

# The Transmitter

Covering all of Iowa and the best parts of Illinois and Nebraska

Fall 2009

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## Anticipating the Harvest

Many of you know I'm a corn farmer in northern Iowa. I've been "fielding" many questions about how my crops look and whether I'm ready for harvest. Here's the thing. You just don't know how it's going to be until you are actually harvesting. There are too many variables and at any moment your equipment can fail leaving you with tough times and second guessing your preparation.



How do I combat this uncertainty? I prepare my equipment to the best of my ability and, using my experience and help from professionals, I anticipate what can go wrong and try to build in additional strengths or redundant systems. That way I can handle what comes my way when it matters most.

A friend of mine from the Nebraska district leadership team often says, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." We can't know how productive our own personal goals 'crop' will be quite yet, but we can plan for both our personal and club goals.

Make sure you review your plan with the rest of your club. That's part of

membership: working toward a common goal. Keep your goals in mind and make the way ready for them to come to fruition.

At the same time, have alternative plans in case something goes wrong. That's a key to unlocking your potential. Being ready for small failures means they can't stop you. You'll be prepared to overcome them.

Do you wish you had a mechanic to go over your plan? Do you want more experience and more confidence? Then attend conferences at every level of Toastmasters. Watch for other district-sponsored training opportunities. There are several in the planning stages across the state. These expert training sessions will help you prepare. Applying the experiences of others in your own club can shine a light on new ways to enjoy growth. Plus it's a fun experience and you'll be the envy of your club when you bring home great ideas.

We are all growers of our abilities, our courage, our self-confidence. How do your crops look? Are you ready for harvest?

Doug Nelson, District 19 Governor  
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 Unlock your Potential

## Ideas Invited on 7-of-7 Promotion

By Thomas Lindaman, DTM, Lt. Governor of Education and Training, District 19

How would you like to be an agent of change?

One of my personal goals this year as Lieutenant Governor of Education and Training is to encourage as many people as possible to get excited about Toastmasters. A big part of that excitement comes from being recognized for a job well done, from meeting

a personal goal, or from achieving a milestone. District 19 recognizes achievements in a number of ways, not the least of which is the 7-of-7 promotion.

The 7-of-7 promotion is meant to be a way to reward clubs whose seven club officers have completed training. Currently, if all seven of a club's officers are trained,

Ideas Invited, *continued page 2*



that club's name goes into a drawing for a free registration for a future District Conference. This is meant to encourage clubs to attend a District Conference and get reenergized.

Since participation in conferences has been waning in recent years, it's time to bring some excitement to them again.

That's where you come in. Give some thought to ways we can tweak or overhaul the 7-of-7 promotion. Should we include more criteria to earn the free registration? Should we open it up to clubs with fewer officers trained? Should we devise a points system similar to the Toastmaster of the Year form? Do you think it's fine the way it is?

Regardless of where you come down on this matter, let me know what you think. Email me at TLindamanDTM406@aol.com. Catch me at a District event. I want to hear from you! And who knows? Maybe you can be an agent of change!



## What are you Selling?

By Mike Anderson,  
District 19 Public Relations Officer

**G**o promote your club. We all know the importance of this advice. It includes everything from news releases and flyers to “elevator speeches”, those 20-second sales pitches to convince someone to come and sample the Toastmasters experience.

Give thought to the messages you send out about Toastmasters and make sure your efforts focus on the results of Toastmasters, not just the process.

There's an old saying in the advertising business (some day I hope to hear Don Draper use it in an episode of *Mad Men*): “You are not selling quarter-inch drill bits. You're selling quarter-inch holes.”

It's not the product you're selling. It's what your product can do that satisfies a need.

In Toastmasters, we are not selling speeches, or Table Topics, or contests.

It even goes a step beyond things like “improve your speaking skills.” Ideally, we should sell the results of Toastmasters and the development of better speaking and leadership skills as well as self-confidence, and career growth. These are the “quarter-inch holes” that ultimately result from the Toastmasters program.

When you do your elevator speech, talk about how Toastmasters has changed your life. How have you put those skills to use? My dad was a Toastmaster through the 1960s, '70s, and '80s. Many times I heard him tell others about how the speaking skills and confidence he gained from Toastmasters took him from a factory floor to upper management. It was the results that mattered most to him.

Maybe you've earned a promotion. Or you grabbed an opportunity you never would have considered before. Perhaps now you can hold your ground in a debate. It's not enough to talk about the skills you've learned as a Toastmaster. Talk about how those skills have made a difference in your life.

District Governor Doug Nelson says he was taught the hook-line-sinker approach. Start with the hook: “I have this skill... “. The next line explains where you got it—Toastmasters. Then the sinker: “Are you free to come to our next meeting?”

Whether it's drill bits or fishing gear, remember to sell the results!



### District 19 2009-2010 Public Relations Team

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# Planting? Now? You Bet!

By Susan Saltou, DTM  
District 19 Lt. Governor of Marketing

**I**t's Planting Season!  
It's the job of the District 19 Lieutenant Governor of Marketing—my job—to lead the effort to develop new clubs in the District. Right now, it's a very busy job, and that's a great thing for the District! Here are some of the leads we're currently working on:



- Joan Johanson is spearheading the weekly meetings for a community-based club in Webster City held on Tuesday evenings with 14 members to date. Mentors and sponsors are in place.
- John Carlson is leading the way on a possible company-based club at Bridgestone of Des Moines.
- Debbie Woods-Smith is working with Childserve to start a new club in Johnston.
- Ann Mangan is working on a start-up Advanced Toastmasters club in the Quad Cities area.

In addition, District 19 has nibbles for clubs at Prairie City, Iowa Workforce-Cedar Rapids, Onawa, Clinton, Waterloo, Knoxville, Storm Lake, Oakland, Western Illinois University at Moline, a community club at Moline, and Des Moines area leads at Childserve and CDS.

All of these developing clubs will— we hope— eventually need mentors and sponsors. These are terrific leadership opportunities and provide the necessary opportunities for advanced Toastmasters working on their Advanced Leader Silver awards.

Are you interested in helping to turn these leads into working clubs? If so, please call me at 641-420-7274 for training and possible assignment.

Also from the District 19 Marketing team, the scheduled visit to the District Conference in Dubuque (November 13 and 14) by Toastmasters International

Director Theo Black has us working on corporate visits to McGraw-Hill, IBM, Kendall Hunt, Cottingham & Butler, Inc; Eagle Point Software, Flexsteel Industries, and Peninsula Gaming. It'll be some great exposure for Toastmasters in the Dubuque area!

Currently, there are more than 20 clubs in District 19 that qualify for a coach. If your club is one of them and would like a coach, or if you're interested in serving as a club coach, contact Diane Stone, Club Coach Chair, at [dicastone@msn.com](mailto:dicastone@msn.com)

We'll see you in Dubuque in November—yet another opportunity to Unlock Your Potential!

## Three Steps to a New Club

By Cindy Hanevy, Area 36 Governor

**S**o you want to start a Toastmasters club? Get ready! Get set! Go!

Get ready! Have a clear vision of the finish line before you start. What leads do you have? Should this be a corporate club or a community club? Download a new club information kit from the TM Web site at <http://www.district19.me>, or call 949-858-8255 and ask for one.

Get set! You're crouched at the starting line ready to take off. If you are starting a corporate club, get buy-in from the decision makers at your company. Set up an appointment to present your case. Review the checklist for completion of the Competent Leader program. Toastmasters fosters skills that every business needs.

Next, hold a demonstration meeting. Here you collect the charter fee and dues from new members and arrange a second meeting. Remember to follow up with thank-you notes and meeting reminders. Encourage and guide your new members as they learn the ropes. You are well on the way!

Go! Don't forget to celebrate when you break through the tape. Once your club is chartered, TM will apply for an Employer Identification Number for it. The club must register as a nonprofit before it can open a bank account. In the meantime, club funds may be held by an officer or temporarily deposited in another funds account.

Go Team! Each club may have up to two sponsors or a sponsoring club to help with marketing, meetings, paperwork, and planning the charter celebration. Once the club is chartered, the sponsor's responsibility ends. Your new club may then have up to two mentors appointed by the district governor for six months to one year after it is chartered.

That's it. Get ready! Get set! Go!

# Where Do We Stand with our Standing Rules?

District 19 has guidelines put together by a council of past District Governors to help the District leadership team and our members understand the traditions and expectations of Toastmasters in our District. These are called Standing Rules, and they are subject to regular review and adoption by the District Council during an official business meeting at a District Conference such as the one coming up in Dubuque on November 14.

If you are a president or vice-president of education for your club, you carry a vote representing your club to the semi-annual meeting. If you cannot attend, you may give another club member the right to vote by filling out a proxy. A printable proxy and information are available online.

In the past, we've reviewed our Standing Rules each spring and voted on them during the May business meeting. In May we also have District officer elections and a need to regroup our clubs into areas and divisions (redistricting). The spring business meeting usually runs long.

The leadership team decided to move the review and adoption of changes to the Standing Rules to the fall business meeting. The past District Governors council, meeting under the direction of Immediate Past District Governor Doug Doughty, reviewed the Standing Rules with a focus on cutting unnecessary wording and revising rules that are now covered more clearly by Toastmasters International policies.

In September, Doug Doughty asked Joan Johanson, PDG/PID, to present the proposed changes to the Executive Council (the District Leadership team including your Division and Area Governors). Joan created an electronic version for review. The changes reduced the document by two pages. The Executive Committee voted to recommend that the District

Council adopt the proposed rules in the November business meeting.

Copies of the current Standing Rules and the proposed Standing Rules are available at: <http://www.district19.me/Docs/revise%20Standing%20Rules.pdf>

I thank the Past District Governor Council members for their hard work and long hours. The needs of the District were well represented. The simplified rules will help future leaders understand the expectations they face as well as give them guidance on how to resolve tough issues.

I ask that everyone representing a vote on the District Council review the proposed Standing Rules and if you have questions, that you submit them to the District Leadership team by November 7 so we can be prepared for discussion and streamline the voting process.

Sincerely,  
Doug Nelson, DTM  
District 19 Governor

## October is Toastmasters Month

Once again, Iowa Governor Chet Culver has proclaimed October to be Toastmasters Month.

The honor comes as we celebrate the 85th Anniversary of the founding of Toastmasters International. See the proclamation on the District 19 Web site at [www.district19.me](http://www.district19.me) Choose "Resources" then "General District Information."



### PROCLAMATION

- WHEREAS,** THE VISION OF THE TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION IS TO EMPOWER PEOPLE TO ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND REALIZE THEIR DREAMS; AND
- WHEREAS,** TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL IS THE WORLD'S LEADING ORGANIZATION DEVOTED TO COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC SPEAKING AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS, AND HAS NEARLY 250,000 MEMBERS IN 106 COUNTRIES; AND
- WHEREAS,** SINCE THE TOASTMASTER ORGANIZATION BEGAN IN 1924, MORE THAN THREE MILLION MEN AND WOMEN HAVE BENEFITED FROM ITS COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM; AND
- WHEREAS,** MEMBERS OF TOASTMASTERS BENEFIT FROM IMPROVED COMMUNICATION SKILLS, CONSTRUCTIVE EVALUATIONS, BETTER MEETING FACILITATION SKILLS, LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND INCREASED SELF-CONFIDENCE AS AN ADDED DIVIDEND; AND
- WHEREAS,** 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:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, CHESTER J. CULVER, GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF IOWA, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM THE MONTH OF OCTOBER, 2009, AS

TOASTMASTERS MONTH

# Hoping for a Full House at District 19 Hold ‘Em

By Mike Anderson District 19 Public Relations Officer

The District 19 Fall Conference is just three weeks away! This is one conference you don't want to miss!

This year's conference site is the historic Julien Hotel on the banks of the Mississippi River in Dubuque on November 13 and 14. The event promises both fun and wisdom.

Considering the Dubuque location, the theme of this "District 19 Hold 'em" conference is a natural fit: riverboat gambling.

Tradition calls for costume dress-up for the Friday night entertainment activities. Think the Mel Gibson-Jodie Foster-James Garner movie *Maverick*! Put on your finest riverboat duds and join us!

Friday night's entertainment will include a Tall Tales contest. Many Toastmasters Districts hold Tall Tale contests, but we haven't seen one in these parts in years. Come and see what it's like. You may even want to spin a whopper of a tale yourself!

The District Conference is a great chance to meet or reunite with Toastmasters from across the District for special training sessions, social events, and the contests to determine the District Humorous Speech and Evaluation champions for 2009!

We have received word that newly elected Toastmasters International Director Theo Black will attend.

The featured speaker will be Ed Tate, the 2000 Toastmasters World Champion of Public

Speaking, and a successful motivational trainer and author.

There will be again be a silent auction of donated gift baskets to help fund the conference.

Please consider having your club assemble and donate a basket to the auction.

For more information on the District 19 Hold 'em Conference, contact Conference Chair

Kelly Nielsen at [kelly.nielsen@prudential.com](mailto:kelly.nielsen@prudential.com).

You can register for the conference on the District 19 web site: <http://district19.camp9.org>.



## Proxy Form

Club presidents and Vice Presidents of Education are to vote on the Standing Rules at the District 19 Fall Conference. If you cannot attend, you may give another club member the right to vote by filling out a proxy. Proxy ballots are available on the District 19 Web site at <http://www.district19.me/index.html> Go to "TM Quick Links" on the right and select "Proxy Forms" for a downloadable form.

Toastmasters District 19 Proxy	
I, _____ (print name)	(the President or Educational Vice President ) do hereby give my
proxy for _____ (club name)	Club # _____ to _____ (print name)
to be voted at the District 19 Fall Conference Saturday, November 14, 2009 at the Hotel Julien in Dubuque, IA..	
Signed: _____ (President or Educational Vice President)	
Date: _____	

# District Conference Hosts New International Director Theo Black, DTM

“Energizer” Ed Tate is featured speaker

Theo Black of the Toastmasters International Board of Directors will be at the District Conference in Dubuque, November 13-14. Theo was elected to the board in August at the International Convention in Mashantucket, Connecticut.

Black lives in Wayzata, Minnesota where he is an information technology project manager. He joined Toastmasters in 1999 after completing his MBA at the University of Minnesota and now is a member of four advanced clubs. His positions with Toastmasters have included lieutenant governor training and education and lieutenant governor marketing, and district governor.

The featured speaker at this year’s conference will be Ed Tate, the 2000 Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking. Ed is known as “...the speaker who energizes, educates, and entertains” and is a successful motivational trainer and author.

The conference will be held at the Hotel Julien. Register online at <http://district19.camp9.org/>



## Look Where We’ve Been...

It was 85 years ago this month, October 22, 1924 to be exact, that Ralph Smedley held his first Toastmasters meeting in the basement of a YMCA in Santa Ana, California. A story on the Toastmasters International Web site reports that the organization is at a historic high point. Even in this challenging economic climate, membership is at an all-time high with 250,000 members in 12,000 clubs in 106 countries. Read the whole story online, complete with a timeline showing Toastmasters’ milestones, at:

<http://www.toastmasters.org/MainMenuCategories/WhyJoin/SuccessStories/ThenandNow.aspx>

## ...Look What We’re Doing

District 19 Toastmasters are achievers. Have a look at the Educational Achievements pages online. As Clyde Eisenbeis says in this month’s Tidbits, we only compete with ourselves in Toastmasters. Congratulations to all who are on these lists and to all who are on their way!

2008-2009 list is at: [http://reports.toastmasters.org/reports\\_new/dprReports.cfm?r=18&d=19&s=Award&sortOrder=1&curProgYear=2008%20-%202009](http://reports.toastmasters.org/reports_new/dprReports.cfm?r=18&d=19&s=Award&sortOrder=1&curProgYear=2008%20-%202009)

2009-2010 list to date is at: [http://reports.toastmasters.org/reports\\_new/dprReports.cfm?r=3&d=19](http://reports.toastmasters.org/reports_new/dprReports.cfm?r=3&d=19)

# Get Your Groove On!

By Michelle R. Lessmann, CC, CL  
Siouxland Ciceros #2670

Immediately after the Fall District Conference, District 19 will begin a new Club Visit Promotion: "Get Your Groove On!" The new promotion will feature a Dance Card that will be available on the District 19 website. To collect points, print off the Dance Card and take it with you to each club you visit. Points are based on such factors as the number of members in the club visited and the distance the club is located from other clubs. Additional points are awarded if you bring a non-Toastmaster guest with you. Gain big bonus points if that guest joins the club you visit! The fine print will be available on the District 19 Web site.

There will be top winners in three categories

One individual winner will be crowned "John Travolta King of Disco" or "Gloria Gaynor Queen of Disco," based on most points earned. (District officers making official visits are not eligible for this contest.) The winner will sit at

the head table during the Awards Ceremony at the District 19 Spring 2010 Conference to be held in Des Moines in May. The winner will also receive a prize of their choice from the Toastmasters catalog valued up to \$50.00.

There will be two winning categories for clubs. The first is the Hot Spot Award for the club that receives the most visits. The second is the Groovy Pad Award for the club with the largest percentage of membership growth during the contest period. Each winning club will receive its choice of items from the Toastmaster catalog valued up to \$50.00 each.

Our goal for this contest is to encourage club members to get out there and help all clubs in Iowa grow their memberships. Many clubs are struggling with only a few members. By visiting those clubs, you show support for both the club and for visitors who might be interested

in joining. It is also a fun way to meet other Toastmasters and see how other clubs run their meetings.

So get out there and Get Your Groove On!



## Toastmaster Tidbits

### Your Manual—an Important Resource

by Clyde Eisenbeis, DTM, Crosswinds #7858

The CTM manual and the Advanced Manuals are a key part of Toastmasters. Why? Because they identify important aspects of public speaking, aspects that we might otherwise overlook. They also give excellent suggestions that will help us improve our speaking skills.

In Toastmasters, we only compete with ourselves. We continually strive to do better than the last time. The manuals reinforce this by asking questions about improvement over previous speeches. The effort to improve applies to every position, not just speaking. Each time we are the Toastmaster for the Day, the Grammarian, or Table Topics Master we hear an evaluation which encourages us to reach a new, higher level of performance.

Be certain to read and understand the speech objectives in the manual as you prepare a speech. Bring the manual to the meeting when giving a speech and give it to the Evaluator before the meeting so he or she has the information necessary. Review the Evaluator's comments after your speech. Evaluators only have two or three minutes to present their comments so will write additional notes and comments in the manual.



# Toastmaster Profiles

## Cindy Hanevy

Old Capitol Toastmasters VP/Education  
and Area 36 Governor

### What do you do outside of Toastmasters?

I spend time with my three children and grandchildren. I enjoy reading and traveling. I especially like to run off to the woods, mountains and lakes and just relax in front of a roaring fire. Unfortunately, I don't get to do that as much as I'd like.



Toastmasters meetings are a great place to learn...it is safe not to be perfect.

### Where are you from?

Richmondville, NY.

### How did you get involved in Toastmasters?

I took a Communicate with Confidence course and got the speaking bug. Toastmasters was recommended by the instructor.

### What was the topic of your best speech?

How to approach life with a focused, fearless, and faithful attitude. Somebody should give that speech to me when I get down.

### What is your advice to new members?

Just relax and enjoy the process. Toastmasters meetings are a great place to learn and grow because it is safe not to be perfect. As long as you don't give up, you can never fail.

Do you have a suggestion for a Toastmaster or Toastmaster's club to be profiled in a future edition of the *Transmitter*? If so, send an email to [diane-debok@uiowa.edu](mailto:diane-debok@uiowa.edu).

## Richard Smith

Sunrise Marion Club

### What do you do outside of Toastmasters?

I'm currently looking for a job. I'm also studying to be a Business and Life Coach and I recently became a distributor for Send Out Cards.com



Don't be afraid...the only way we get better is to get up and talk.

### Where are you from?

I was born in Eldora, Iowa and raised in Marshalltown, though I've been away from Iowa since 1970. I've recently moved to Marion from Texas where I lived for the last 18 years

### How did you get involved in Toastmasters?

In 2005 I joined Toastmasters at my place of employment in Austin, TX. I wanted to learn to think better on my feet.

### What was the topic of your best speech?

Boy, lol, let's see, I actually believe it was my speech concerning guardian angels.

### What is your advice to new members?

Don't be afraid to make speeches, the only way we get better is to get up and talk.

# Los Oradores Club Celebrates Twenty Years

by Barbara Corson, Los Oradores Toastmasters

In October 1989 a small group of like-minded friends from Des Moines realized that they had two things in common. They all spoke both Spanish and English to varying degrees, and they all wanted to improve their speaking skills.

Assuming there would be other people with similar interests, they realized that a bilingual, Spanish/English Toastmasters club would be the perfect way to achieve those goals. This led the friends to create Los Oradores, the first bilingual Toastmasters club in the United States.

Toastmasters International's goals of developing communication skills through prepared speeches, building leadership skills, and organizing and expressing thoughts through the practice of impromptu speaking were and continue to be important to the club. Since its beginning, the club has been a friendly and supportive place for members to learn about public speaking and to practice a second language.

Over the years, members from the United States, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, and many other countries, including India, have met bi-weekly in the Des Moines area to achieve these goals.

Los Oradores' twentieth anniversary year is a time to reflect on accomplishments, to remember former club members, and to celebrate past successes. Ours is the home club of a former president of Toastmasters International, Ian Edwards. We are also a District 19 Distinguished Club.

It's also a time to continue to challenge our members and strengthen our club for the future.

Los Oradores meets the first and third Thursdays of each month at 6:30 at the Urbandale Public Library.

To find out more, please visit our Web site at <http://losoradores.freetoasthost.us>

Five Toastmasters helped facilitate an August session of Elevate, a program that helps kids in foster care speak up for changes in the foster care system.

# Elevate & Communicate

By Christy Hatter, Heritage and AEGON Articulators

Five Toastmasters spent the morning of Saturday, August 29, presenting a three-hour seminar to kids in Elevate, a program that allows kids in foster care to advocate for changes in the foster care system.

The advocacy efforts of Elevate have successfully influenced changes such as legislation requiring all reasonable efforts be made to place siblings together in foster homes. Forty kids from eleven different Elevate chapters attended the seminar as part of a leadership retreat in St. Charles, Iowa.

The Toastmasters began by giving the young advocates basic tips on preparing a speech. The kids then broke into groups to prepare and present an informative speech and a persuasive speech about role models in their lives. The last activity was a brainstorming session to spark ideas about which messages should be included in their advocacy efforts.

One participant commented "... you helped me realize that there are great ways to go about speech making. Thank you very much." Despite their powerful and heartbreaking stories, these youths are turning their experiences into positive changes for others. The Toastmasters left the seminar not as teachers but as students, taught by an amazing group of young people.

The Toastmasters who participated were Kueier Chung, (Ames Toastmasters Club 2187 and iToast 134); Christy Hatter (Heritage 1205 and AEGON Articulators 1282753); Kayoko Kimura (iToast 134 and Town and College 875); Laura Tucker (Old Capitol 164) and Sherry Washburn (NADL Early Risers 8595).



# The Roller Coaster

By Jack Ackerman, ACS

*In May, Jack won the District 19 International Speech Contest then in June went on to win the Region IV championship in Winnipeg. On August 15, he competed in the International Championship in Mashantucket, Connecticut. Here is his follow-up article on his competition experience. Jack is a member of Waterloo #101, Crossroads Storytellers #1443, Pro Achievers #8132, and Waterloo Speechmasters #9708.*

You have won and won and won again with your motivational speaking. It has almost become a habit; the glory, the accolades, the pride. Then you are at the top. Ranked with the other nine best speech contestants in Toastmasters International, you must now write and deliver a speech which will stand head and shoulders above the rest and rocket you to stardom. You will forever be remembered as the World's Greatest Speaker for 2009.

After the contest, seven speakers go home without a trophy. They gave it their best shot. They put everything they had into the preparation and delivery but no recognition, no evaluation. Even the second and third place winners sometimes return disappointed.

How good was it? What could I have done to make it better? Was it the delivery or the content?

Here is where the Toastmasters in Region 4 shine. After returning home without the trophy my fellow Toastmasters were enthusiastic and supportive. I was invited to share my experience with surrounding clubs. I was invited to give a talk about Speaking Better to a group of professional speakers. Is that daunting?

I received cards and letters from other Toastmasters thanking me for my efforts. The pressure was now off. I could relax and give speeches that were fun and informative. I could kick back and be myself again.

Or could I? Was I now held to a higher level of preparation? Would I be able to speak about subjects that had not already been exhausted by others? Would I start over next year climbing the mountain of victories necessary to take me again to the summit of public speaking? Would I once again sit for hours, for days staring at a three-page draft of a contest speech? Would I be trying to change that one word, add that one expression, find a richer conclusion or start over again with a whole new message to reach the top?

It is a roller coaster ride: slowly grinding to the top, one win at a time and then flying across that Interna-

tional Stage to glory or defeat.

I love roller coasters. I love the way that Toastmasters go out of their way to help other speakers become better at their craft. Although it is hard work, time consuming and scary, the speech contest pushes you out of your comfort zone and provides a lifetime learning experience that you would otherwise never have discovered.

The most important discovery is the large number of real friends and supporters you did not know you had. Your fellow Toastmasters are with you all the way up and, surprisingly, all the way down as well. Life is wonderful, enriched and made dearer by the people around you who share your successes and disappointments. What would I ever have done without my Toastmaster friends?

Viva La Toastmasters!



Jack Ackerman  
2004 Region IV International  
Speech Contest Winner