

Toastmaster on a Stick

Where Leaders Are Made



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The gregarious and cogent Amy Cyr

Meet Amy Cyr

by John Barrett

As our resident club secretary, Amy has kept track of what has been going on in our club. Her tireless efforts as an officer are much appreciated. In order to better understand this dedicated club member, we asked her ten probing questions.

How and why did you get into Toastmasters?

I've always hated public speaking. Most of the times when I've had to do public speaking for work, I did a "passable" job. Then, I spoke at a conference a year ago last November, and did an absolutely terrible job because, despite having prepared extensively, I was very nervous. I decided that I couldn't ignore what I disliked doing any longer, and joined Toastmasters to improve my skills and become more comfortable with public speaking.

Explain what you do when you are not at Toastmasters.

I enjoy my work in program evaluation, and spend a lot of time focusing on work. You could find me at the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center, or co-leading a new political support and action group through our Zen Center, or you may find me doing yard planning with Jim and working on our yard or house.

Tell us about your favorite hobby.

My favorite hobby is curling up with a good book, a blanket, and a cup of tea or hot cocoa. I'm currently on book 14 (of 14) of a fantasy series called the Wheel of Time by Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson.

Talk us through your ideal vacation.

My ideal vacation would be in nature, but I have a tie for two, opposite types of best vacation. One is going backpacking in the wilderness — completely unplugged. The other is staying in a quiet remote cabin in the woods, but with modern comforts.

Give us an example of a public speaking/leadership experience that went wrong.

When I presented at the conference I noted in question 1, I practiced my speech so much the morning of my presentation that I wore out my voice. Then, when I got to the presentation, there was a microphone that amplified the way my voice was worn out, and it made me sound very shaky and nervous. Hearing my voice like that made me as nervous as I sounded, and it was a downward cycle from there!

How has Toastmasters improved your private or professional life?

Toastmasters has helped me better understand and practice basics of speaking like vocal variety and gestures. It has been wonderful to receive all the constructive and positive feedback that I have received during meetings. And simply forcing myself to get up and speak over and over, whether an actual speech or a simple meeting role, has helped make it easier for me to speak in public. This past winter I gave a 30-minute presentation for work, and it went extremely well. I still did not enjoy the public speaking and couldn't wait for it to be over, but it went well, and I don't think the audience knew how much I did not want to be there.

If we could see the ideal playlist on your iPod, what groups or songs would we see at the top of the list?

Jazz, traditional music (including Celtic, Turkish, Arab, and Balkan), Indian classical music, Western classical early music (Medieval and Renaissance) and any type of modernized folk music. There's a great Swedish band called Vaasen that has a wonderful modern folk sound. (Continued on page 2)

CRAFT CORNER

Triumphant Table Topics

by Mike Raffone

The following nuggets are taken from Tobias Tittlemeyer's *Top Ten Table Topic Tips*. These hints apply to speaking in real life as well as within the club setting.

1. Take a breath and give yourself the time to think before you speak.
2. Prepare ahead of time by having a list of fun, interesting stories that you can use in table topics. Often, when pressed, people can scarcely remember their name, let alone an interesting answer to the question at hand. Having a one-sentence description of your fun stories will serve you well when you are called upon to speak.
3. Think of the one, most important point you want to make. There are many points you *could* make, but focus!
4. Take a sentence to restate the question. This buys you time to think a little bit more before speaking. ("What is my favorite hobby? It would have to be gardening!")
5. Be sure to give your main point some life! Make it interesting by being more descriptive. ("I have a lush, 20' x 20' garden on the back of our house, with a green, rabbit-proof fence around it.)
6. Reinforce your main point with some interesting background information or history. ("My father was a gardener, but the rabbits and raccoons got to the food

before he could ever harvest it.")

7. Even though your time is short, engage the audience by using questions that cause them to answer, either to themselves or out loud. ("How many of you have a garden?")
8. Do not go further into the topic than your main point...that second area would be a follow-up question, but is not what you will want to cover in your short time. ("I would love to explain to you all of the many variations of snow peas that will thrive and flourish in a zone-five climate...but I digress.")
9. Tittlemeyer suggests that you try using a short, humorous anecdote, if appropriate, to get the people's attention right before you close. ("God made rainy days so that gardeners could get their housework done.")
10. Watch your time! You do not need to fill every last second of time with your golden voice. Say what you need to say and be done.

Help Produce a Newsletter

The editor welcomes others to submit articles, which fulfill your Competent Leader Project 6 requirement.

J.B.

WORD OF THE MONTH

Cogent adjective: *koh-juhnt*

1 Convincing or believable by virtue of forcible, clear, or incisive presentation; telling

The President made a cogent argument for the need for a National Parks System.

(Continued from page 1)

Explain the process you go through when preparing a speech.

I decide on a topic, outline the general and specific purposes. Then I'll outline my main points. I write out what I plan to say, time it, adjust to the time limit, and practice it until I know it. Then I'll pare back my notes to an outline or speaking notes. My goal is to eventually work straight from an outline without planning out what I'll say so extensively.

Who are the leaders or speakers that you idolize or look up to?

I aspire to be able to speak as fluently and confidently as the great speakers in our club! Thanks for the role modeling, folks!

If you could change something about our club, what would you change and why? We would video record our meetings to be able to learn from watching them.

TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL MISSION: We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders!

CLUB CORNER

Nancy Brinker (born Dec. 6, 1946) Founder of *Susan G. Komen for the Cure*, named after her sister, who died from breast cancer. Brinker became the U.S. Ambassador to Hungary from 2001 to 2003. This Toastmaster is also the author of the New York Times best-selling book, *Promise Me - How a Sister's Love Launched the Global Movement to End Breast Cancer*. She is married to Norman Brinker, the founder of Steak and Ale, Bennigan's, and Chili's restaurant chains.



STORY TELLING

After years of urging from family, a wise old lady had a hearing-aid fitted, hidden under her hair.

A week later, she returned to the doctor for her check-up.

"It's absolutely wonderful - I can hear everything now," she reported very happily to the doctor.

"And is your family pleased, too?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, I haven't told them yet," said the old lady. "And I've changed my will twice already!"

Remember to speak as if everyone were listening. Speak kindly, for words have great weight.

GUESTS ARE WELCOME

Toastmaster on a Stick Toastmasters (TOAST) meets at the Minnetronix headquarters, 1645 Energy Park Drive, from 5 to 6:15 p.m. on Tuesdays.

Everyone is welcome!

Visit:

<http://toast.toastmastersclubs.org/>

for more information about our club.

