

The SLICE

BURNT TOAST

Toastmasters Club 764388

NO. 9: Spring/Winter 2011



Professional and Fun, That's How We Run!

by Lisa Krueckl

Two thousand eleven has gotten off to a great start for Burnt Toast. The initial focus of the current executive team has been to increase membership and I am pleased to report that we are meeting this goal. We have built our membership from only 14 members this past October to 23 members and growing. Burnt Toast has maintained a friendly and supportive atmosphere with meetings that are professionally run, but not too serious. In fact humour is often a key part of our meetings! I believe that these characteristics have given Burnt Toast a distinctive personality that has been integral to its ability to attract new members. It is the belief of the BT executive that we strive to maintain our club "personality" because not only does it help to attract new members but we also believe it is key to maintaining club membership.

Our focus over the coming months is to look for strategies that will help us to maintain our current members. To develop these strategies, we need to have a clear understanding of what the members' goals are in joining Burnt Toast and look for ways to meet those goals. One of our strategies is to develop a short survey that asks members what their goals are in joining Toastmasters, to get feedback on how we are doing with helping them to meet those goals and to see what ideas people have for improving meetings. We will be able to meet better the needs of our Burnt Toast members by understanding and capitalizing on the club strengths and knowing why they join Toastmasters. I look forward to working with the executive team in the coming months to develop further these strategies and ensure that the club is meeting the needs of its members.

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The Slice

Editor: Rosine Hage-Moussa

Meetings

Tuesdays / 5:30–6:45PM

YWCA downtown

www.burnt-toastmasters.ca

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An Executive Committee Update

Susie Howson, Burnt Toast Treasurer, has recently announced she will be taking a break from Burnt Toast for a while due to work constraints.

Thomas Luo has taken over as treasurer effective March, 2011 and we would like to take this opportunity to welcome Thomas to the executive team.

Burnt Toast wishes Susie all the best and we look forward to seeing her back at Burnt Toast very soon!

The Art of Regifting

Burnt Toast decided to shake things up for the last meeting of 2010 with a special Christmas edition of our Tuesday night meetings.

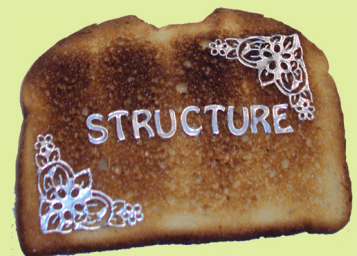
Members in attendance were asked to bring a regift to the meeting and everyone took turns randomly selecting a wrapped gift and answering a randomly drawn Table Topics question. The evening proved to be a success and had everyone nearly on the floor from laughter. Awards were given to three individuals for having the best Table Topics answers. They were awarded as follows:

Most Humorous: Jordan Taylor

Best Story: Steve Boland

Best Structured Speech: Heather Allen

If you missed the meeting, don't worry! We'll definitely be having more meetings this year run strictly as Table Topics sessions -- so don't miss out!



The Definition of Burnt Toast

We asked some of our new members what the name Burnt Toast meant to them and here's what they had to say:

"The name Burnt Toast, I suppose, means to me that we come into the club with speaking skills that need to be improved (a little burnt), but that with time they will improve!"

- David Robinson

"To me, Burnt Toast is a place to ignite our love of public speaking and get to know the fantastic (and often fiery) members."

- Michelle Chan

"I like burnt toast (the food) because it's a character food - it's crunchy, it's loud, and it's got an interesting smell, texture, and colour. In terms of Toastmasters clubs, "Burnt Toast" is definitely a club full of energy (i.e. crunchy and loud) and loaded with character (i.e. texture, smell, and colour)."

- Darin Wong



Club Updates

Here's a review of what's been happening at Burnt Toast over the last few months.

Toastie of the Month

This new program was designed to recognize some of our outstanding members every month. At the end of every meeting, members are asked to vote for their favorite "performer" of the evening. The votes are tallied at the third meeting of every month and the winners receive a free beverage of their choice at pub night (pub night is held on the third Tuesday of every month). So while some of you continue umming and ahing, one amazing Toastie is enjoying a nice cold one at your expense!

New Members

Burnt Toast welcomes the following new members to the club and looks forward to being part of the journey to improve their public speaking skills:

Michelle Chan
Brett Hitchins
Ash Lau
Kuldip Mann
David Robinson
Heather Shields
Kie Shiroma
Darin Wong



Competent Leadership Manuals

Toastmasters receive two manuals upon joining: a Competent Communicator (CC) manual and Competent Leadership (CL) manual. Many of us focus on getting through the 10 projects in the CC manual and forget that the CL manual also has projects to be completed. Completing both CCs and CLs leads to club points and special distinctions every year so it's important to remember to complete your CL as well. The CL manual contains ten projects which you complete while serving in various meeting roles and participating in other club activities such as helping with a newsletter or getting involved with a membership building campaign. An evaluator will give you feedback on each project to help you improve.

Burnt Toast members are invited to bring their CL manuals and store them in our club kit so they don't have to be carried back and forth to each meeting. For questions on the CC or CL, please contact Danielle Vlemmiks, VP Education.

Control Your Nerves ...

Professional speakers often feel anxious or tense before speaking. Indeed, stress before speaking appears to be a normal and natural emotional and physiological state. It helps ensure that we are alert and mentally active, and that we have the energy to meet the occasion.

So our goal should NOT be to eliminate stress, but rather to control it. A healthy amount of stress ensures that we perform at top levels. The key is control and this is one of the many things we learn at Toastmasters.



Why I Joined Toastmasters

By Jordan Taylor

During a recent Toastmasters meeting that I attended, a guest posed an interesting question to the members. He asked, “Why are some people afraid of public speaking, and others aren’t?” I imagine it’s different for everyone, but I actually remember the day that this fear entered my life.

The year was 1988. I was in Grade 5, away on a school trip. It was a four-day trip out in the country, and we were staying in cabins. The occupants of each cabin were given a team name, and we competed with the other teams in various competitions throughout the trip. One of these competitions was to put on some sort of an act or short play in front of the rest of the groups. We decided to sing Queen’s “We Will Rock You,” except we changed the lyrics so that we were trash talking the other teams in our version of the song.

It was now performance time. Each person was to sing a verse, then we’d all sing the chorus, then move on to the next person. I was the third one down. The first was our leader, a Grade 12 student. He was on the football team: a big guy that belted out the tune with full force. Things were getting off to a good start. Next in line was Michael Fell, my bitter enemy. We used to be best friends, but had a falling out over a Lego incident. He went, and rocked it just as hard as our leader. We were a sure bet to win the competition. Next it was my turn. I don’t remember being that nervous. I had never done anything in front of a group before, so I probably wasn’t smart enough to be nervous. What I do remember is opening my mouth ... and nothing coming out. I quickly became so horrified that any chance of recovery was futile. I made a couple noises; a few ums and ahs came out. I probably would have been charged a dollar if the performance took place at Toastmasters.* The rest of the group cut me off to spare me further embarrassment, and went back to singing the chorus. Needless to say, we didn’t win the competition, and my team was not impressed.

The incident was a complete nightmare, and public speaking has been difficult for me ever since. To this day, I still hear “We Will Rock You” in my head when giving a speech, but the music seems to get quieter and quieter with each Toastmasters meeting.

**The Grammarian charges 10 cents for every “um” and “ah” at Burnt Toast meetings.*



Australian Fact and Fiction

By Rob Reid

Most Canadians have an image of Down Under acquired from clichéd icons such as Crocodile Dundee (now that's a knife!) or Steve Irwin (Crickey, that's a bloody big snake!). Having visited Australia five times and spent over five years living here, I've gotten to know the place rather well so I'd like to confirm or dispel some common Aussie stereotypes.

Stereotype No. 1: Australia is a land filled with deadly creatures just waiting to kill and/or devour unwary humans. It is true that Australia is home to nine of the world's 10 most poisonous snakes as well as a few lethal spiders and jellyfish, but the odds of encountering any of these killers are extremely small. There are occasional attacks by sharks and (in the far north) crocodiles but seldom more than two or three fatalities a year. Over all the threat posed by Aussie wildlife is no worse than the risks from bears and cougars in British Columbia. The Aussies are unperturbed by the local fauna and merely take a few wise precautions: wear gloves when gardening, don't walk barefoot in tall grass and calmly exit the water when sharks or jellyfish are sighted.

This nonchalance extends to the vast array of lizards found everywhere in Australia including Sydney – home to, among others, the blue tongue (a chubby reptile described as “a sausage with legs”), the prehistoric-looking water dragon and the goanna – a big long-tailed lizard that likes to climb trees. Goannas often come prowling around campsites in search of food. They have no fear of humans and vice versa – the Aussies consider them harmless, at least to the extent that a four-foot lizard with razor sharp claws is harmless. We saw our first goanna while having lunch with some Aussie friends at a picnic table in a suburban park. After unsuccessfully attempting to pry the lid off of our cooler, it crawled under the table looking for food scraps. The Aussies reacted much the way Canadians would react to a squirrel. Someone calmly commented, “There's a goanna down there,” and everyone continued on with their lunch. So while Australia does host some intimidating creatures, the locals take a decidedly “no worries mate” attitude to it all.

Stereotype No. 2: Australia is similar to New Zealand. I lived in NZ for seven years and in Australia for five and was surprised by how different the two countries are. Geologically they could not be further apart. New Zealand is among the youngest lands on the planet, pushed up from the sea by comparatively recent seismic activity. The country is dotted by the cones of volcanoes – mostly dormant but not extinct – and the land is made of undulating green hills and jagged volcanic rock. By contrast, Australia is the oldest continent – a block of ancient sandstone eroded by eons of wind and rain. None of Australia's unique flora or fauna such as eucalyptus trees and marsupials are native to New Zealand.

The people are different too, aside for a shared enthusiasm for sports such as rugby and cricket. Most Australians have a boisterous, cheerfully irreverent nature that they call the “larrikin spirit.” New Zealanders tend to be more reserved, perhaps because most of the early settlers were dour Scots rather than the Irish (convicts and otherwise) who formed the nucleus of the Australian colony.

Australian Fact and Fiction cont'd...

There is much rivalry between the two nations, each enjoying jokes at the other's expense. Here's one of the less crude ones:

Q: What do you say to a New Zealander with a beautiful woman on each arm?

A: Hey, nice tattoos!

The differences between the two countries can be seen in their respective nicknames. Australia was dubbed "the Lucky Country" by settlers who quickly realized how fortunate they were to have escaped the British Isles. New Zealand is known by the translation of its Maori name Aotearoa – the Land of the Long White Cloud.

Stereotype No. 3: Australians love to drink and gamble. This one is very true. Rather than give you dry statistics on alcohol consumption, I'll simply mention one fact. A town called Bathurst hosts an annual car-racing festival that attracts fans known as petrolheads from across Australia. Due to problems controlling drunken crowds they recently imposed restrictions on the amount of alcohol that fans can bring to the event. The limit is 24 cans of beer per person per day or 36 cans of light beer. I doubt that anyone has chosen the second option.

There are pubs everywhere in Sydney (six within a five-minute walk from my apartment) and, in addition to drinking, people go there to play the "pokies" – short for poker machines and what we call video lottery terminals. Australia has over 200,000 of these machines (20 per cent of the World total) and Aussies play them all hours of the day and night. A couple of years ago I visited Melbourne at Christmas time and the city's biggest casino (open 24 hours a day, seven days a week) had a sign saying it would be closed for the holiday – but only between the hours of 3 a.m. and 7 a.m. on the morning of the 25th – just enough time to stuff the stockings then back to the pokies!

Betting on horse races is also a popular pastime. The racing pages are the biggest section of the newspaper and every neighborhood has a local betting shop that shows the races from around the country on banks of TV monitors. The annual Melbourne Cup is called "the race that stops the nation" because everybody in Australia watches it and most people bet on it. Race day is a public holiday in Melbourne while in Sydney businesses stop work in the afternoon so employees can watch the race, usually while having a drink or two.

The other event that epitomizes this aspect of Aussie culture is Anzac Day – the public holiday honouring war veterans held on the anniversary of Gallipoli – a World War One battle in Turkey that is to Aussies and Kiwis what Vimy Ridge is to Canadians. However, unlike our sombre Remembrance Day ceremonies, Anzac Day is a positively festive occasion. After a respectful dawn service, there is a midday parade of veterans – often accompanied by their children or grandchildren – marching down the street with regimental banners flying and bands playing watched by large cheering, waving crowds. Then everybody goes to the pub for the afternoon where one of the traditions is betting on an old wartime coin toss game called Two Up. It may seem strange for a country to commemorate its military sacrifices by drinking and gambling, but knowing the Aussies, I'm sure the old veterans wouldn't have it any other way.

The other Aussie stereotype that is undeniably true is that Australia is a fabulous place to visit. If you choose to take a trip Down Under, I guarantee you won't be disappointed.

