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We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



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INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Continue the Toastmasters Legacy

One hundred years ago, in 1924, Dr. Ralph C. Smedley had a vision of a supportive environment where individuals could develop their speaking and leadership skills. What began as a modest club in Santa Ana, California, has grown into a global movement with over 14,000 clubs in 150 countries, impacting millions of lives.

Our legacy is built on countless stories of personal growth and transformation. It's the shy individual who found their voice, the uncertain leader who discovered their potential, the mentor who inspired others, and the speaker who captivated audiences with their message. Over the past century, Toastmasters has been a beacon of empowerment, providing the tools and support for people to achieve their goals and realize their dreams.

As I reflect on the profound impact that Toastmasters has had on my life and the lives of others, I encourage us all to show that we are proud Toastmasters. Use the virtual centennial backgrounds provided by World Headquarters when online, display your banner in the club, and wear your Toastmasters pin daily.

Here are four suggestions to honor Dr. Smedley, and I urge you to consider doing at least one, if not all:

1. Improve your communication skills by completing the Pathways level you are working on, or even the entire path.
2. Share your time and talent by mentoring someone in your club, reflecting Dr. Smedley's emphasis on mentoring and evaluations.
3. Spread the wealth by inviting someone to join Toastmasters. Participate in the [Plus One Pledge](#) by bringing a family member, friend, or coworker to a meeting and letting them experience Toastmasters for themselves.
4. Donate to the Smedley Fund, which supports educational initiatives, provides emergency relief, and helps offset costs for those under 18. If your company matches donations, that's even better.

3. Spread the wealth by inviting someone to join Toastmasters. Participate in the [Plus One Pledge](#) by bringing a family member, friend, or coworker to a meeting and letting them experience Toastmasters for themselves.

In today's dynamic landscape, the need for effective communication is more critical than ever.

4. Donate to the Smedley Fund, which supports educational initiatives, provides emergency relief, and helps offset costs for those under 18. If your company matches donations, that's even better.

As we look to the future, the horizon is filled with promise. The world is changing rapidly, bringing new opportunities and challenges. In today's dynamic landscape, the need for effective communication and leadership is more critical than ever.

Together, we will continue transforming lives, one speech, one leader, and one community at a time.

Let's continue to make Dr. Smedley proud and ensure that our legacy endures for the next century and beyond.

Radhi Spear, DTM
International President



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Members of **Elevated Speakers Toastmasters Club** in Kigali, Rwanda, celebrate the club's charter in 2023. Within a year, the club achieved Select Distinguished Club status.

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This *Toastmaster* magazine collector's item is packed with content that celebrates the essence of Toastmasters. Flip through 56 pages of this limited-edition issue and enjoy exclusive print features you can look back on for years to come.



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Club Follows in Smedley's Footsteps

Toastmasters' original club is still going strong.

By Stephanie Darling

The men who gathered for the first time in the basement of the YMCA in Santa Ana, California, on October 22, 1924, were unknowing visionaries. Even their sage leader, Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, could have hardly imagined this fledgling club would be the foundation of one of the world's foremost nonprofit organizations for speaking and leadership education.

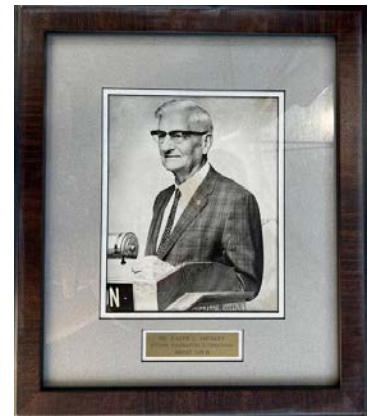
That club was Toastmasters' first—later dubbed the Smedley Chapter One Club. Since 1924, the club has held more than 2,400 meetings, and it welcomes seasoned Toastmasters and eager newcomers to this day. The hybrid community club meets twice a month, online and in person at the First Presbyterian Church of Santa Ana. Amazingly, this was the church Smedley himself attended and is just 100 yards from the club's original

YMCA meeting site. The Chapter One club includes local residents as well as remote members from the United States, Kuwait, India, Japan, Peru, and other countries.

The club's historical fame has long been a draw for members, including six-year member and Club President Junaidi Tjen. "I'm very proud to be part of this historic club," he says. "We want to help ensure Dr. Smedley's mission never ceases. In fact, I think it's the wish of every Toastmaster to see this club continue."

At age 146, Smedley himself attends every club meeting as a photograph sitting on a chair at the front of the room. Each meeting starts with a brief history of the club, which is especially intriguing for new members and guests, Tjen says.

"I was always attracted to the rich history of this club," adds Julie Murphy, DTM, the club's Vice



A framed photograph of Dr. Ralph C. Smedley sits on a chair at every meeting of the Smedley Chapter One Club—a reminder of the club's rich history.

President Membership and former Founder's District Director. "All that we do today as Toastmasters started with this club—everyone has adapted from Smedley Number One. So to me, it's like a pilgrimage to participate in this club."



Early Toastmasters, including Ralph Smedley (far right), gather in the Santa Ana YMCA basement, circa December 1925.

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A Leader Emerges

Ralph Smedley was a natural leader, starting with his days as a stellar student at Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington, Illinois. He had a special passion for education and organizing groups designed to teach by doing, especially communication skills.

After college, he organized Toastmasters clubs in cities where he worked in various leadership positions at the local YMCA. Even though these clubs didn't last, the "Toastmasters idea" had been successfully tested in Smedley's mind.

The Santa Ana YMCA building where the Chapter One club originally met is currently undergoing renovation. (Smedley himself assisted with the original building plans and supervised construction of the building.) It is listed on both the Santa Ana Historic Register and the United States Register of Historic Places, with both Smedley's and Toastmasters' names appearing on the 1993 federal nomination form.

The club met in the YMCA basement from 1924 to 1928 before moving to Kerner's Café (until 1935) and other meeting places. Had they continued meeting at the Y, their space would have survived earthquakes in 1933 and 1971, due to the 18-inch-thick walls specified by Smedley and the architect of the building.

In 1958, Smedley Chapter One honored its leader by dedicating a Founder's Room in the Y's basement, along with a plaque noting the Toastmasters club's birthplace.

History Begins

The club's start was a colorful one. In October 1924, the *Santa Ana Register* newspaper

announced that YMCA general secretary Ralph Smedley was forming a club to "strengthen the streams of oratory" for its members. An October 21 newspaper announcement noted that approximately 25 reservations had been made for the meeting, and that 30 spots was the limit to ensure everyone had a chance to speak.

That first meeting featured a 50-cent dinner and drew local businessmen, educators, the media, and civic leaders. The club was originally dubbed the Toastmasters Club or the YMCA Toastmasters by the *Santa Ana Register*, which published weekly club reports. In 1927, then-Club President Chester Hawk suggested the name Smedley Toastmasters Club Number One, which was resoundingly adopted. Within several years, the club name was adjusted to Smedley Chapter Number One, and later on, "number" was deleted from the name.

During these early years, the club was going "full blast," with a waiting list for membership, according to a report in a 1933 issue of *The Toastmaster* magazine. Sixty new clubs cited the Smedley club as their organizational inspiration.

Bob Palmer, DTM, a 51-year member of Prime Time Toastmasters in Riverside, California, is an expert on Toastmasters history and has a wealth of knowledge about Smedley Chapter One. According to Palmer, the club introduced an extemporaneous-speaking activity in 1931 called "table chatter"—a precursor to the Toastmasters activity later known as Table Topics®. The *Santa Ana Register* noted that early meeting roles included the "chief critic" (now the General Evaluator) and "critics" (now speech evaluators) for audience feedback.

Smedley Chapter One enjoyed remarkable success as soon as it chartered. In 1930, the first issue of *The Gavel* commended the club for winning multiple speaking awards from the California Bankers Association and thanked Smedley for bringing his "novel idea" to its "present state of perfection."

The Smedley club also produced many Toastmasters leaders, including 1942–1943 International President Ted Blanding, who served as the organization's first Executive Director from 1945 to 1958. The club's first DTMs included Bob Gorby, a 51-year Toastmaster and 10-year member of the Chapter One club, where he is 2024–2025 Club Treasurer.

Then Came COVID

Through the years the club survived the Great Depression, the World War II era, and all the common periodic membership drops and summer slumps. However, it was the COVID pandemic that finally threatened the club's long history and close-knit culture. Like many clubs, Smedley Chapter One didn't escape the fallout. Needing to meet online led to a perilous drop in a membership that had long thrived on quality and face-to-face fellowship.

However, existing members rallied, bringing Simone Nash, DTM, onboard as a club coach in 2023. Nash, a 13-year Toastmaster and member of multiple clubs, relished the assignment. Because she lives in Taiwan, she served as an online coach (attending every meeting and helping through WhatsApp messages and frequent Zoom calls).

Steadily, the club upped its social media postings, streamlined its agenda to allow more time for speeches and Table Topics, hosted open houses, and improved guest follow-ups. Members are proud of earning 2023–2024 President's Distinguished honors.

Nash says this has been her most rewarding coach assignment. She fell in love with the club and is now its 2024–2025 Vice President Education.

Smedley Chapter One has its heart and mission firmly set on the next 100 years: to lead a vibrant future while honoring the club's long legacy.

Nash says, "We want to make Dr. Smedley proud!"

Stephanie Darling is a former senior editor of and frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster* magazine. District 12 historian Bob Palmer, DTM, also contributed to this article.

Must You Tell a Story?

By **Ralph C. Smedley**
 Founder, Toastmasters International

If you aspire to be a popular speaker, you will have to learn to tell stories. Even the most serious speaker needs to be able to light up his discourse with occasional flashes of wit and humor, which may or may not be provided by the use of stories, and so the answer to the title question must be in the affirmative. You must tell a story now and then.

This brings up several important questions. *When* should you tell a story? *How* should you tell a story? *Where* can you find good stories? How can you *remember* the stories after finding them?

When?

The time to tell a story is the time when it is appropriate. Just to drag in a story for the sake of telling it is not good. Unless it adds to the effect of your speech, it is a waste of time.

There are at least three occasions when a story is appropriate.

First, to put over an argument without using a whole chapter of serious talk. Consider how effectively Abraham Lincoln used homely stories, usually with the result that an argument was refuted or a point illuminated with very few words.

But the story must be pertinent. It must bear directly on what you are saying. An “illustration” must illuminate. An inappropriate story may raise a laugh, but it weakens your speech.

Second, to keep your speech from growing too serious, too intense. The grave-digging scene which opens the fourth act of *Hamlet* is a good example. Shakespeare deliberately introduces the clowns to relieve the tension of tragedy. It is an excellent speech technique—if well handled.

Third, to catch the attention of the audience at the start of your speech, and to establish a desirable rapport, which can lead naturally into

attentive listening. This is not always the best practice, and if used at all, it must be with discretion and good judgment.

How?

Tell the story well. That is the universal and imperative rule.

You must know the story perfectly. You must have its procedure and its point thoroughly in mind, and you must have learned, by experience, what is the best way to put it over.

A story is well told when it is condensed into brief form without losing the effectiveness of its point. Too many details will kill the best story.

The more naturally it can be woven into your speech, the better. Too much preliminary explanation or introduction will ruin the effect. If you can make it appear to be an essential part of your speech, it will be much stronger than if you have to bring it in with “That reminds me of a story I once heard,” or some such cliché.

Where?

The very best place to find stories and illustrations is in your own experience.

Things that happened to you and can be told in first person are good material. They have the added advantage that they are your own, so no one else can use them.

You can test every story in your repertoire by these simple standards:

1. Is it likely to prove objectionable to anyone?
2. Is it clean and decent? Shun anything that has even the slightest suggestion of being off-color.
3. Does the story amuse you after the fourth or fifth time? Or does it lose its effect? If you don't enjoy it, your audience will not care for it either.



Ralph C. Smedley

4. Does it have a point which is clear and unmistakable—and worthwhile?
5. Can you tell it well?

Remember?

You run across a good item in your reading. But you fail to clip it or make a note of it, and when you want it, it is gone from your memory. The moral is, don't depend on your memory alone.

Keep a notebook or a file of cards for this purpose. When you need an illustration, go to your collection and find it.

Many good storytellers use catchwords to suggest stories. Thus, if something is said about education, or about criticism, or about errors in grammar, or automobiles, or apples, the word brings an appropriate story to mind. Hang your stories on such catchwords and you will remember them.

Summary

Decide when and why you need to tell a story, what effect you want to produce, and what story fits the occasion. Then prepare carefully to tell it in the best possible style. Don't tell too many jokes, and when you do tell one, make it count.

Editor's note: *The original article appeared in the April 1947 issue of The Toastmaster.*

Getting Better With Age

4 ways Toastmasters is as valuable as ever.

By Bill Brown, DTM



I recently had a birthday, and although I hate to admit it, I don't feel as spry as I once did. That happens when you get as old as I am. But guess what? Toastmasters is even older. Is the organization a mere shadow of what it once was? Or has it improved with age?

When it's my birthday, I like to sit down and reflect on where I am now and where I am going. Let's do that with Toastmasters.

When I first joined in 2006, I saw plenty of opportunities. And I have grown a lot these past 18 years. But, with that growth, do I still see those opportunities in Toastmasters? The answer is yes. Here are four ways Toastmasters has gotten better with age.

Continued Value of Speaking Skills

The key benefit for all of us within Toastmasters, since day one, has been to improve our communication skills. Whether you are in a corporate environment, running your own business, or even retired, having good speaking skills is always of great value. Two years ago, I worked with several political candidates for state and local offices. They did not have any speech training and it showed. But what if they had been working on their speaking skills all along? What if they had been members of Toastmasters? They would have been much better prepared for what was ahead.

Maybe you have started to hone your speaking skills but are no longer feeling challenged in your current club. There are many advanced clubs throughout the organization where you can connect with more experienced speakers. With the wide

availability of hybrid and online clubs, you can take advantage of expert advice from afar.

Increase in Confidence

Gaining confidence is another area that has long been a benefit of Toastmasters, and that hasn't changed. We talk a lot about confidence in our speaking, but having the confidence to take on leadership roles is another way Toastmasters has helped people.

I recently sat before my county commissioners to interview for a position on the board of a local committee. That is something I would not have considered doing a couple of years ago. Although my confidence came from an accumulation of responsibilities over time, it started with Toastmasters, and my club and District leadership experiences.

Opportunities for Growth

One aspect of Toastmasters that has increased since the early days are the different ways to challenge yourself. That is true in both the speaking and leadership areas. Look at the leadership page of your District website and you will be amazed at how many ways you can get involved. There are support positions available in addition to Area, Division, and District Director roles.

If you are more focused on the speaking side, you can challenge yourself by entering speech contests. Participating in contests has pushed me forward more than any other aspect of Toastmasters. The initial challenge of competing at the club and Area levels gets you moving. But when you compete at the Division and District levels, you not only grow in your speaking skills, but you also grow your mindset as well.

One last challenge: If you are seeking to distinguish yourself in the public speaking arena, the Accredited Speaker Program will provide a greater challenge for you. The program's criteria drives you to become better at your craft so that you can compete in the marketplace.

Career Connections

The final area I would like to highlight is that of career growth. If you work for a corporation, you probably have professional growth opportunities within the organization itself. But those opportunities also abound for those of us who work for ourselves, and Toastmasters can help with that.

My Toastmasters contacts have introduced me to other connections within my local county and state. I am on a first-name basis with three county commissioners and four state legislators. In addition, I have been selected to serve on the board of our local museum. This will challenge me at a higher level and expand my network even further. Where will that take me?

Every one of my current responsibilities and opportunities can be directly traced back to my Toastmasters involvement. The organization continues to be a springboard to new and better challenges.

So, is Toastmasters slowing down with age? On the contrary, the opportunities are only increasing and expanding at this 100-year-old organization. Where will it take you?

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette. Learn more at billbrownspeechcoach.com.

A CENTURY OF Toastmasters International

This global communication and leadership organization celebrates a centennial milestone.

By Paul Sterman

Get out the cake, open the scrapbook, and start the speeches: Toastmasters International turns 100!

The centennial is a yearlong celebration, but the official anniversary is October 22. On that day in 1924, Ralph C. Smedley, a modest Midwesterner, led a meeting of about 25 men in the basement of a YMCA in Santa Ana, California, launching what would become the organization we know today. Millions of men and women have since benefited from the Toastmasters program.

Smedley's goal was for individuals to become confident public speakers and leaders by practicing in a supportive group setting rather than a formal academic environment.

The concept was deliberately simple, and it has proved remarkably durable. Today, about 270,000 Toastmasters gather in more than 14,000 clubs. They meet in 150 countries.

The members, past and present, have shaped this history with their individual journeys of growth and learning.

"This particular organization has changed my life, and I don't think I'll ever stop being a member," says Mark Brown, a longtime Toastmaster in Macon, Georgia. The Jamaica native won Toastmasters' 1995 World Championship of Public Speaking.

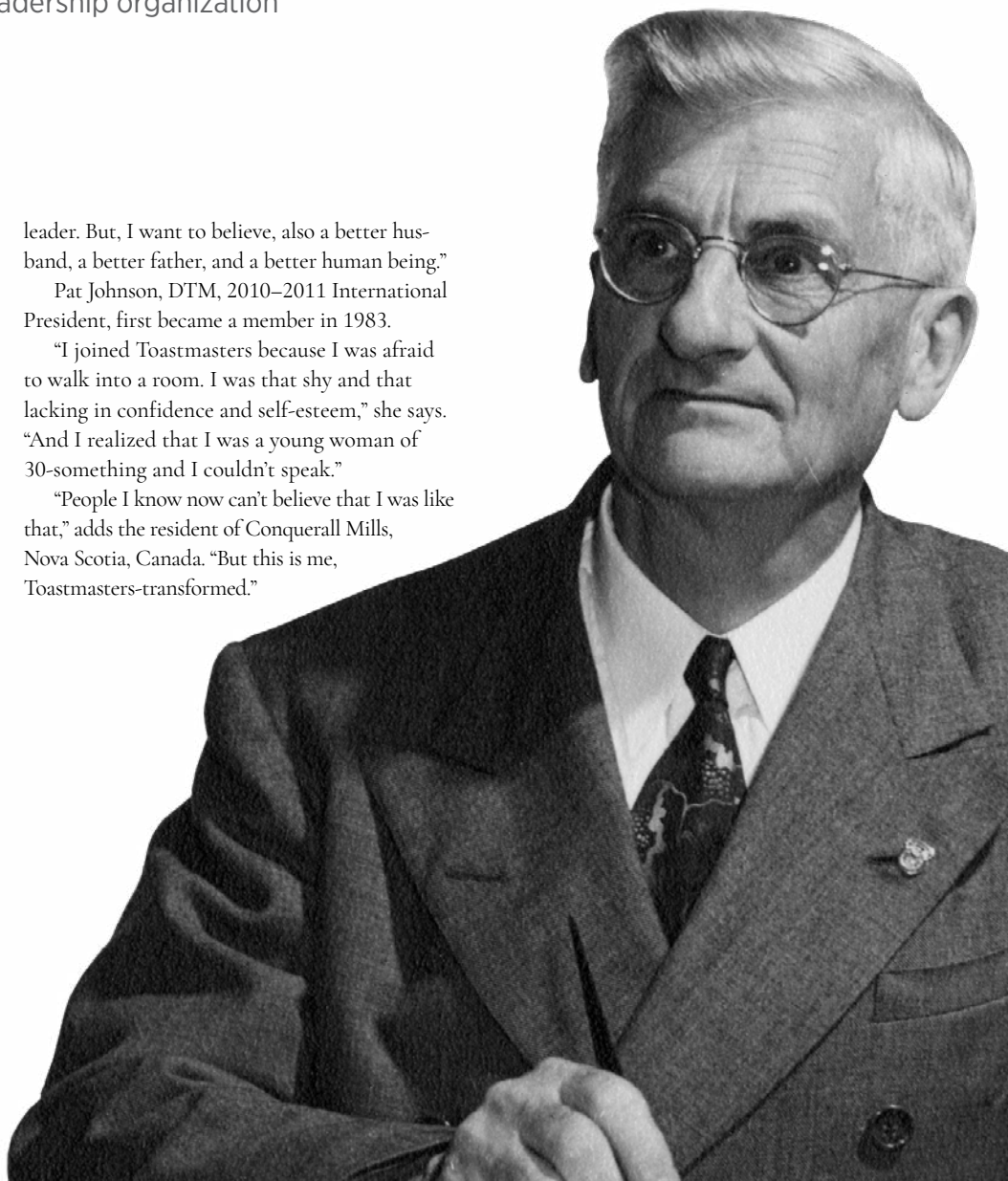
"I've become a better communicator, a better

leader. But, I want to believe, also a better husband, a better father, and a better human being."

Pat Johnson, DTM, 2010–2011 International President, first became a member in 1983.

"I joined Toastmasters because I was afraid to walk into a room. I was that shy and that lacking in confidence and self-esteem," she says. "And I realized that I was a young woman of 30-something and I couldn't speak."

"People I know now can't believe that I was like that," adds the resident of Conquerall Mills, Nova Scotia, Canada. "But this is me, Toastmasters-transformed."



Challenges and Change

The organization's 100 years of existence is a testament to success and resilience. Toastmasters has met challenges (such as the World War II era and the COVID pandemic), adapted to societal and technology changes, and accommodated diverse member needs across the decades.

The education program has evolved from a single pamphlet of tips from Ralph Smedley to an expansive digital learning program.

Toastmasters has grown from having a predominantly North America-based membership for many years to one that is now divided nearly equally between members from inside and outside North America. Women, who were not officially allowed to become members until 1973, today comprise more than 50% of the membership.

Consistent to Its Core

While the organization has evolved in many ways, it still hews closely to Smedley's ideals. His mission and principles are throughlines in these 100 years, and they still form the core of what Toastmasters is: a global network of clubs where members learn to be dynamic communicators and leaders, fostering friendships in the process.

Smedley's concept was brilliant "because every member has a home," says Radhi Spear, DTM, Toastmasters' 2024–2025 International President. "Their home is their club."

Club meetings retain the same basic structure and purpose as

in the organization's early years. Now, like then, members prepare and deliver speeches, practice extemporaneous speaking (Table Topics®), and learn leadership and active listening by taking on meeting roles and speech evaluations.

Toastmasters Chief Executive Officer Daniel Rex, in his introduction to *Confident Voices:*

The Story of Toastmasters, observes, "If Smedley were to sit in on a club meeting today, there are aspects he wouldn't recognize, most notably the technology. However, despite all the external changes, there is no doubt he would recognize the agenda, the meeting roles, and the enthusiasm of the members."



Men Only

Despite the common ground with the past, there are distinct differences today. Most obviously, the composition of the membership. For almost the first 50 years, members were all men. When Smedley started the organization, and for decades afterward, men were primarily the ones in the workforce, so the Toastmasters program was aimed at them. Women still had some options to be involved, though not at the same level. Clubs held "ladies nights" so members' spouses could get a taste of Toastmasters. Husbands

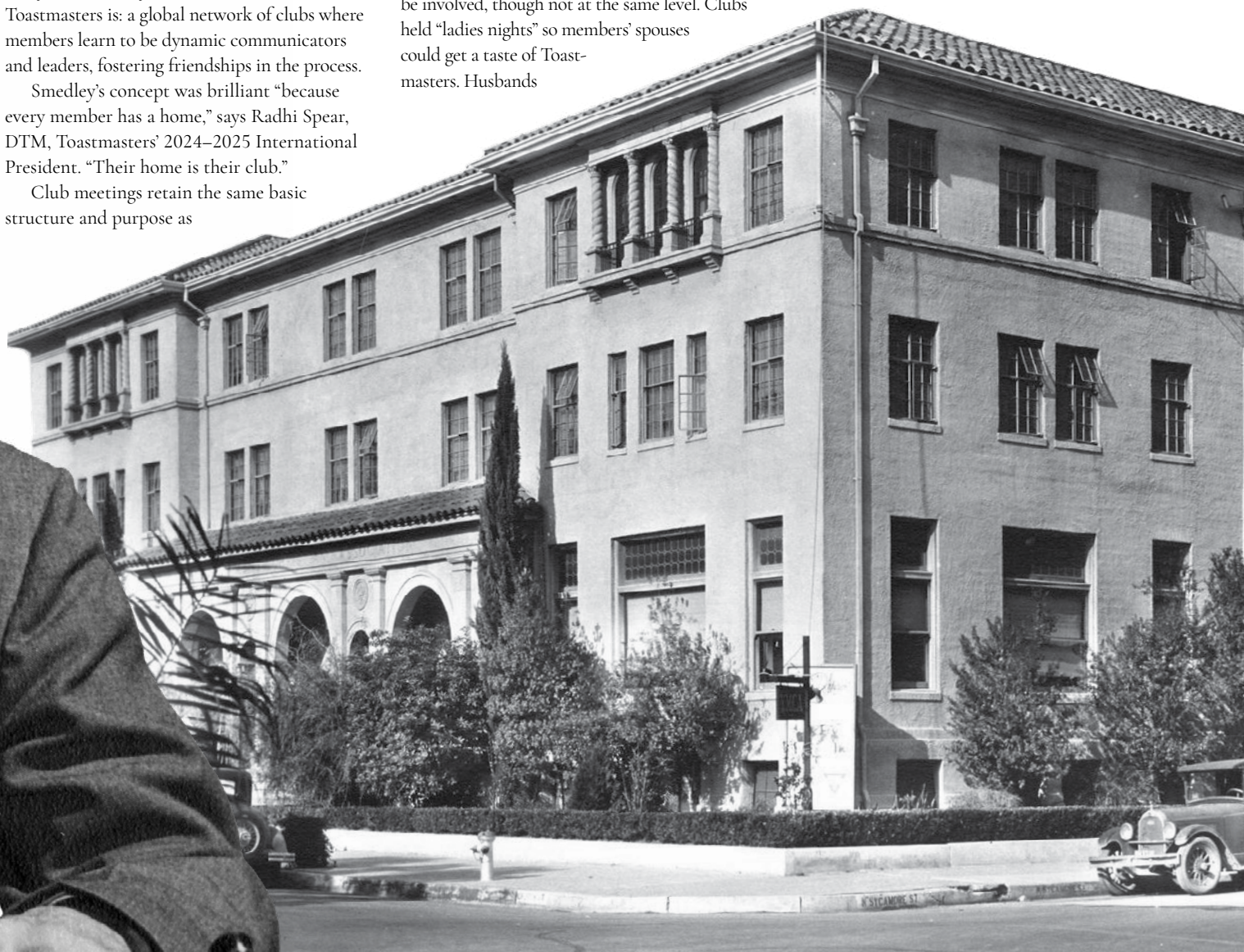
brought their wives to the International Convention, where fashion shows and shopping expeditions were organized for the women, while the men went about the business of self-improvement.

In the late 1930s, a group of women had formed an organization modeled on Toastmasters but existing independent of it, called International Toastmistress Clubs. The women identified themselves as "wives and sweethearts" of Toastmasters members. Smedley and other Toastmasters leaders offered their guidance to the parallel organization.

By the mid-1960s, Toastmasters clubs were allowed to form women's auxiliary Toastmasters clubs if they desired. Some clubs also sponsored women as "honorary members"—allowed to attend club meetings but not eligible for awards or accepted as official members—and some women formed Gavel Clubs, open to those who didn't qualify for regular club membership.

Women Break Through

At the 1973 International Convention in Houston, Texas, delegates approved a new ruling that would allow women to officially become full members. The move was a boon to the organization:



Ten years after the historic change, Toastmasters membership had doubled.

Helen Blanchard, DTM, was at the center of the shift. The trailblazing Toastmaster from San Diego, California, had surreptitiously become a member in 1970, disguising her gender to World Headquarters by using the name “Homer” Blanchard. After she became official, Blanchard kept battling away obstacles, becoming the first female International President in 1985.

Countless other women followed in her wake as leaders at all levels of the organization. “Helen laid the groundwork,” says Jana Barnhill, DTM, AS, 2008-2009 International President. “She is the one who paved our path.”

Fifty years after the Toastmasters ruling on women members, Morag Mathieson, DTM, of Bavaria, Germany, became the organization’s eighth female International President, while Radhi Spear, DTM, of Piscataway, New Jersey, and Aletta Rochat, DTM, of Cape Town, South Africa, were elected First and Second Vice President, respectively. Which meant that a woman would be the Toastmasters International President three years in a row.

Growth Through the Years

The concept for a Toastmasters program actually began in 1905. Before Ralph Smedley came to Santa Ana, California, to lead operations at the new YMCA, he created Toastmasters clubs in several other cities where he worked for the Y. However, the clubs eventually disbanded each time he was transferred to another YMCA.

The pattern was broken in Santa Ana, and a new era began. From that single club in Santa Ana, Toastmasters would mushroom into a spate of other clubs in Southern California,



Mark Brown, the International Convention announcer and 1995 World Champion of Public Speaking, says Toastmasters connects people of different nationalities and perspectives.

then the western United States, and into places like Canada, Hawaii, and the United Kingdom. By 1945, a District had sprung up in Scotland.

Smedley was pleasantly surprised at the expansion. He realized, he said later, that Toastmasters “met a real need” for people.

The organization’s demographics changed, too, as more and more clubs emerged outside the U.S. and Canada. By the 1970s, clubs had chartered in South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Mexico, Japan, and many other countries. In 1987, New Zealand’s John Fauvel, DTM, became the first International President from outside North America.

But with growth also came tensions. Members outside North America pushed for a bigger seat at the Toastmasters table. They wanted more equality among all Districts and opportunities

for officer training, speech contests, and representation on the Board of Directors.

In 2009, delegates at the International Convention voted to change the organization’s global structure, resulting in Toastmasters regions existing outside North America for the first time. Under the new alignment, each of the 14 regions around the world would be represented by one International Director.

Toastmasters also created a translations department at World Headquarters, and with the help of member volunteers across the globe, translated Toastmasters materials and resources into a variety of languages.

Such diversity is symbolized by the annual Parade of Flags held at the International Convention. In a colorful display, members from around the world walk in a procession onstage,



From left to right: Past International Presidents Helen Blanchard (1985-1986), Pauline Shirley (1994-1995), Jana Barnhill (2008-2009), and Pat Johnson (2010-2011)



Toastmasters across continental Europe celebrate in 2018 at the “Rebirth in Athens” conference in Greece. The event spotlighted years of membership growth, as two Districts reformed into six. Photo credit: Ana Isabel Ferreira

carrying the flags of their countries. As Toastmasters has built a presence in more and more countries, more and more flags have appeared.

Convention announcer Mark Brown narrates the event and says the parade is always an emotional sight.

“As I say the names of these different countries, and I realize we have Toastmasters cheering for these flags, some of the nations whose names I call may be at war, but their citizens are here with each other, at Toastmasters, because conflicts don’t matter to them,” Brown says.

“They know they can come here and build a personal relationship with somebody from that country.”

The Impact of Technology

Technology wielded its influence in various ways through the years. In the 1960s, television became a tool. The 1963 International Convention featured an education session that included demonstrations of modern television techniques, along with tips on how members could make use of the technology. Some Toastmasters clubs produced programs or segments on local public television.

In the 1980s, Toastmasters began producing audio and video content to supplement members’ learning. In the mid-1990s, the organization introduced a website.

In 2003, Toastmasters International went online to manage its administrative operations at World Headquarters in Southern California. The move was a catalyst for membership growth, especially outside the U.S., because membership payments and other transactions could now be processed easier and less expensively; previously, members primarily had to mail or fax their information.

The digital era ushered in more opportunities. Starting in 2011, members could access the *Toastmaster* magazine online. In 2017, the Pathways learning experience debuted with a digital education program. In the 2020s, many clubs began meeting online, and some now hold meetings in a hybrid format, with members attending both in person and online.

Member Achievements

There are many more strands to the Toastmasters story. Corporate clubs over the years have helped businesses benefit from the Toastmasters program, with employees in clubs boosting their communication and leadership skills. Speech contests, from club events to the World Championship of Public Speaking®, continue to be a highlight of the Toastmasters experience.

So, too, is the International Convention, an annual slate of education sessions, top speaking competitions, and social opportunities. The event has been held throughout the U.S. and in Canada, Malaysia, and The Bahamas.

Through the years, Toastmasters has expanded its training programs for club and District officers. Members have flourished as



Sapna Ohri carries the flag of India in the Parade of Flags, held annually during the International Convention’s Opening Ceremonies.

leaders in their communities, from the boardroom to the medical field, the political arena to the world of education. King Vidor, a famous director of Hollywood films in the 1940s and ‘50s, was a member of a club in Beverly Hills and spoke of how he benefited greatly from Toastmasters. As did Linda Lingle, governor of Hawaii from 2002 to 2010, and Philip Davis, DTM, elected prime minister of The Bahamas in 2021.

Generations of young people have developed self-confidence and speaking skills. Erica Alfaro, whose Mexican parents had worked in the agricultural fields of Southern California and urged her to pursue an education, shared how her Toastmasters club helped her prepare when she was chosen to give her college commencement address.



Launched in 2017, the Pathways learning experience was designed as an online program featuring interactive resources such as video, quizzes, assessments, and other activities.

The Next 100 Years

The world of Toastmasters keeps evolving—quite literally. In 2024, the organization charted a new global structure, reflecting increasing international growth. The alignment equally divides the 14 Toastmasters regions: seven inside North and South America, seven outside the Americas.

There are new opportunities for progress. The Pathways learning experience continues to be strengthened, hybrid club meetings offer the chance to improve online communication, and the Toastmasters alliance with Rotary International, which started in 2019, can help members positively impact others around the world.

“It’s the next hundred years that we should be concentrating on, as Dr. Smedley would have desired us to do,” says 2019–2020 International President Deepak Menon, DTM, of New Delhi, India.

The Toastmasters program, time-tested and universal, continues to meet a real need.

“I’m often asked, what is the role of Toastmasters in this age of digital communication?” muses Toastmasters CEO Daniel Rex. “Quite honestly, that makes me smile just a little bit. Human nature is human nature. Communication is as necessary now as it ever has been, maybe even more so.”

“Toastmasters,” he adds, “has a role in communication, now and in the future.”

Paul Sterman is senior editor, executive and editorial content, for *Toastmasters International*.

A Branding Change



In 2011, Toastmasters updated its branding elements—a refresh that included a new logo, tagline, and colors—giving the organization a more cohesive and consistent identity. The new branding elements were introduced at that year’s International Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

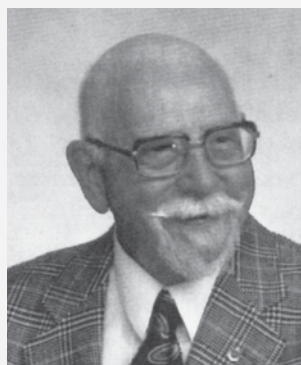
Leaders Who Made Their Mark

Many leaders have shepherded Toastmasters International over the years. Here are a few whose legacies loom large.



Dr. Ralph C. Smedley started it all. The founder of Toastmasters, he contributed profoundly to the organization for many years. He guided Toastmasters as it found its footing, oversaw planning as it expanded, wrote reams of early educational materials, edited *The Toastmaster* magazine, advised executive leadership for many years, and chronicled the history of Toastmasters’ first 35 years in a book.

Yet he never strove to profit financially from the far-reaching impact of his brainchild. Smedley assigned all his rights and claims back to the organization he founded, and ensured it would remain a nonprofit. “I would rather be rich in friendship than in money,” he said.



Joe Rinnert, DTM, was hugely influential to Toastmasters’ long-term stability and success. The 1946–1947 International President served as the organization’s legal counsel for more than 40 years. During that time, he was also consultant, committee member, and parliamentarian at the biannual Board of Directors meetings.

Rinnert became a Toastmaster in 1939, after earning his Harvard law degree. By 1953, after opening his Los Angeles law firm with a fellow Toastmaster, he became the organization’s legal counsel.

Tributes flowed after Rinnert’s death in 1995. John Latin, DTM, 1984–1985 International President, said, “Quite simply, Joe Rinnert was the world’s most dedicated Toastmaster.”



After becoming one of Toastmasters International’s first official female members, **Helen Blanchard, DTM**, led the way in leadership as well. She was the first female International Director and then became the organization’s first female International President in 1985.

She was also the first female member to earn Distinguished Toastmaster status. Blanchard said the communication

and leadership skills she gained in Toastmasters were vital to her professional success. She had a long career at the technical information division of the Naval Ocean Systems Center in San Diego, California.

The devoted Toastmaster was fond of saying, “If you get out of Toastmasters all that there is to get out of Toastmasters, you’ll never get out of Toastmasters.”



In 1986, **Ted Wood, DTM**, became Toastmasters’ first Black International President. He played a pivotal role in helping the organization take a more inclusive approach to membership, advocating for more minorities to become Toastmasters, and championing the benefits of the program to groups like senior citizens, police officers, firefighters, and paramedics.

Wood also organized the Black Caucus, an informal group who gathered at the International Convention to discuss ways to encourage Black individuals and other minorities to pursue leadership positions.

“Just as there have been advocates for the advancement of women, Ted was that for Black members,” said Tim Keck, DTM, the 1999–2000 International President.



John Fauvel, DTM, was Toastmasters’ first International President from outside of North America. The Auckland, New Zealand, resident served in the role in 1987–1988, a particularly important time for an organization that was forging an increasingly large international presence.

Fauvel joined Toastmasters in 1963, only one year after the first club in New Zealand had chartered. (1997–1998

International President Len Jury, DTM, hailed from the same club in Auckland as Fauvel.) Fauvel became passionate about building clubs and about international growth. In his presidential term, he set a record by traveling 10,000 miles by air to visit 10 Districts in the United States and four in New Zealand and Australia. His term also saw a record-breaking 683 new clubs chartered.

Many other Toastmasters leaders—at all levels—have put their own stamp on the organization. In the 21st century alone, International Presidents have deftly navigated such challenges as supporting a growing international membership, updating the organization’s branding, transitioning to a new education program, and adapting in the face of COVID’s public health risks.

International Presidents in this century have also reflected Toastmasters’ increased global diversity: Eleven of them have been from outside North America.

As the highest-ranked officer on the Board of Directors, the International President is Toastmasters’ top leader. During their term, they visit Districts around the world, write the International President’s Message in each issue of the *Toastmaster* magazine, and preside over meetings of the Board, among other responsibilities.

Visit the International Presidents page on the Toastmasters website to see a list of all who have served in the role, including the first one: J. Clark Chamberlain in 1931–1932.

TABLE TOPICS

FROM

History

Include a historic twist in your next spontaneous speaking session.

By *Toastmaster* magazine staff

- » On October 22, 1924, about two dozen men met in the basement of the Santa Ana YMCA and listened to founder Ralph C. Smedley outline the premise and procedure of a Toastmasters club. Describe the first meeting as if you were there.
- » If you could talk to Smedley, what would you ask him?
- » Helen Blanchard was the first female International President. She joined Toastmasters before women were allowed by using initials and a fake male name. Blanchard's club held a Table Topics session to choose the name, Homer. If you had to rename yourself, what would you choose and why?
- » Smedley was an avid stamp collector. What is something you collect, or would like to collect, and why?
- » Smedley once said, "We grow or learn or work better when we enjoy what we are doing." Is there someone who made learning enjoyable for you?
- » Another one of Smedley's quotes was: "The past prepares us to meet the challenges of the future." What lessons from your past help you meet challenges?
- » Toastmasters World Headquarters was located in Southern California for more than 90 years, until the organization relocated to Colorado. What place do you think would make a great site for Headquarters?



Dick Brooks of Westchester Toastmasters in Los Angeles shows off his Table Topics cup—which he proudly modified into this photo—in a 1954 issue of *The Toastmaster*.



BEST TABLE TOPICS

Recognize the best Table Topics® speech of each club meeting with a custom-printed ribbon.

- » A 1960 *Reader's Digest* article on Toastmasters noted that there was an industrial swing-shift Toastmasters club in Portland, Oregon, that met at 1 a.m. What would be your favorite time of the day to meet? The most difficult time?
- » A famous film director of the 1950s and '60s named King Vidor was once a member of Toastmasters. If there was a film made about Toastmasters, who do you think should play Smedley and why?
- » Smedley once said, "The work of a Toastmasters club is to help each member be his best self, as a member of society and as a protagonist of the things which seem to him most worthwhile." How has your Toastmasters experience helped you be your best self, or how have you used your skills to help someone else be a better member of society?
- » Astronauts Jim Lovell and Wally Schirra were once Toastmasters members. If you were an astronaut, what are some ways you could use your Toastmasters skills?
- » Smedley did all of his own typing in the early days. When did you learn to type, and do you think it's still a useful skill?
- » Terry McCann, 1975–2001 Toastmasters International Executive Director, won a gold medal for wrestling in the 1960 Summer Olympics. What Olympic sport would you like to win a gold medal in?
- » In 1953, Smedley spent two weeks visiting clubs in Scotland. If you could spend a few weeks traveling, where would you go?
- » With words and actions, describe a windmill in action.
- » The baby wakes up crying in the middle of the night. Show how you get him back to sleep.
- » Demonstrate how to split kindling and start a fire.
- » Explain and demonstrate your favorite swimming stroke.
- » Demonstrate how you would cast a fly for trout in a lake and catch your fish.
- » Demonstrate how to play a violin.
- » Choose two people. One tries to sell the other person something, and the other must resist the sale.
- » One member presents a "gift" to another member, and that member must respond to the gift.
- » One member gives a brief talk on a topic, with subsequent members adding something to the talk to make it better.
- » Choose two members. One gives an unrehearsed talk on a lively subject, the other makes the appropriate gestures that the speaker should be making, with the speaker making no gestures at all.
- » Choose four members. Each member writes a topic on a piece of paper. When it is time for each of them to speak, each member hands his topic to the person on their right, who speaks on that topic.
- » Put speakers into pairs. One person gives a sales talk, while the other interrupts, haggles about the price, or makes excuses.
- » Give the speaker a job title that is not their own (firefighter, milk delivery person, usher, etc.) and have them describe how they would do that job.
- » With words and action, describe the close finish of a horse race.
- » Choose two people. The first talks for one minute, and the other must pick up where the first leaves off and complete the speech.
- » The first speaker is assigned a subject for a one-minute talk. The second speaker does not use the same subject but selects a topic from one of the suggestions made by the previous speaker. The next speaker chooses from one of the second speaker's topics, with each subsequent speaker taking a topic from the preceding speaker.
- » Try to sell your neighbor an item in your house that you've had for a while.
- » Describe the best job you've ever had.
- » What do you tell people when they want to know what Toastmasters does?
- » If you could have any job, what would it be? Describe why you want it and how you are qualified for it.
- » Choose a club officer role and give a campaign speech on why you are the right person to fill the role.
- » What would you serve the president of Ethiopia (or another country) for dinner?
- » If you were suddenly left a huge fortune, what would you do?

The Toastmaster magazine staff is composed of five editorial team members.

The Enduring Structure of Club Meetings

While much has changed, a remarkable amount has remained the same.

By Laura Amann

While Toastmasters is a vast international organization, spanning 150 countries, each member's experience is based in their club. The club is the core of the entire Toastmasters program.

Toastmasters founder Dr. Ralph C. Smedley knew he wanted to avoid a classroom feeling, and strongly adhered to the principle of learning by doing, and improving through constructive criticism. He also recognized that people “learn best in moments of enjoyment” and emphasized that clubs need to be convivial, supportive places, where members felt comfortable and encouraged as they progressed.

Interestingly, for as much as Toastmasters has changed over the years, much of the club experience—including the agenda and meeting roles—has remained true to Smedley's vision. In fact, if he were to attend a club today, while the technology, the diversity of members, the speech topics, and some meeting locations would likely seem perplexing, he would undoubtedly recognize the flow of the meeting itself.



Early Club Meetings

On November 5, 1924, the early members put together a standard agenda for meetings and determined club officer roles. Meetings were to include prepared speeches, a critic for those speeches and the overall meeting (today called evaluators and General Evaluator), and an impromptu speaking section (dubbed Table Topics® in 1935), as well as a Toastmaster, and assigned meeting roles. Club officers were to include a President, a Vice President, and a Secretary-Treasurer.

Sound familiar?

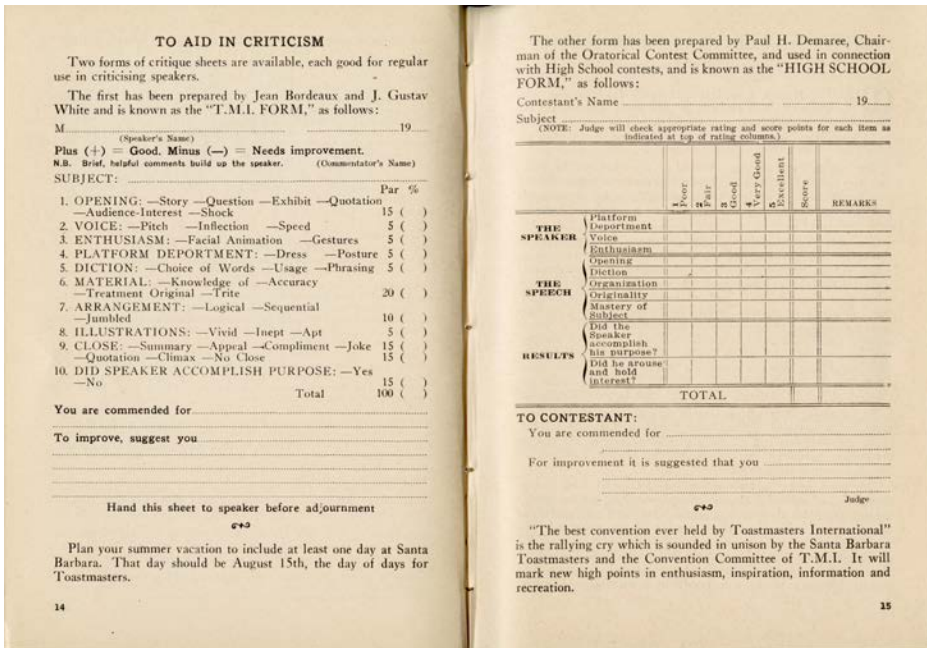
It quickly became apparent that the quality of evaluations could vary wildly, and by 1927, a standardized critique sheet was developed to help guide the process. Each speaker had four evaluators (then called “critics”) prepare comments for their speech.

Speech Topics and Themes

The first speech a member gives to their club has always been a way to introduce themselves. Smedley himself



The second Toastmasters club, the Anaheim Toastmasters Club, receives its charter, in 1925, with Ralph Smedley looking on (far left).



1936 evaluation form

referred to them as Ice Breakers.

Today, the majority of speeches are based around the Pathways project material. However, the first education manual wasn't produced until 1942, and prior to that, members frequently chose their speech topics based on the club meeting theme, something all clubs regularly determined. A theme would be announced well in advance and speakers would either choose their topics, or be assigned a topic, based on that theme.

Some themes from those early meetings include: "What I Do for a Living" and "Santa Ana, City of Schools and Churches." The calendar year also provided inspiration, with themes such as Abraham Lincoln (near his birthday), vacations, and various holidays. As Smedley put it, "There was never any difficulty in finding speech material. We just applied a bit of originality and imagination."

At the November 12, 1924, meeting the theme was California, and speeches included "Save the Redwoods," "Building More and Better Highways," and "Capitalizing on the Tourists."

Themed meetings remain still popular with clubs today—everything from Academy Award-like events to backward meetings to costume-inspired sessions.

Meeting Roles and Locations

Despite having similar agendas, different clubs have always had different personalities—some

are more formal, some more casual, and some cater to a profession, hobby, or other interest. Some are sponsored by corporations. Some are formed in prisons.

In the early years, meetings were held over dinner, with each member either bringing a dish or chipping in a bit of money to keep costs down. Having a dinner meeting made it easier for members to get to know each other, thus encouraging the desired congenial atmosphere.

While some meetings today still take place over dinner, there is no prescribed meeting location—clubs gather everywhere from a corporate office to a community center, a library, or, in the case of online meetings, in cyberspace. Some meet every week for an hour, some for two hours every two weeks. Membership numbers can range from eight to over 100.

Wherever the club meets, meeting roles still include a Toastmaster, a Table Topicsmaster, a timer, and a General Evaluator (or the Evening Critic, as it was first named). Roles such as Ah-Counter and grammarian are also common.

Some clubs put their own spin on these roles, and the meeting may start with a joke from the Jokemaster, or a poem read by the Poetmaster. Some clubs begin with a comedy-inspired improv session, to loosen and relax members. There may be a Guest Greeter to ensure nonmembers are welcomed,

or there may be a Quiz Master, who periodically tests members' listening skills. The possibilities are endless, and add flavor and personality to meetings, as well as give additional opportunities for members to speak and lead.

Clubs Today

Community clubs, which are open to everyone and have a range of members, are the most prevalent. In the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of clubs were corporate clubs, which are sponsored by an organization for its employees.

Some clubs bring together people with similar interests or hobbies—such as cooking, books, photography, or online gaming. Some are designed for people with similar challenges, such as a stutter, vision impairments, autism, or neurological disorders. Advanced clubs serve members who want to advance their speaking skills and be challenged by other advanced speakers.

Sometimes clubs have served as a poignant reminder of the need for camaraderie and structure in the darkest of times. Clubs have formed in prisoner-of-war camps in both World War II and the Vietnam War, providing a way to keep the men's minds sharp and bring a sense of purpose, as well as the chance to develop a skill while bonding with others.

During the COVID pandemic, many members felt their online club meetings helped them maintain a sense of connection at a time when feelings of isolation were so prevalent.

Club meetings provide a level playing field, where everyone is welcome. They provide an opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds—socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, gender—to share stories, listen to each other, and grow together.

Through listening and speaking, members are exposed to and can better understand a variety of people they might not otherwise get to know. A club is a melting pot of learning individuals, something unique to Toastmasters, particularly in a world where it can be easy to only interact with people who are similar.

Laura Amann is managing editor for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

Celebrate the CENTENNIAL in **STYLE!**

Add to your meetings with these anniversary-related ideas.

By Mackenzie Eldred and Laura Mishkind

Milestone anniversaries and birthdays—such as a whopping 100 years—call for some type of observation, big or small. With so many achievements in the last century, there is plenty to celebrate.

Whether you want to delve into Toastmasters' history, gather with other members, or stir up excitement at your club meetings, there are many opportunities to commemorate this centennial. Read ahead for a list of ideas on how your club can celebrate Toastmasters' centennial year.

Dive Into History

- » **Read through past issues of the *Toastmaster*.** Go to the [Explore page](#) on the magazine's website to browse full PDF issues dating back to 1930. Share interesting stories you find with fellow club members.
- » **Give a speech or ask a Table Topics® question based on a historical speech title.** Find any interesting speech titles in early issues of the *Toastmaster*? Incorporate this into your next speech to share some history about Toastmasters.
- » **Host a centennial party.** Celebrate the centennial by showcasing the Toastmasters 100-year logo on your meeting-room décor or placing it on a special cake or dessert. Create games based on historic facts or make personalized bingo cards so everyone can get in on the fun. Make sure to send your pictures to the Magazine Team and check the Brand Guidelines to ensure everything is in compliance.
- » **Explore the Toastmasters history website.** Did you know Toastmasters International has a robust [history website](#)? From a historic overview to in-depth coverage of important Toastmasters events and fun photos, this look back will enlighten you during this anniversary month or any time of year.
- » **Stream speeches by previous World Champions of Public Speaking on YouTube.** Take a step back in time and watch former winners at your leisure or with fellow members. See how topics have shifted over the years and what inspires or invokes a laugh. Consider conducting evaluations on the speeches to highlight what the champs did well and what they could have done even better.
- » **Watch an archival video from the Toastmasters Vault.** Listen to Smedley's thoughts and hear his voice in a [compilation video](#) of recently uncovered footage. Host a watch party during a meeting so all your club members can learn about the organization's history.
- » **Research what was happening in your area during 1924 and incorporate your findings into a club meeting.** Who was a leader in your state that year? What significant event took place in your city? What food was popular at the time? Share what you find with your club or create a culinary masterpiece for a taste of Toastmasters' founding year.

Gatherings and Connections

- » **Host an alumni reunion.** Invite past and present members to come together to celebrate the centennial year. Recognize the achievements of past members and share what current members are gaining from their Toastmasters journey. Encourage attendees to network and build relationships with one another.
- » **Reach out to someone you met at the International Convention or District Conference.** Follow up with a message and share what you have been up to and how your club plans to celebrate Toastmasters' anniversary.
- » **Host an open house.** Join in the organization-wide centennial [Plus One Pledge](#) drive by asking each member to bring a guest or invite your community to the event. Have members share what they gained from Toastmasters and distribute guest packets with more information. After the open house, reach out to the prospective members and invite them back.
- » **Host a demonstration meeting.** Introduce the Toastmasters program to nonmembers by showcasing what a club meeting looks like. Encourage the audience to join or form their own clubs.
- » **Combine your celebration with another club.** Invite local Toastmasters to join the fun by hosting a joint meeting. Meet other members and share interesting facts about each of your clubs.



Featured photos were posted by members for the Centennial Snaps campaign on social media.

CLUB EXPERIENCE

- » **Host a potluck for your club.** What do you think Smedley's favorite food was? What dishes were popular in the 1920s? Invite members to bring in their favorite dishes and present a Table Topics response on why they brought in that food or what its connection to the organization is.
- » **Get coffee with your mentor or mentee.** Plan a day to meet and talk about what goals you have accomplished in the last year. Acknowledge the support your mentor has provided and the hard work you have put in to develop your skills.
- » **Host a Speechcraft® workshop to spread the word about Toastmasters.** Invite nonmembers in your community to develop their communication skills through this condensed version of the Toastmasters program.



Spread the Word

- » **Use the unique centennial logo.** The Graphics Team at World Headquarters designed a [100-year logo](#) for special use during centennial celebrations. Use it on your signs, purchase shirts from the Toastmasters Online Store showcasing it, and sport it wherever you go.
- » **Encourage members of online and hybrid clubs to use the centennial backgrounds during meetings.** With several design options, you can mix up your club meetings by using different [virtual wallpapers](#). You can also use these backgrounds during other meetings to help promote Toastmasters.
- » **Show off your limited-edition centennial memorabilia from the store.** From shirts to pins and keychains to ribbons, the [Toastmasters Online Store](#) is your stop for 100th anniversary gifts. Wear and use your commemorative swag throughout the month.
- » **Use the centennial PowerPoint template.** Do you have an upcoming presentation in your club or at work? Help promote Toastmasters and show your support by using [specially designed slides](#) featuring the organization's 100-year logo.
- » **Build community awareness.** Take this opportunity to spread the Toastmasters mission to those who haven't joined yet. Try to get interviewed on your local TV news or radio station. Send a press release about the 100-year anniversary or your club's celebration to the local paper or magazine—print or digital.
- » **Include your celebration information in newsletters.** If you have a club or District newsletter, be sure to write up the details of any events so people can plan to attend. After the event, submit a write-up and photos to the newsletter.
- » **Sign off with a centennial email signature.** Show your Toastmasters pride and spark others' interest in the organization by showcasing the 100-year logo alongside your [digital signature](#).
- » **Create a digital photo album.** Take pictures of your club members—during speeches, meetings, and posed shots. Compile them into a digital album on your club's Facebook page or on a Google Drive to make it easy to share the memories.



Mix Up Club Meetings

- » **Share your Centennial Snaps.** Each month, Toastmasters is introducing a new “100 photos” social media theme to celebrate the centennial. Post your photos on social media using the hashtags [#toastmasters](#) and [#Toastmasters100Years](#) and tagging Toastmasters International.
- » **Host a themed club meeting.** Excite your club members by adding entertaining themes to your meeting, such as the 1920s era or Ralph C. Smedley. Focus your Table Topics questions on the meeting’s theme or have the grammarian use words from 100 years ago or ones that relate to the organization’s founder.
- » **Listen to *The Toastmasters Podcast*.** Have each member of your club listen to a different episode of the [podcast](#) and relay what they learned.
- » **Celebrate the club’s and members’ accomplishments.** Take the opportunity to honor all your club has already achieved. Hand out ribbons and pins and ensure members are applauded for completing learning paths in Pathways or reaching personal goals. Acknowledge the hard work of the club overall and any designations earned or growth achieved throughout the year.
- » **Host a book club meeting or a signing party.** Delve into the history of the organization and explore the people, events, and stories that have shaped Toastmasters by reading the recently published [Confident Voices: The Story of Toastmasters](#) (available on the Toastmasters Online Store). Host a book discussion sharing interesting facts you learned, and then have members sign each other’s books using the blank pages at the end.
- » **Use the photo booth backdrops.** Find some fun props to accompany the 100-year branded photo booth backdrops and set up a photo station for members to enjoy snapping photos together. Don’t forget to share them on social media!
- » **Plan for the future.** How does your club want to improve for the next 100 years? Ask members what goals they want the club to accomplish or that they want to reach themselves. Discuss them as a group and find a way to display them, whether through a shared document or on a vision board with pictures and phrases.

Mackenzie Eldred is editorial coordinator and **Laura Mishkind** is associate editor for the *Toastmaster* magazine.

Get Involved!

Send photos of your celebrations for a chance to be published in an upcoming issue of the *Toastmaster*. Email photos@toastmasters.org with your pictures and explanations.

Ready to go back in history? To see the Toastmasters timeline, snapshots, and videos from the vault, visit toastmasters.org/About/History.

Looking to enhance your PowerPoints, virtual backgrounds, or email signature? Use the specially made centennial elements found at toastmasters.org/100Years.



TOASTMASTER Cover Stars!

Members strike a pose at the
2024 International Convention.

By Mackenzie Eldred

On-person attendees in Anaheim, California, were invited to be on the cover of the *Toastmaster* magazine, and members did not disappoint, using props and Toastmasters skills to strike some memorable poses. The photo booth was in the *Toastmasters Through the Years Exhibit*, and part of the magazine history section.



Svetlana Breum, DTM, of Silkeborg, Denmark; Olga Kutsche, DTM, of Erlangen, Germany; and Tuire Vuolasvirta, DTM, of Helsinki, Finland



Sukumar Nayak, DTM, of Germantown, Maryland



Abha Ohri, DTM, of Siliguri, West Bengal, India



Corren Thomas, DTM, of Kingston, Jamaica; Elka Price, DTM, of Antigua and Barbuda; and Tashi Browne, DTM, of Georgetown, Guyana



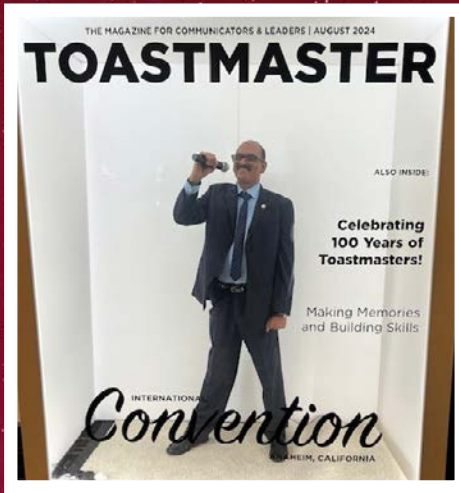
Shaheen Backer of Doha, Qatar



Lauretta Jaysura, DTM; Andrea Haye, Kathy Blount, DTM, and Marietta Phoenix, all from New York



Jennifer Nelson, DTM, Rose Bradford, DTM, Rae Anh George, DTM, Zenia Shipp, DTM, and Terrie Green, DTM; all from Texas



Alex Philip, DTM, of Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia



Stanley See, DTM; of Maryville, Tennessee



Joe Jarzombek, DTM, of Canyon Lake, Texas; and Sharyn Jarzombek, DTM, of Montclair, Virginia



Rey Batomalaque, DTM, of San Fernando, Philippines



Monica Langhorne of Goleta, California



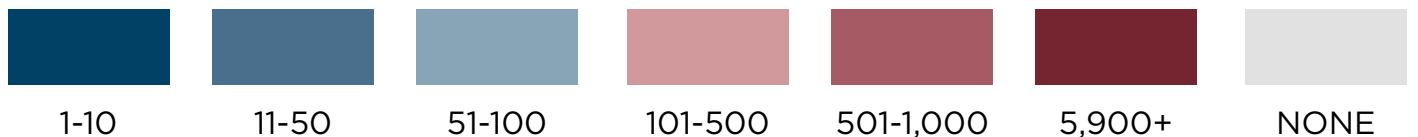
Toastmasters *Today!*

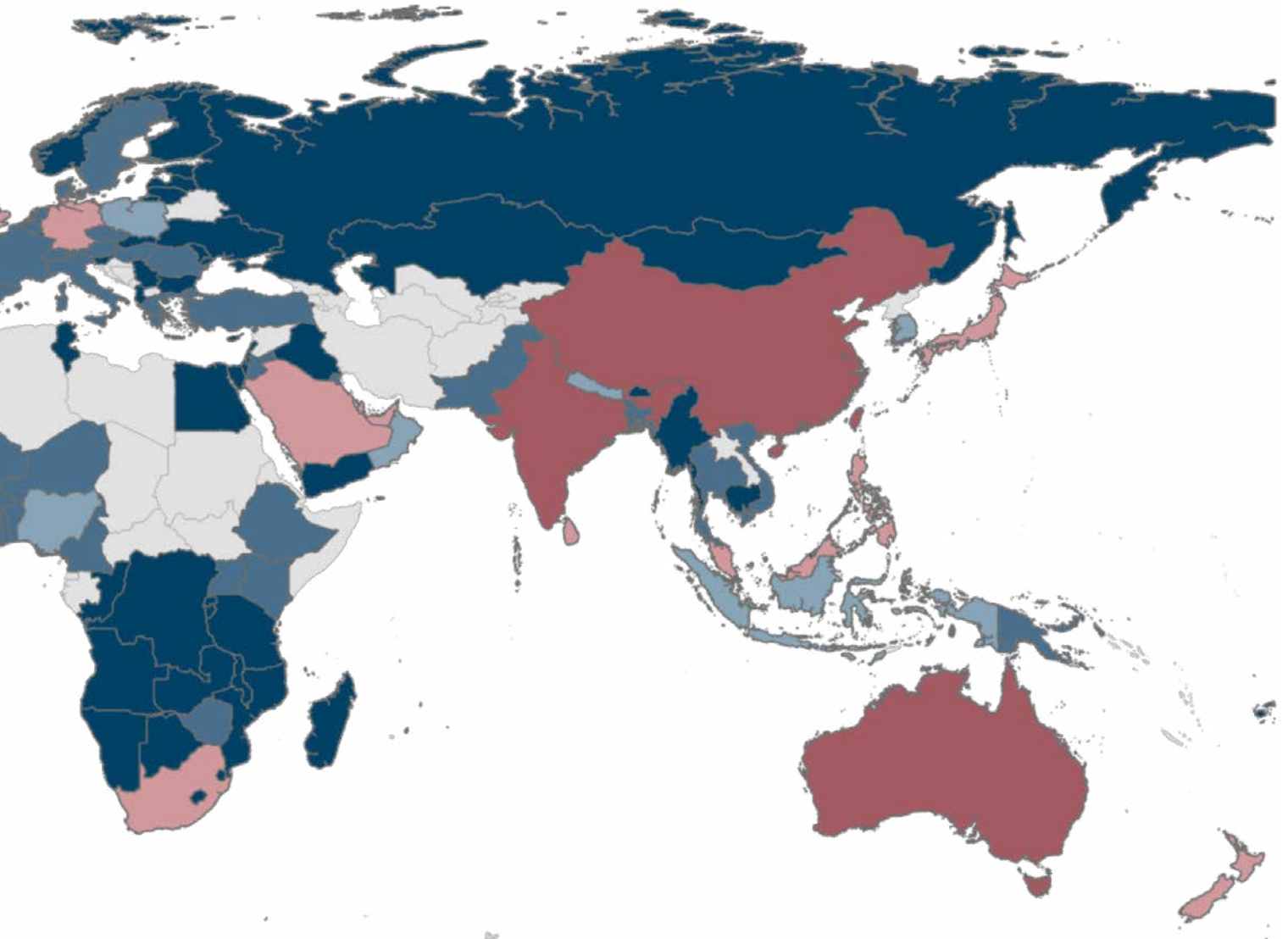
The numbers in this statistical snapshot show an uptick in Toastmasters growth and a pattern of continuing diversity. More than half of members now live in areas of the world other than North and South America. Additionally, female members outnumber male ones.

Information is based on the latest fact sheet from the World Headquarters Research and Analysis Team. To learn more about these demographics, visit the Statistics and Data Hub on the Toastmasters website.

Clubs by Country

See map above, updated June 30, 2024





Member Facts

272,000+

MEMBERS

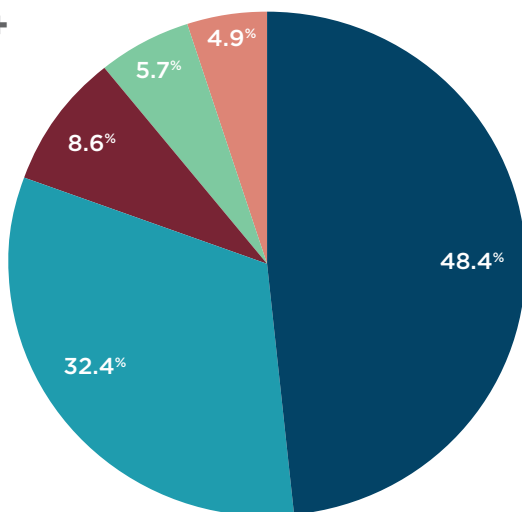
2.2%

GROWTH

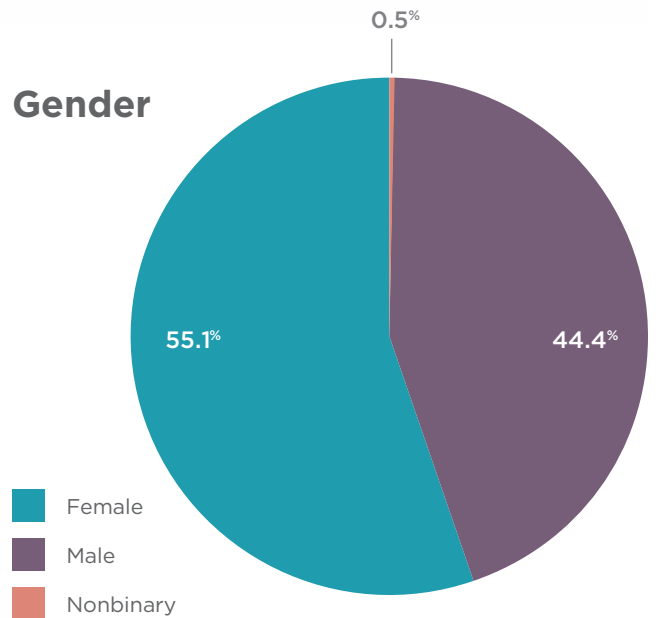
150

COUNTRIES

- Americas
- Asia
- Europe
- Oceania
- Africa



Gender



The Meaning of Good Mentoring

How to ensure positive future club experiences.

By Dana LaMon, DTM, AS

Editor’s note: A version of this article was originally published in the April 2018 Toastmaster. The author, Dana LaMon, passed away on June 2, 2024. Blind since the age of 4, Dana refused to accept limitations and became the first person to earn Distinguished Toastmaster, win the World Championship of Public Speaking* (1992), and achieve Accredited Speaker status. He was also a mentor to countless members in the Toastmasters community.

Excellence is listed as the fourth of Toastmasters’ guiding principles, not because it has the least value, but rather because it offers stability to what would otherwise be a three-legged stool. The other three principles—integrity, respect, and service—are meaningless if quality is not their end.

We witness and experience the quality of Toastmasters in our club meetings.

Each member is the keeper and the carrier of Toastmasters excellence—and we maintain excellence by sharing through mentorship.

In 1994 I met a woman while on my way to attend Toastmasters International’s annual convention. She, too, was traveling to the convention, and she was going to present a workshop. We took a cab together and talked about Toastmasters.

To my surprise she knew who I was, having won the World Championship of Public Speaking two years earlier. She asked why I was still in Toastmasters and explained that she left after becoming a professional speaker. I replied that I remain in Toastmasters because I have an obligation to give to others what was given to me. In today’s parlance I would say that I had Toastmasters mentors—Paris and Lucille Lanham, Jeanne Nelson, and Joe Sweeney—who freely shared with me their knowledge and wisdom. I now have the responsibility to mentor the members of my club and Toastmasters around the globe who seek to know what I know.

In Homer’s poem, the “Odyssey,” written in 800 B.C., the character Mentor has the responsibility to teach Telemachus the social norms of manhood. Telemachus’ father, Odysseus, left home to fight in the Trojan War when his son was an infant. Odysseus asked his friend Mentor to perform the role of father. Given that Telemachus trusted what Mentor taught him, the Goddess Athena assumed the disguise of Mentor to encourage Telemachus to leave home to search for his father when his father failed to return after the war. Nearly three millennia after Homer wrote the “Odyssey,” we use the term “mentor” to refer to a person who shares knowledge, imparts wisdom, and encourages action.



Dana LaMon, DTM, AS

The success and quality of each Toastmasters club depends on its members’ willingness to serve

as mentors. Unlike the classroom of an educational institution, no one person is appointed to teach. Those of us who teach today were yesterday’s students; today’s students must become tomorrow’s teachers. This cycle of mentoring is required to maintain the viability of a Toastmasters club. The quality of the club depends on the content of the mentoring.

From my experience as a member of three clubs, as well as visiting Toastmasters Districts and clubs around the world, here is what I have gleaned as relevant to mentoring excellence.

Purpose. Every Toastmasters club has a purpose beyond the institutional purpose of making leaders. One club may be formed for employees of a company to hone their communication and leadership skills. Another may exist specifically to work on a single presentation skill such as storytelling. Still another might exist to prepare members for speech contests. The quality of the club is maintained when members know why the club exists.

Each meeting must have a purpose as well. Generally, the purpose is to give members opportunities to practice their communication and leadership skills. Sometimes, however, the focus of the meeting may change, for example, to celebrate club successes, orient new members, or conduct an open house. Knowing the purpose guides the planning for the meeting.

Administration. The quality of a club is diminished when it fails to keep current with its administrative matters. Accurate and up-to-date records must be kept of its business, financial, and meeting activities. Reports to World Headquarters must be submitted in a timely manner.

Relationships. Meaningful mentoring requires a relationship built on trust, as evident in the relationship between Mentor and Telemachus. A club member must have the confidence that each member has at heart the best interest of every other member.

Plan. Quality is more likely to result from a plan—a plan for the year (e.g., the Distinguished Club plan) as well as for meeting agendas. I have participated in grab-bag meetings where a member chooses a meeting role from a bag on the day of the meeting. The purpose of that plan was to practice flexibility and readiness to take on any role.

The success and quality of each Toastmasters club depends on its members' willingness to serve as mentors.

Promotion. Promote meetings to members who have been absent for a while and to the community. If people don't know about your meeting, they can't put it on their schedule to attend.

Location. The meeting's setting must be conducive to enjoyable learning. It must be a place where participants can sit comfortably and speakers can be seen and heard. If it is held at a restaurant, attendees should arrive early enough to have a meal before the meeting begins.

Preparation. Speakers should arrive early with props, visual aids, etc. Speech evaluators should know the objectives of each speech. Other participants, such as the word master or joke master, should come prepared with material.

Promptness. Starting and ending a meeting on time is quality performance. On the other hand, quality is not compromised because the written times on the agenda are not met. The timed agenda should be seen as an estimate, not a mandate.

Performance. Every member holding a leadership position in the club and every person playing a

role in the meeting must perform to their best ability to achieve the meeting's purpose.

Participation. Roles should be pre-assigned and Table Topics® speakers chosen to ensure that the maximum number of members and guests may participate in the meeting.

Presentations. What you say in a presentation is as important as how you say it. Style should never supersede substance.

Protocol. When guests and new members are present, the meeting formalities we've learned in Toastmasters must be practiced. Less formal meetings may be appropriate among club members who are familiar with proper protocol.

Priorities. When circumstances demand flexibility, it is important to know the meeting's priorities. Adjustments to the agenda can then be made to still fulfill the meeting purpose.

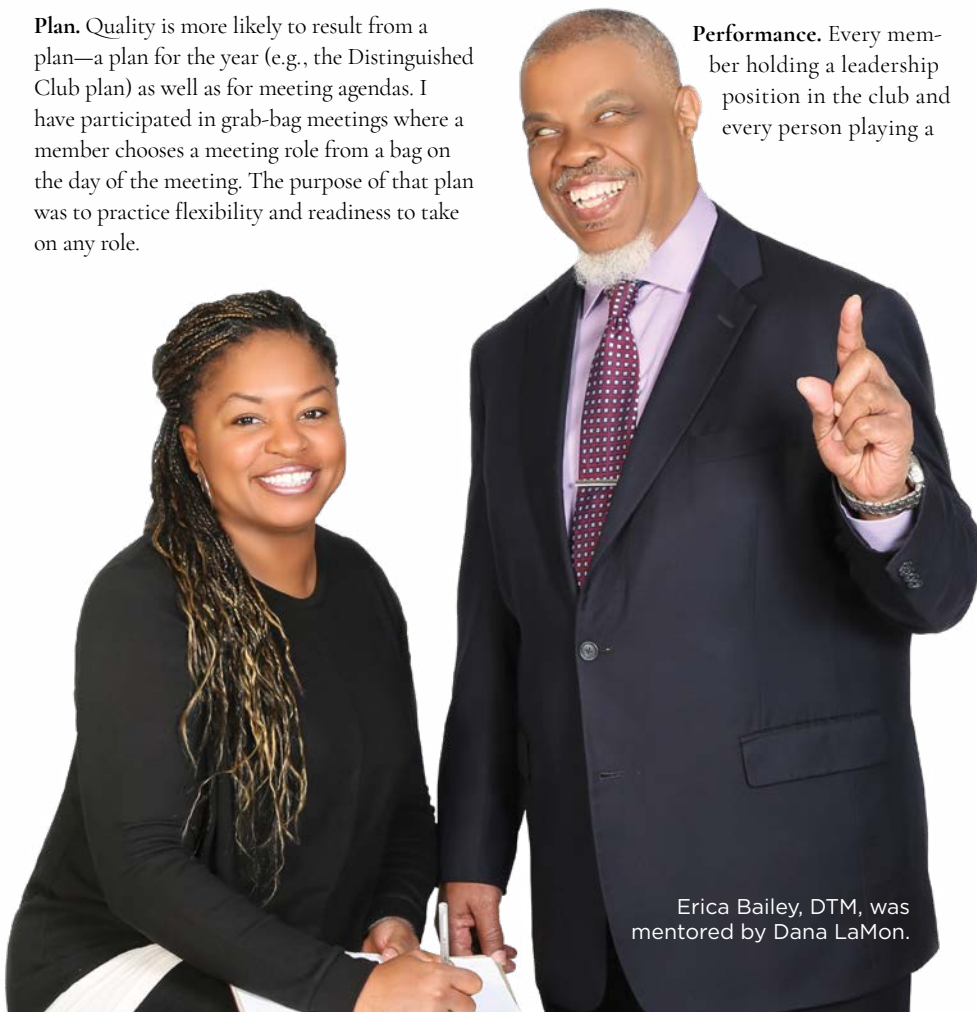
Growth. The day a club stops growing is the day it begins dying. Likewise, when a member stops growing in his communication and leadership skills, it marks the beginning of the end of his Toastmasters experience. The opportunity to mentor a fellow Toastmaster is an opportunity for both the protégé and the mentor to grow. The quality of the club depends on a mentor's ability to spot opportunities for growth, and to encourage it.

Relevance. Membership in Toastmasters and our meeting experiences have no value if they are not relevant to our lives. Mentor's task was not to keep his protégé occupied until his father returned; his responsibility was to prepare Telemachus for life as an adult.

If these principles are included in our mentoring, we can and will ensure the quality of our clubs. A mentor uses words to share knowledge and impart wisdom; that's communication. A mentor must also demonstrate the teaching method by serving as a role model; that's leadership.

Dana LaMon, DTM, AS, was a member of three clubs in Lancaster, California, won the 1992 Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking, and earned the Accredited Speaker designation a year later.

Erica Bailey, DTM, was mentored by Dana LaMon.



Speech Titles From the Past

Members have picked compelling titles to make their presentations stand out.

By *Toastmaster* magazine staff



Evelyn Jane Burgay, 1976



Roy Fenstermaker, DTM, 1983

From Early Club Meetings:

- “New and Old Methods in Farming”
- “Corn Is King”
- “The Hog, His Nature and Values”
- “Good Roads in Our Country”
- “The Hen and the Egg”
- “Organizing the Farmers”

Overseas Taped Speech Contest:

- “Nation of Sheep”
- “A Blessing and a Curse”
- “The Importance of the Sender and Receiver in Communications”
- “The Multi-Nationals in Our Time”

Theme of California:

- “Save the Redwoods”
- “Finding Makers for Our Products”
- “Wasted Wealth in Water”
- “Building More and Better Highways”
- “Capitalizing on the Tourists”

1940 Inter-Club Speech Contest:

- “Leadership”
- “Men of Science”
- “The Heart of a Nation”
- “Be It Ever So Humble”

WWII POW Club:

- “How I Handle My Monday Bread Ration”

- “Red Cross Recipes”
- “The Greatest Act of Kindness I Have Seen”
- “My Happiest Moment”
- “What I Shall Do When I First Debark in the U.S.”

World Championship of Public Speaking®:

(the International Speech Contest finals changed to the World Championship in 1976):

- Mildred Lawrence, 1952: “What Time Is It?”
- John Nydegger, 1965: “Dare We Fail?”
- Bennie Powell, 1974: “Who Am I? Where Am I Going? Why?”
- Evelyn Jane Burgay, 1976 (first female winner and first blind winner): “A Tool for Survival”
- Roy Fenstermaker, DTM, 1983 (oldest winner at age 70): “Retirement—Never!”
- Dana LaMon, 1992 (blind member who became the first World Champion, Distinguished Toastmaster, and Accredited Speaker): “Take a Chance”

Titles With Impact

Can a one-word title convey the essence of a speech? LaShunda Rundles showed this was possible with her winning 2008 WCPS speech, “Speak!” as did 2001 first-place winner Darren LaCroix with his simple yet effective “Ouch!”

And then there’s taking speech titles to the max. In 2016, Aaron Beverly placed second in the World Championship with what could be one of the longest speech titles the judges have ever seen. While Beverly went on to win first place in

2019, he’s still known for this 57-word title:

“Leave a lasting memory using as few words as possible and strive with every fiber of your being to avoid being the type of person who rambles on and on with no end in sight more likely than not causing most listeners to sit and think to themselves oh my goodness can somebody please make this stop.”

Some speech titles can also carry a deeper meaning. Like in 2022, when Cyril Junior Dim became the World Champion with his speech “Ndini,” a word in the Shona language of his native Zimbabwe that means “this is me.” And this year, at the 2024 championship, Luisa Montalvo earned first place with her speech titled “37 Strangers,” a nod to the medical personnel who saved her life after a car accident.

In honor of Toastmasters International’s 100th anniversary, this is the tenth in a year-long series of articles commemorating historic milestones.



Aaron Beverly

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Author/Book Websites

One of the best ways to promote your book(s) and yourself as an author is through your own website. We have developed software specifically for authors and their needs.



Online Course

Take our online course to learn the strategies that will help make your book a best seller. For each strategy, a detailed audio and/or video explanation of the idea is included.




CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

You might know Bo as the creator of FreeToastHost, the host of the Toastmasters Podcast, or the Founder of eBookIt.com. Or perhaps you never heard of the guy. Either way, you will enjoy his latest book, *Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring*.

What is a "normal childhood?" Does it include almost being murdered by your sister with an ax? Speeding around town in the back of a station wagon because your mom is chasing an "alien spaceship"? Being busted by the police for intent to light a pond on fire? Tackling your mom to the ground and wrestling a knife out of her hand because she was trying to kill your dad? While my stories may be unique, readers will be able to relate to the broader themes that are part of a normal childhood such as sibling rivalry, eccentric parents, doing stupid things, and frequently preventing one's parents from literally murdering each other.

Although some of the subject matter is not something one would generally laugh at, you have my permission to laugh. Social rules don't apply here; my rules do. It works for me, and who knows, after reading the stories from my past, you might be inspired to see your own screwed up past in a more humorous light.

Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring by Bo Bennett is available in ebook, paperback, and audio, at 

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