involve listeners. You speak fast. Some words are difficult to catch. You tend to look at certain people delivering your speech."
- "Clarie, it was the funniest speech I heard from you. The "bedroom" part was really good. The only suggestion I have: Get rid of the hands in the pockets."
- "It was entertained! I had a good laugh from your speech. Only the first part that could have been better coordinated to help us to follow more easily."
- "Movement around room resulted in talking with back to portions of the audience. Consider a stationary delivery to remain in touch with whole audience. Voice is strong and highly engaging. Vocal variety is a key strength. Changes in tone, volume, rhythm were very effective."
- "Cool speech, Clarie. Very engaging and humorous. One suggestion is that your walking was sometimes distracting and sometimes you turned your back to the front of the audience (though you did look at us regularly).
- "Great rapport with the audience. The speech is too long."
- The closing of your story really made us laugh. It is a hilarious story. You achieved your objective effectively. Even if it is a long story, it is a good story and (indecipherable) to its theme.
- Very entertaining speech. I realized why you named your speech "Circus Acts". You started talking about your story of donkey. Not sure the "marriage" story is correlated to the title. I definitely liked your speech.

Excerpt from a speech

The 60-year-old marriage between the Queen of England, Elizabeth the Second, and Prince Phillip, ought to teach us ‘commoners’ something about the art of staying together. We ought to study the longevity of the Queen’s marriage and apply the principles that have spared it from the divorce courts to our own marital unions.

And I have. I have determined that what is required to keep a marriage together is:

1. ownership of, at least a half-dozen palatial residences – castles, if you wish – to which you can separately retreat after a tiff;
2. an extensive staff of servants – butlers and maids and chefs, valets and dressers, horse groomers and chief saddlers and private veterinarians, counsellors and advisors and protocol officers, etc. etc.; and
3. an expensive new hat for any occasion, a hat that can make even a curmudgeonly old woman look charming and cherubic.

Yes, these things could cut the divorce statistics in this country in half. Perhaps, better.

I exaggerate, of course. The marriage of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip has not always been a perfect one. It had a rocky beginning, for one thing, because of that “prince” business.

I mean, when a queen marries, her husband ought to become ‘king’, right? But here he is, sixty years later, *still* “Prince” Phillip. Do you know why he’s not “King” Phillip?

Right from the beginning Liz said, “Look, my namesake Elizabeth the First never married at all. She figured she could count on her head in a basket if she did. Queen Victoria might have gotten married, if the intimacy of marriage could have been avoided.

“I...” said Liz, exaggerating the personal pronoun, “I will marry you, Phillip, but we must make it clear who’s the boss, whose running the show, and it ain’t you. You will remain a prince so that no one, not even you, gets the wrong idea.”

It looked as if their marriage might end right there; however, the royal couple resolved the problem of Phillip’s second place standing in an efficient manner-- in the bedroom where all marital problems are finally worked out.

Phillip rolled over on their queen-sized bed and said: “Your Majesty, I will quit griping about being a prince, if you will obey me in the bedroom.”

“Yes, dear,” said the young Queen, expectantly.

“Very well,” said the prince, “out there, before your subjects, you can be queen and I’ll be your prince but here, right here, in the bedroom I am ‘king’.”

“Yes, dear,” his wife gasped, casually discarding her nightgown

“Therefore,” said Phillip, “I demand that you get rid of this queen-sized bed and replace it, immediately, with a king-sized one befitting my position and my dignity.”

Liz agreed.

And this simple compromise saved their marriage.

Improving evaluations

Suggestions to help you help others

Cont. from pg. 3

The club encourages all listeners, whether club members or guests, to write their thoughts down. We gather the slips of paper in envelopes and deliver them to the speakers for their contemplative perusal later. These individual evaluations may be anonymous, though some people prefer to provide their names.

Another form of evaluation at club level is personal contact. That’s the moment when members of the audience go directly to the speaker during a break or after the meeting and extend their congratulations.

We should all be aware of the function and value of making evaluations. We should make our evaluations count. Properly designed, our evaluations will not only help our colleagues, they will help us gain confidence. They will make us all better communicators.

The evaluations themselves are not just a few words of praise randomly discarded (“I liked your speech!”; “My,

how do you do it?”; “Great job!”), though these are certainly better than an inglorious attack of stand-alone phrases (“I didn’t understand a word!”; “You looked really nervous!”; “Your speech had a Churchillian affect upon me!”).

Proper evaluations, even mini ones or a chat with a speaker, require that you give at least one positive opinion (give this one first) about the speech and then follow up with a couple of opinions that might lead to improvement. The more helpful you can be the better.

Is it enough to say: “Wow! I liked your speech!”? It’s nice, but it’s not enough. Is it enough to say the speech was “too long” or “sorry, I couldn’t understand what you meant?” It is not enough.

A proper evaluation of any type need not discuss every aspect of the speech pro or con.

(The two-minute front-of-the-class evaluation guides you by specifically setting questions that you are

required to answer in the speaker’s manual, while every agenda carries a brief description of the parameters for evaluating every scheduled speech).

As a matter-of-fact, it is better to be selective. If you heard and saw a dozen things upon which you could comment, select just three -- or four at most -- for best comprehension by the speakers. Just make sure that you establish a fine balance between what you believe the speaker did well and what you believe the speaker could have done better. And accentuate the positive.

Upon what areas should you focus your evaluations, if you are not working with the manual or any pre-set evaluation criteria? This, of course, is difficult to determine until you have actually heard a speech, though, perhaps, you can select a couple of

See “Improving” Pg. 5

Improving evaluations

Suggestions to help you help others

Cont. from Pg. 4

areas of good speech-making and determine that these will be the focus of your evaluation.

Virtually all the areas of good speechmaking are discussed and practiced in the Competent Communicator series of speeches, the first ten speeches that we, as Toastmasters, have to make.

The first speech is the familiar “icebreaker”, which might be one that determines how personable the speaker is. If you don’t know what to dwell on as an evaluator and you want to say something other than “great speech”, you might select this as an area that the speaker would find rewarding.

But there are others. You might discuss the speaker’s use of vocal variety, for example, or gestures or visual aids. You might suggest to the speaker how he could have been more persuasive or humorous or motivational or how, in fact, he was any of these.

What should you, as listener, write upon those slips which are gathered and given to the speaker during the meeting? Rest assured they will be read by every speaker. Every speaker hopes that her speech has been admired and appreciated, but every speaker also expects to read an observation that would have made the speech better.

I have illustrated the quality of the information on these slips, these mini-evaluations, by providing a series of them (Pg. 3). I received these for a speech which I gave a few weeks ago, entitled “Circus Acts”.

Are any of these effective? Which ones? Could any have been made better and more useful? You decide.

Any speech is more than written words (it is action and diction and gesture and stance, to name a few); therefore, presenting mine in its entirety in these pages would be imprudent.

However, I’ve given you an excerpt (Pg. 4), the opening sequence variously referred

to in the evaluations as the “bedroom” part and the “marriage” story. What might you have said, if you had heard me present this?

For “Circus Acts”, Toastmaster Erin McLaughlin, our club secretary, was the evaluator and she did, I think, is a marvellous job. Both verbally and in written form she captured, sensitively, those things that I may have done well and those that I could have done better.

On this page, I share Erin’s thoughts (with her permission) as she noted them in my speaker’s manual.

Perhaps, reflecting upon it, you might have made similar comments and observations to those delivered by Erin.

Evaluations are important. Give Them your best.

John Watkis says music, speeches motivate

Cont. from Pg. 2

Churchill’s memorable words, delivered calmly, are an example. “We will fight on the beaches; we will fight them in the trenches...” Bridges are “rallying in nature”, but speakers do not have to be charismatic to carry them off.

“Music can motivate and make us feel better,” said the writer/actor, who once

Erin’s evaluation

- **With your questions and jokes, you took time to establish rapport (with the audience)**
- **Watch your body language. Your hands in your pockets made you seem (to have) very low energy.**
- **There was a clear flow from one part (of the speech) to the other. It was clear where each idea came from and how each – the Queen, the robin and the wren, the circus – were related.**
- **There was audible laughter. There were visual smiles and everyone was following you with their eyes, captivated.**
- **You have great material and have no difficulty at all structuring a well-sequenced, simple and vivid story with unexpected twists.**
- **You used a number of techniques, especially exaggerations and twists, and chose effective words. Ex: you “chirped” your song (rather than you “sang” your song). Your jokes were most effective when you used pauses and took your time to get to the punch-line.**
- **You were consistent in using exaggerations and absurd examples with each of your three sub-topics. It was especially effective at the end (when you were) talking about your second chance to subdue a donkey and you got very animated acting it out.**
- **The ending was very strong. You were energetic and emphatic. (You) used effective self-deprecating humour that you then turned around, and made effective use of pace and pauses in the delivery.**
- **My only suggestions related to cleaning up the delivery (and I’m being nit-picky), posture (and) stance. You are more effective with the full range of your hands. Be careful not to exclude the people at the edge of the table.**
- **Slow down in getting to your jokes. You will stumble less and have more impact. Perhaps, the missing page (*Mislaid, but had no effect on delivery: Ed.*) caused you to doubt whether you remembered your speech properly, but the content was great. All you needed was as much energy at the beginning and the middle as at the end.**

played Mustafa in ‘The Lion King’.

“Speeches can do that, too. Make sure you write so that your (speeches) are memorable and that (the words) feel like music to the ears of the (audience).”

“A-wimaweh, a-wimaweh, a-wimaweh, a-wimaweh, a-wimaweh, a-wimaweh, a-wimaweh, a-wimaweh.”

‘The hook’ from “The Lion Sleeps Tonight”

Seasonal gathering: More than 15 club members turned up at Tanoor, a Persian restaurant on Yonge Street north of Steeles Ave., on Friday, Dec. 7, to enjoy each others company. The venue was great, traditional Persian décor. The food was traditional Persian as well, kekobs and the like. The music, again, was traditional Persian - a single singer who sung achingly of love and wine to the beat of a drum and the twang of a sandu. This was our club's nod to the festive season that's quickly approaching. We talked; we joked; we ate; we listened; we enjoyed ourselves tremendously. See photo this page.

Halloween fun: We filled our meeting on October 31 with fun, laughter, and stories. Making special guest appearances were Inga from Sweden (Fred Jones) and the one-and-only Elvis Presley (Yassamin Gharai). Witches, princesses, and even a thief attended with an assortment of other "peculiars". Everyone was keen to do some satisfying socializing. See photo Pg 1.

Contest winners: Anyone, and everyone, who participated in the fall Humorous Speech Contest and Table Topics Contest was a winner, but special mention must be made of Julia Savitch, Josef Stetter and Fred Jones, the stalwart contestants. Our club held these contests on September 26 with Yassamin Gharai, our VP of Education, as Contest Chair. She needed help setting up and received it. She thanks everyone who provided support.

Yassamin chose the Table Topics topic, "First Dates, Awkward Pauses". Josef won the contest handily. Second place went to Julia Savitch. The Humorous Speech Contest was also exciting – and funny. Julia, in her speech, found humor in the behavior of people she has worked for and with. Fred told us that old age doesn't "suck" (even though his speech was entitled "Old Age Sucks") and kept us chuckling throughout. It was Fred's fortieth speech and a great way to achieve his ACG. Josef, who recently received his DTM, brought on more laughs by talking about dating, particularly online dating, which he claimed to have some expertise in. Fred took top spot in the club's Humorous Speech Contest and Josef came in second. They both moved on to the Area Contests, Josef to challenge other club Table Topics winners and Fred to take on club victors in the Humorous Speech challenge. At the Area Contests, Fred delighted us further by winning and moving on to the Division Contest.

Special thanks to Vadim, Jessie, Shahla, Misa, Linda, and Yanjin who took on important roles at the club contests and to a half-dozen other members who acted as "secret" judges. Also, thanks to all who attended to hear and encourage our speakers.

New members: Anna Gryshchenko, Anna Tarakanova, and Isaac Zeitoun joined the New Horizons Toastmasters Club in November; Robert Nuamah and Setila Alaghband joined in October. We welcome them all. Any questions or concerns, please contact any club member or any member of the club executive listed on this page.

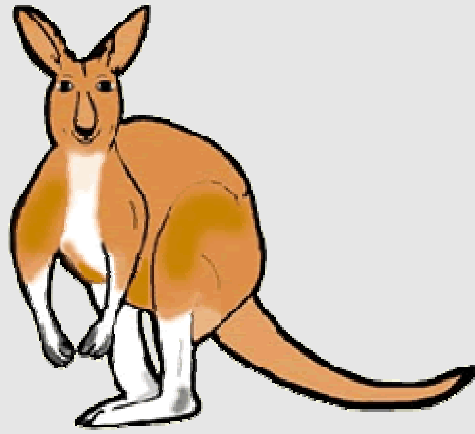
In good time: Our Sergeant-at-Arms Le Vu advises (in case you hadn't noticed) that there are some useful tools on the Turbobase web site to help you time your speeches. Stop Watch Turbobase is a browser-based utility that can be used to time your speeches at home. You input the time duration of your speeches and the browser keeps track of the time without requiring that you connect to Speech Timer: Speech Timer is another browser-based stopwatch with more options and fancier than Stop Watch Turbobase.

Helping youth: Youth Leadership Programs continued at the North York Central Library on Saturday mornings from Sept. 22 to Dec. 1. Our club members gave another batch of young people superlative lessons in speechmaking and meeting organization. Two concurrent sessions were held for students in the 13/14-year-old range (coordinated by Fred Jones and Linda Leung) and for students 15 and 16 years old (coordinated by Max Zive and Kitty Wan). Charlene Watters, a former member of the New Horizons Toastmasters Club, generously provided us with assistance; Erna Brusch and Le Vu also helped out. Youth Leadership Programs consists of eight 2-hour sessions, each session similar to a Toastmasters meeting. There is a Chairperson, a Toastmaster, a Timer, and an Ah Counter. There are Table Topics and speeches and evaluations. Sessions often have themes such as Impromptu Speaking, Organizing Your Speech, Listening, Gestures, Voice and Vocabulary, etc. Participating club members, while practicing their craft and organizational skills, enjoy working with the young people who always offer up pleasant surprises.

Advanced YLP: Mary Szatcher, Youth Leadership Program Co-chair for Divisions A and B, advised our club of a Toastmasters Advanced Youth Leadership Program Speech Contest – a first -- on Saturday, Dec. 8 at the North York Library. New Horizons Toastmasters were invited to attend. The group of "graduating" students who put on the contest are pioneers for the new Advanced Youth Leadership Program. During an eight-week period, they took on every challenge put before them and 'delivered', always giving their best.



<p>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.</p>	<p><u>New Horizons executive:</u> 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</p>
<p>Questions or contributions for <i>On the Horizon</i>? Contact the editor, Clarie Martin, at: clariemartin@yahoo.com.</p>	



The Final Word

During our November 26 meeting, our club had a surprise guest in attendance. David Griffiths is a member (as well as VP of Public Relations) of the Parramatta Toastmasters Club in Sydney, Australia. David graciously participated in our program and afterwards sat in on our executive meeting, offering unimagined insights into the functioning of his club Down Under and, inadvertently, giving us ideas for improving our club and increasing its value to members.

David noted, for example, that his club has on hand every week “reserve” speakers – people with speeches at the ready who are able to fill in if scheduled speakers are absent. This arrangement eliminates the type of vacancies we have where the scheduled appearances of three or four

Australian Toastmaster David Griffiths tells us about his recent experience in Canada

speakers is suddenly reduced to one or two – or none at all. David also talked about “Speech Craft”, educational programming that his club routinely does. This suggested to us the possibility of staging our own Speech Craft sessions (on giving effective evaluations, for example) which might be held on a prescribed day once a month with new members, especially, participating.

Finally, David told us about the “business” portion of meetings at his club, sessions in which members establish

quorum, vote on accepting apologies from absentee members and vote on accepting the minutes of previous meetings. David said a typical business meeting even includes a “Parliamentarian”, who evaluates the Chair on points of order.

Our club conducts “meetings”, of course, and we attempt to supply members with some practical experience regarding preparing agendas, chairing all or part of a meeting, evolving a suitable decorum, and assigning and

preparing for specific tasks. However, our structure doesn’t follow the pattern of many formal meetings and, thus, our members do not learn and practice, for example, how to maintain order or how to make a motion and much else besides.

Your executive hopes to address all this in due course.

However, below, is an interesting item that David sent to On the Horizon. It’s the first part of a two-part series he generously agreed to write about his recent experience with Toastmasters in Toronto. In the second part, which will appear in the next issue, he promises to describe specifically the impression our club made upon him.

The Editor

A ‘blind date’ with Toronto Toastmasters

One of the best things about belonging to a international organization such as Toastmasters is that sometimes you’re lucky enough to be able to go abroad and visit.

Visiting other clubs was high on my agenda recently when I found myself in Toronto. Easy to do, you say. Toronto has more clubs than Australia has kangaroos! All you have to do is go onto the Toastmasters International web site and look for a nearby club, right? All the location and meeting time details are provided. Easy as pie.

And, really, all that is true (except for the part about the kangaroos).

I went onto the web site and found 113 Toastmasters clubs. Like an ►

Looking for a club’s as easy as pie. Right?

Like an unattached male on a dating web site.

Aussie finds welcoming arms at T.O. club

Continued from previous page

unattached male on a dating web site, I started to sift through all the information looking for, as it were, a “25-34 YO, 5’7”, brunette female non-smoking, social drinker with a good sense of humor.”

Translating this into Toastmaster parlance, I mean that I yearned for a “non-corporate TM club, meeting during a specific week, Tuesday or Wednesday evening, starting time about 7 P.M., short taxi ride from hotel.”

Could have bought John Lennon’s guitar.

Simple enough? Unfortunately, the last requirement was as difficult to access as an on-line date with a sense of humor. Being a complete stranger to Toronto, how would I know exactly where any of the addresses were in proximity to my hotel, which was located northwest of Toronto? Had I been staying closer to the city’s centre, the search likely would have been easier. However, my hotel was about a \$100 taxi fare from downtown, so clearly I needed to look in the Toronto environs.

I hadn’t realized that I was staying - not in Toronto, not even in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) -- in a separate town entirely. Vaughan is a lovely place, but its distance from Toronto only became clear to me after a particularly expensive taxi ride to a guitar shop. (I felt that I could have bought John Lennon’s guitar or Elvis Presley’s pink Cadillac for close to the same amount of money!) It required considerable research at the hotel level to discover which towns (North York, Etobicoke, Mississauga, or Brampton) were

reasonably accessible by taxi. I mean I really wanted to find a location that would result in fewer triumphant smiles on the faces of the local taxi drivers. I went back to the TM International web site and advised it properly of my revised “dating” criteria.

Ah, a new list of clubs! Still I was no closer to deciding which one I would attend. (And, to complicate matters, I was now thinking of fitting two meetings and two clubs into my schedule.) Still, despite the web site’s encouragement, I realized that my outing was going to be a “blind date”. And I felt some of the emotions associated with the same. What would these clubs be like? What if the ones I picked, at random, weren’t right for me at all? What if my choices should be composed entirely of eighty-year-olds who enjoyed talking solely about lawn bowling or bridge? I’m a young man, for heaven’s sake, with vitality – vim and vigor. What if the meetings I

Thought of retreating to the hotel bar.

ventured into consisted of nothing more than small, disorganized bunches of rowdies completely indifferent to the marvelous methodologies of my own club -- the Parramatta Club that I know and love? What if they didn’t like me? My heart almost sank. I thought of abandoning my plans altogether and retreating to the hotel bar.

I didn’t, of course. And a good thing because it soon became clear that I needn’t have been so concerned at all. “Toastmasters” is Toastmasters wherever you go. Here’s what happened:

I whittled the list of clubs I could visit down to a short list and sent off a few

e-mails to the respective VPs of Membership. Whether by chance or design, I received a prompt reply from Vadim Katcherovski, the VP of Membership for the New Horizons Toastmasters Club (Club 312). He confirmed that I was most welcome to attend their meeting and provided a phone number I could call, if I had further questions. I also checked the club’s meeting details on its web site (www.newhorizonstoastmasters.info) so I knew where and when the meeting would occur. The area map on the site was particularly important in helping me work out where the New Horizons Toastmasters Club met in the GTA.

Here are some words of advice to the traveler seeking accommodation at a Toastmasters club beyond your own borders:

- When you make contact with a club, remember to ask about dress standards and meals so that you come prepared. It’s easy to forget that other clubs have different arrangements and expectations than your own. The New Horizons Toastmasters Club maintains a casual dress arrangement, so I was okay there. However, after a two-hour meeting, my stomach growled and the “munchies” provided during the break just weren’t enough.
- Offer to do Table Topics or take a minor assignment, if appropriate, so that you really get into the “international” experience.

From my Toastmasters experience in Toronto, I learned that, although every club has a listing on the international web site, it’s best to go directly to a specific club web site when you’re a stranger in town looking for a TM “date”. If you are able to get in touch with the VP of Membership or some other member of the executive, that’s even better.