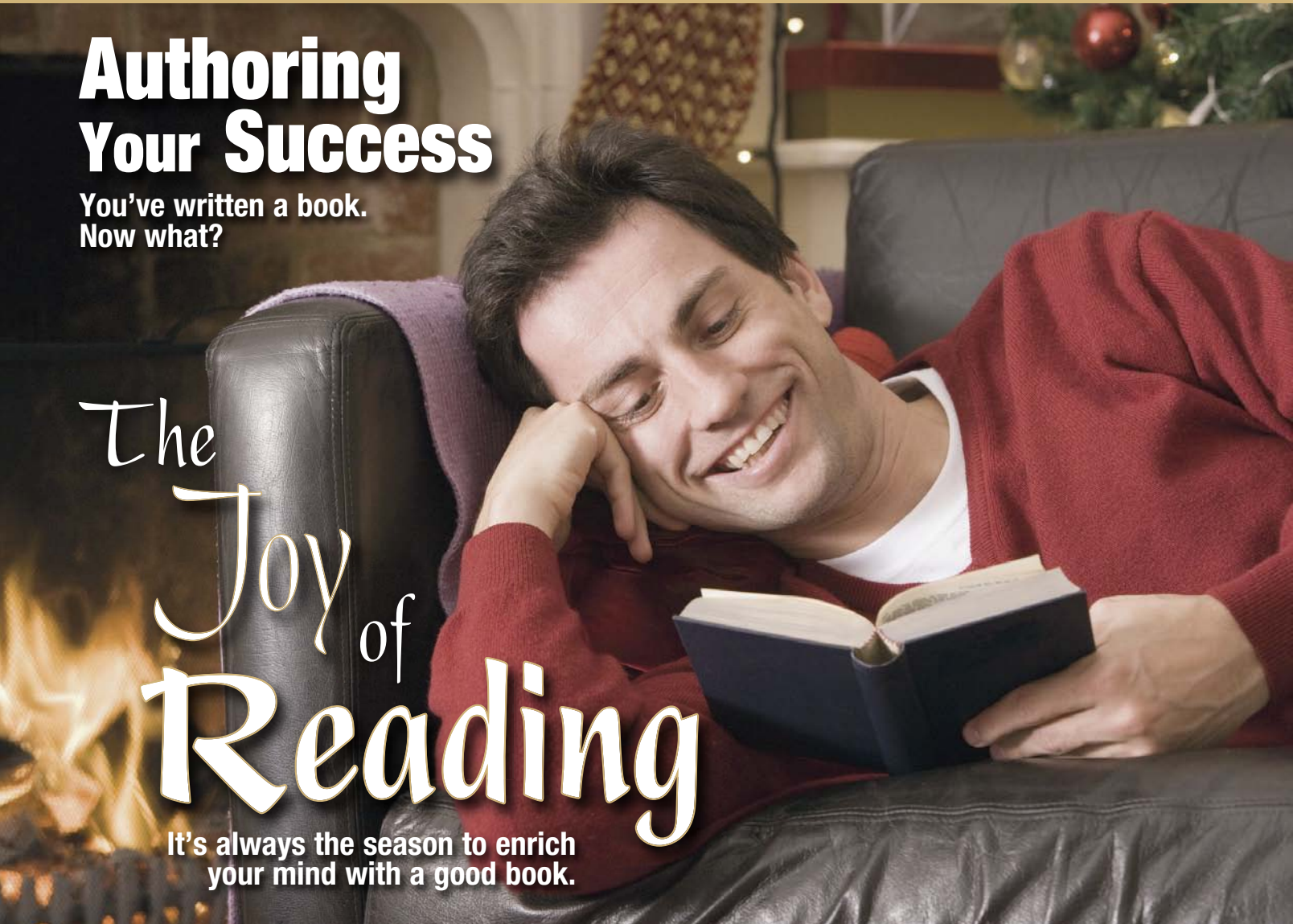


TOASTMASTER®

December 2008

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**What's In It
For You?**

Don't burn family, friends with a shameful toast.

By Michael Varma, ATMG, ALB

Tips on Toasting Well

Two summers ago I witnessed a truly tragic toast – and as a professional entertainer with more than 25 years of experience, I know a train wreck when I see one.

The best man at a wedding, seemingly sober, grabbed the microphone and with a booming voice launched into a notably naughty limerick: “There once was a groom from Nantucket...” The guests were not amused. The newlyweds, their parents and *grandparents* were mortified by the off-color verse. This soon-to-be ex-friend thought his humor would be enjoyed by all, or perhaps he crumbled under the pressure of public speaking. Whatever the case, his major faux pas reinforced my resolve to provide practical tips on toasting etiquette.

Toasting Advice

The purpose of a toast is to shine a gentle spotlight and pay tribute to the honored guest or event. Toasts typically proffer well wishes, good fortune, long life, health, happiness, sage advice or other positive thoughts. Composing a toast that is eloquent, poignant, whimsical and witty can be a challenge but worth every effort.

Begin by introducing yourself, state your first and last name for non-family members, explain how you're related to the guest of honor, then present the toast. Follow the three Bs for delivering a successful toast – be brief, be bold, be done:

▪ **Be Brief.** “No toast except his own should last longer than 60 seconds” was Mark Twain's golden rule. Keeping your remarks short gives your toast a greater impact and gets you on and off the stage more quickly. Well-crafted words and a succinct

delivery will be appreciated by your audience and make your tribute more likely remembered for years to come.

▪ **Be Bold.** Stand proud and speak loud. Ensure that everyone in the room, including folks sitting in the back row, can hear your tasteful toast. Belting it out to the rafters may not be needed; a quick run-through before the crowd assembles in the room will help you gauge how far to project your voice. It can also help calm your frayed nerves and provide valuable practice time.

▪ **Be Done.** When finished, sit down. Resist the urge to take a bow or return for an encore. Smile, nod and accept any applause or acknowledgements, then refocus the spotlight on the guest of honor.

A well-presented wedding toast will have every father of the bride raising his glass with glee and every mother dabbing her eyes – a true

“tissue moment.” The following toast, which I wrote for my brother's wedding, is simple yet heartfelt:

*Your marriage makes a perfect start
For every life is a work of art
Paint a picture filled with bliss
Treasured in your lover's kiss
Wedding vows are truly strong
May yours last forever long*

Advanced speakers can add a humorous story about the guest of honor after they explain how they know the honoree and *before* the actual toast. I recommend avoiding dirty jokes and risqué stories. Veer toward the white wedding light with words that praise and inspire, and you'll never be seen in the Toasting Hall of Shame.

Michael Varma, ATMG, ALB, is a member of BergenMeisters Toastmasters club in Orange, California. He can be reached at www.michaelvarma.com.

Raising Your Glass in Rhyme

In his book *Tasteful Toasts*, Michael Varma writes 100 toasts to be used for a variety of occasions. They are written in the form of poems and limericks. The book can be purchased through the Toastmasters International Web site, at www.toastmasters.org/shop. Varma also has a Web site for the book: www.tastefultoasts.com.

Following are a couple of the author's creations:

Birthday

*Tenderly we joke and tease
Candles blown out with a wheeze
Sharing in your birthday feast
We wish you 50* more –
at least!*

*Substitute 20, 30, 40, 60, 70, 80, 90

New Year's

*We greet the day with
cheers galore
For Father Time is at the door
Now we rejoice
In one clear voice
Shout Happy New Year
and many more*