



David Brooks

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Commentary on

Magic Moments

from the International Speech Contest 1990-2000

Opening segment

On screen text:

To be a better speaker, you can study the winners...

1999	Craig Valentine	start	3:36	I stood and I thought	total clip: 21 sec.
		stop	3:57	shut up!	

I stood and I thought (pause, audience laughter) That's how I think. (audience laughter) Silence! That's it! Silence. You're trying to tell me that I never take the time to just be silent and still and listen to my spirit. I'm so busy trying to be all things to all people that I never take the time to be silent. Silence is the key, isn't it?

He said, "Uh huh."

So I said, "What do I do now?"

He said, "Shut up!" (audience laughter)

1991	Dave Ross	start	3:59	He taught those students	total clip: 19 sec.
		stop	4:18	of those students.	

He taught those students to fail before they entered the arena. And more importantly, they never learned that you can succeed by not winning, but by giving it your all. That is the true measure of victory. And he deprived that of those students.

1994	Morgan McArthur	start	1:30	It's dark	total clip: 34 sec.
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stop 2:04 to my bucket!

It's dark. I'm in a barn with no electrical power. There's a cow strapped to a post with a rope. And back here is a cold cowboy aiming his flashlight...poorly. Would you like to talk about a bad day at the office? (audience laughter)

I reached for the instrument bucket; forgot my hand was wet. Now here's the science quiz. True or false: Wet skin freezes fast to super cold metal.

True! I was stuck to my bucket! (audience laughter)

1993 Otis Williams, Jr. start 3:20 The truth of the matter is total clip: 21 sec.
stop 3:32 makes you special.

The truth of the matter is no one else is going to write your national bestseller, sing your Number One song, or introduce that special training program to cultivate and develop that high self-esteem that our children need.

No one else can do what you have been called to do, in the way in which you have been called to do it. That's what makes you special.

1996 David Nottage start 3:27 Kick, kick, kick total clip: 31 sec.
stop 3:58 I was 8 years old!

Kick, kick, kick and slip and slide Whoo! Yes! I'm on the bike! Hey, Mom, look! I'm on the bike! Whoo hoo!

Oops! Uh oh! Uh oh! Bang! Ow! Ow! Oh, Ow! (audience laughter)

And that went on for many months. Until finally, I was riding a bike! I was successful! I was eight years old! (audience laughter)

1995 Mark Brown start 1:46 This angry mob total clip: 35 sec.
stop 2:21 Why?

This angry mob cuts down trees, and carries clubs. They brandished knives, pitchforks, and torches. And they march through the forest singing, "We don't like what we don't understand. In fact it scares us and this monster is mysterious at least. Bring your guns. Bring your knives. Save your children and your wives. Save our village and our lives. We'll kill the beast!"

(Pause) Why? (audience laughter)

1997 Willie Jones start 1:57 I have become total clip: 22 sec.
stop 2:19 absolutely nothing.

I have become a radical baby boomer. When I crossed over the fifty line last year, I looked around for something that was good about being fifty. (audience laughter)

I found absolutely nothing. (audience laughter)

1998 Brett Rutledge start 5:56 And yet, as a child they were total clip: 23 sec.

stop 6:19 imagination.

And yet, as children they were probably told they had excellent potential, but for the tendency to dream. They were probably told they could do much better were they to leave their little words. Well-meaning teachers probably exhorted to them the value of knowledge, having forgotten its author— imagination.

1992 Dana Lamon start 5:34 You can be like the first doctor total clip: 27 sec.
stop 6:01 where there's life.

You can be like the first doctor. And based on what has already happened, conclude there's no hope.

You can be like the second doctor. Make your thorough examination and based on what you think should happen, conclude that there's no hope.

Or you can be like the third doctor and take a look within, and always find hope where there's life.

2000 Ed Tate start 2:07 You had better find a way total clip: 39 sec.
stop 2:46 I was next.

“You had better figure out a way to get us on that plane.”

The customer service agent said, “Sir, the next flight where I can get both of you on the flight is at six o'clock.”

He said, “Do the math, lady. The wedding is at five.”

Then he committed the unpardonable sin. He called her the B-word. And the silence was deafening.

(Long pause) Then he stormed off. And I was next.

1990 David Brooks start 2:04 No, this was the era of total clip: 24 sec.
stop: 2:28 got to be Trigger.

No, this was the era of Superman, Sky King, and Roy Rogers! My brothers and I would watch their shows. And when they were over we would go outside and reenact them. My older brother, of course, he would get to be Roy Rogers. So naturally, I got to be...Dale Evans. (audience laughter) That wasn't so bad, really. Our little brother got to be Trigger.

On screen text:

But if you study only the winners, your education is incomplete.

(Introductory and explanatory remarks)

And to complete our education this afternoon is the last speaker you saw on the screen. It is indeed my honor to introduce Dale Evans. (audience laughter) No, no, no! It is my honor to introduce the 1990 World Champion of Public Speaking, Distinguished Toastmaster David Brooks. (applause) I take it from your applause that you prefer David Brooks over Dale Evans.

How many of you recall the rest of David's winning speech in 1990? Wow! We've got a lot of old guys in here! In his speech, if you will recall, David paid tribute to the greatest childhood hero—The Lone Ranger— the man who exemplified honor, integrity, and self respect.

The Lone Ranger creed begins with: I believe that to have a friend, a man must be one. It is in this way more than any, that David is to me much like the Lone Ranger.

Year after year after year since he won the world championship of public speaking we have had speech contest finalists thanking David for his help, for his support, for his encouragement. As you can see he is truly a champion's champion. A modern-day speech contest Lone Ranger.

To assemble the clips that you will see in this program, David studied every speech of every speaker of the international finals of the last 11 years. And with 9 finalists every year, that's 99 speeches. You've really got to be a hardcore speech junkie to study 99 speeches!

In addition to the 11 clips you saw from winning speeches, David has selected 18 more clips. But these are from speeches that did not win. Or did they? That's what this program is all about.

**To explain is a man who is a friend to all. The champion's champion, the Lone Ranger, the 1990 World Champion of Public Speaking, David Brooks.
(Applause)**

Main clip segment

Aw, go on. No, I mean it, really. Go on! (laughter and applause) Thanks you all for that kind reception. Thank you Johnny for those kind words.

One thing Johnny didn't tell you was that the result of something that happen at a contest, a convention like this 11 years ago. I've been able to travel the world. I'm proud to say that I've been able to speak in 35 U.S. states, 17 Canadian provinces, and 12 countries. But I've got to be honest with you in 8 of those countries it was just to ask for directions.

We open today with a montage of clips from the last 11 world championship contests. And you may think that 11 years is an odd number; and why did I not choose a round number like 10? Well, very simply, if you count back to eleven years

that takes us to 1990, and for some reason I'm rather partial to the winner that year.

By the way, how many people do you know who can still wear the exact pair of jeans? Yeah, I've had them let out three times, but that not the point.

I was in District 20 in Fargo, North Dakota a few years ago and a distinguished, older lady came up to me and said, "David, I think you should know I was a judge in your year's contest."

And I said, "You know, that means so much to me. I've met many people who were there, but I never met anyone who actually voted for me."

And she said, "I didn't say that."

I am pleased to introduce another fellow world champion and a good buddy of mine that's in the front row. Would you please welcome the 1995 World Champion, Mark Brown. (applause)

And Willie Jones said he might be...Where are you, Willie? Would you please stand? (Applause)

You may ask why people like Mark and Willie and I come back to conventions such as this. Very simply, because we realize that with the opportunity that comes with being a world champion, there comes a responsibility. A responsibility to give back to those who helped us achieve what we did, and to give back to the organization. And that's why we're here. That, plus the fact we're very lonely people, and this is good therapy.

If you want to know the definition of bliss, the definition of pure contentment, the next time that they say, "Let the contest begin!" look at us. We sit there and say, "We've been there. We've done that. And we can never do it again." And today in the contest, as it when on further and further, the more blissful we got.

Wow! What a contest! Darren LaCroix said he was going to try and get in here. He may be tied up in the media room (Cheer goes up) Where are you Darren? (applause) Darren come on up. (applause)

And Darren, I regret that we did not get to pull a clip from your speech. But it's only been 4 hours, so give us a chance. Next year if we do this program again, Darren will be featured, as well as most speakers who were in the contest today.

The clips that I have selected today, please understand, are not necessarily what I would be calling the best. I will, however, say they were clips that I selected because they were outstanding for a variety of reasons.

Now there was no contest or competition to choose these. But please understand that I had a tough choice. When I watched 99 speeches, I ended up originally marking down the speeches that I would like to show you, and my original list of clips was over 100. And I realized if I was to show 100 clips I would need a whole day. So I had to edit down and easily leave 4 out of every 5 on the cutting room floor.

So if one of your favorites, or if you were in one of the contests and I didn't select you, please don't be offended. Please know that if you were cut, it was done with kindness. I regretted very much having to leave out anyone because there were so many wonderful performances over the last 11 years.

What I am hope you will take from this session today is the ability to take a speech apart. I want you to start looking at speeches, not as a 7-minute package, but instead as a set of components. I want you to start looking at the individual elements of the speeches. Even the ones that did not place or did not win. Because I contend that most speakers do something exceptionally well. Whether they get a trophy or not, they deserve recognition and they deserve study. So that's what I selected today individual moments that are the best of the genre, or are among the very best of the genre.

So, we'll look at these clips in just a minute. I'll tell you a little procedural matter. We have a handout in your seats, but because of the lighting you will not be able to use it. So here's what I will do. The handout has my e-mail address on it. If you will e-mail me, and it's on the left-hand column, if you will e-mail me and ask for the handouts and my notes I'll be happy to send them to you.

So don't worry about taking notes today. Just enjoy the clips.

I've also put my mailing address on there in case you want to send money (laughter) just in gratitude.

You will notice that the programs will move briskly, we will not have much time for interaction. But I will make myself available for hours afterwards, if necessary, to continue to discuss or answer questions that you might have.

So we'll open the program by addressing a common question that most speakers have. Most people say, what exactly is body language?

Well, I can tell you as of today I have a new definition. It's this (David throws himself to the floor, lays prone) (laughter and applause). I forgot to borrow the kneepads.

A common problem for most speakers is body language. The first four clips I have selected illustrate how to use your body to reinforce your message.

The first two are in the category I call “Outstanding Use of Face.” First, from 1993, here’s Jana Barnhill.

Use of facial expressions

1993	Jana Barnhill	start:	4:30	I will never forget	total clip: 0:25
		stop	4:55	(through facial expression)	

I will never forget the first time I entered this contest. I was a new Toastmaster and I made it to region, where I was overwhelmed. The first time I saw the lights, the red light had been on...oh....two minutes. (laughter) The poor little timer was sitting there like this... (Exaggerated facial expression and laughter).

What Jana did, with that one gesture, was take us into the moment--just as Julie Esguerra does as she tells the story of how she taught a hearing-impaired child to speak. Notice how she not only uses her face, but adds another dimension with her posture:

1999	Julie Esguerra	start	4:10	I knew he was deaf	total clip: 0:34
		stop	4:44	tissue paper (laugh)	

I knew he was deaf. My deep undercurrents led me to teach him. First, I showed him how to read my lips. Then, with a tissue paper, I showed him how to see the sound, “Boy!” Then he went towards the tissue papers and blurted, “Boy!” (Wipes face) I was glad I had a tissue paper. (Laughter)

In each case, Julie and Jana reinforced their point with a powerful physical gesture. Did you notice how the image of the little boy was so much more vivid just because of Julie’s body language? The simple act of kneeling and leaning in brought the scene to life.

Many people agonize over hand gestures. Generally I suggest letting your hands do what they want to do. That’s because overly rehearsed gestures can appear mechanical and become distracting. But every once in a while, you see an obviously rehearsed gesture that really works. Here’s a great example from Mark Haugh.

Use of hands

2000	Mark Haugh	start	2:15	As the oldest	total clip: 0:39
		stop	2:54	ready, aim, blame!	

As the oldest I was suddenly the man of the house. And in my first official act as a man (hands on hips) I chose to assign blame in the matter of my parents divorce. This tragedy needed a villain. And for me, (points to right) it was my father. If he could walk away from his family, then I would walk away from him. (Points right again) After all, he was to blame.

(Holds up finger) The finger of blame. Such a powerful weapon and so easy to use. You just identify your target (Uses finger like a gun) Ready...aim...BLAME.

Mark did two things exceptionally well here: First, he used his hands as a prop. And second, did you notice when he pointed his finger, as if it were a gun, which direction did he point? He pointed away from the audience. That was a smart thing to do; because he knew in many cultures pointing at someone is considered rude. So instead of having his imaginary father stand in front of him, he considerately placed him to the side. So when he pointed, none of the audience would be offended.

I also was very impressed with his use of words—what did he say? Ready...aim...BLAME. A very clever twist—and sometimes the power of your message can hinge on one single word.

So now we've seen examples of use of face and use of hands. How about the use of your whole body? In the past 11 years, I've not seen anyone do it better than Italo Magni did in 1994.

Use of entire body				
1994	Italo Magni	start	2:12	When a controversial issue
		stop	3:20	(freeze just before "Ladies...")
				total clip: 1:08

When a controversial issue comes up in a group discussion, do you dare express your different opinion? Or does the anguish of rejection silence your voice? And because of fear of rejection, how often do we make ourselves feel rejected before it even happens?

When I was a teenager I had a major crush on a girl named Lois. Oh, I really wanted to ask Lois for a date, but I wouldn't dare. And no wonder. I kept telling myself, "Italo, what if she says, 'Drop dead!'"

Ooo! Ouch! For months I was hostage to my self-imposed fear that Lois would say no.

Until one day, I did pump up enough courage to ask Lois for a date. "Lois, would you...if you have nothing else to do... like to go out on Saturday?"

Jeez! (Looks down and away, covering his face, cowering).

"Sure, sounds great!"

(Looks up, mouths 'sounds great?' Tugs his lapels, pumping and preening, slicks back his hair) (Laughter)

There's the total package—face, hands, legs, and all points in between. In less than a minute he captivated us—and most of it without saying a word. That's what body language can do.

Now let's move from delivery techniques to speech construction. A common weakness is a weak beginning. The next three speakers show us how to get started and make us want to hear more. First is Jock Elliott:

Openings

1994	Jock Elliott	start	0:00	From opening	total clip: 0:16
		stop	0:16	she said no.	

When I was just a little boy I asked my mother, “What will I be? Will I be handsome? Will I be rich?” Here's what she said to me.

She said, “No.” (Laughter)

I don't know about you, but I want to hear the rest of that story. That's what a good opening should do—capture our attention and make us want to hear more. Just as Frank Morris did in this clip from 1997.

1997	Frank Morris	start	0:00	From opening	total clip: 1:00
		stop	1:00	to children.	

At this very moment, around the world parents are anticipating the second birthday of their child. And with it, the onset of the Terrible Twos—that point in a child's development where that precious little toddler turns into a diabolical demon of destruction.

Now some of you may laugh, but Mr. Toastmaster, Toastmasters young and old, ladies and gentlemen, I declare to you...the Terrible Twos are not just restricted to children. (Laughter)

In addition to amusing us with alliteration –diabolical demons of destruction— Frank also surprised us with a creative use of the word “too.” Creative use of the language coupled with a strong voice got Frank Morris off to a strong start.

And the third of my three choices for great openings is an example of someone who brings together everything we've covered so far—watch the speaker's use of his face, his hands, and his body, watch his skillful use of a prop, and watch how his excitement propels us into his speech. The speaker is Robert Fergusson.

1998	Robert Fergusson	start	0:00	From opening	total clip: 1:05
		stop	1:05	completely alive.	

“Psst! Psst! Susie! It’s me!”

We had known each other for only three weeks. But we were 16-years old and so in love. I was spending the summer with relatives far from my hometown. And there were two things standing between me and Susie. Her mother, and her father!

But nothing could keep us apart on the last night before I left for home. She called me and said, “I have to see you. Come to my house late and bring a ladder. Look for the open window. Then climb up and kiss me!”

**Ooh Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, *that* was a motivational speech!
(Laughter)**

When I saw her face in the window, I flew up that ladder (Runs up ladder and stays for rest of delivery) and into her arms! And we shared a kiss so passionate I felt completely alive!

Robert had energy, enthusiasm, and excitement. He had polish and poise—and that’s a great example of a great beginning. And did you also notice how skillfully he used the ladder? Props can be a good thing if they reinforce your point and they are used skillfully. If used clumsily, they are a liability.

Good speeches begin with good writing. In the next examples I have selected, the writing is outstanding.

The speaker is Peter Hempenstall, and he is telling a story of how he dealt with his anger caused by growing up without his father, who had died when he was a child. Notice the power of the single short phrase that concludes this clip.

Use of language

1991	Peter Hempenstall	start	4:11	I dealt with a bit	total clip: 1:07
		stop	5:18	a thousand paper tears.	

I dealt with a bit of my unfinished business last year. And in so doing, threw out a great deal of emotional baggage. I was rummaging around in that attic and I came across an old, moth-eaten book of boy’s adventure stories. And inside that front cover was this penciled inscription: If you can survive the battles held within these pages, consider yourself a man. All my love, your Dad.

One again the phantom of unfinished business spoke to me. However, this time I replied.

You see, I decided to write a letter to my dad. And in it. I sought his forgiveness for all those years I’d been so angry at his absence. And I shared with him the moments I truly missed him. I wrote about graduation. I wrote about my wedding. I

wrote about the birth of my daughter. And then I took that letter and tore it up until my hands were filled with a thousand paper tears.

I've thought of that phrase "until my hands were filled with a thousand paper tears" hundreds of times since I heard it first, ten years ago. That's the power of good writing: the imagery stays with you.

A powerful tool for speakers is the metaphor and Hans Lillejord uses one exceptionally well in the next two clips. Listen to imagery that he uses to illustrate the value of our words.

1994	Hans Lillejord	start	0:33	My mother sat me down	total clip: 0:37
		stop	1:10	words are stones.	
		start	4:36	Some words are diamonds	total clip: 1:19
		stop	5:55	were diamonds	

My mother sat me down and gave me what was perhaps the worst advice I ever got in my life. Mark has already referred to it. She said, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names can never hurt me."

How ludicrous. Stick and stones can break my bones, but words can break my heart. And names can shatter my spirit. And there is no cast for a broken heart. There is no prosthesis for a shattered spirit. Some words are stones.

* * * *

Some words are diamonds. The greatest speech I ever heard in Toastmasters was not in a contest like this. It was not given by a professional. It was not given by the Golden Gavel winner.

One day, Laurie Lehman, a beautiful young woman walked into our local club and she gave a speech on "Say it With Feeling" And she gave an 8, 7-minute verbal tribute to her mother for everything she had ever done for her, wrapped it up, and sent it to her, on a videotape.

I called Laurie's mother. I said, "I was so moved by your daughter's speech. I wondered how you responded."

You know what she said? She said. "It was the greatest day of my life. It was the nicest thing anybody has ever done for me. The only thing, I don't know is how many times I can play it for my neighbors? (Laughter)

Some words are diamonds. I wondered what would happen if all 1,700 of us went home to our local clubs, asked every member of that club to give a 7-minute tribute to someone who is significant in their lives.

I know what would happen. There'd be 170,000 people that would say, "I had the greatest day of my life!"—because your words were diamonds.

That was two clips from the same speech, and I chose these two to illustrate the symmetry of his symbolism. His writing here was crisp, filled with vivid images and unforgettable stories. His words that day were diamonds.

Those were great examples of great writing, and the speakers' delivery made their writing memorable. The next two examples do the same, but they also show the value of rhythm and momentum. First is Sandra Ziegler from 1997. Notice how, at a certain moment, she picks up the pace and her speed and rhythm propel us to a strong conclusion.

Rhythm/Momentum

1997	Sandra Ziegler	start	4:30	But the most important lesson	total clip: 1:45
		stop	6:12	become one of the great ones	

But the most important lesson of the road to freedom comes at the end of the journey. In the fruits of success are the seeds of greatness.

Harriet Tubman had intelligence, grit, and determination. But that's not what made her great. She achieved success by winning her personal freedom. But that's not what made her great. What made Harriet Tubman great was that she went back, took others by the hand and conducted them along the road to freedom.

The great ones go back. She went back as often as she could, brought out whoever she could, and as many as she could. Harriet could not rest in freedom while others remained in bondage.

Those that had the courage to travel alone she simply told them the way. The others, she personally led to freedom. She led over 300 slaves to freedom before the Civil War. She never ran her train off the track, and she never lost a passenger.

This morning, if you are standing at a place where two roads are diverging in your life, you are standing where Harriet Tubman, a black, disabled, penniless woman born in bondage once stood. This is your morning. Take the less traveled road to success and freedom. And when you arrive at your destination and you will arrive, go back to your cities, go back to your communities, go back neighborhoods and teach, train, and inspire others to accomplish what you have accomplished. Don't stop at personal success. As a tribute to Harriet Tubman, become one of the great ones.

Did you notice when she picked up the pace? It was when she said "This morning if you are standing at a place where two roads are diverging, you are standing where

Harriet Tubman once stood.” It was at that point that the momentum shifted and she launched into a powerful, unforgettable moment. And she didn’t slow back down until she reached the phrase, “Don’t stop...”

And, there is no doubt what she wants us to do. Her message is clear and her style is unforgettable.

Sandra Ziegler showed us the power of momentum—how to hook the listener by speeding up. The next speaker, Richard Spencer, shows us the opposite—how to keep the listener off balance through an abrupt and unusually effective halt.

Rhythm/abrupt halt

1993	Richard Spencer	start	2:20	Aha, you’re saying	total clip: 2:10
		stop	4:30	is well pleased	

Aha, you’re saying to yourself, “The classic father-son conflict speech. They’ll either rush to the hospital because his dad will be deathly ill. The bedside, talk, the reconciliation, the recovery...and his father is sitting out there proudly today.”

Not quite. My dad died. And we never had that talk. But something interesting happened. About five years before Dad had passed on, Mom had died...and Dad remarried.

Now Elma is a wonderful woman. She’s not like a grim stepmother. Like my mother we sit and we talk about everything for hours. When Dad did pass on, Elma came out that spring for a visit. Over a leisurely breakfast something came up about the adoption. I said, yes I knew that Dad couldn’t have children.

She said, “Yes, that was your Dad’s one regret. That he could never have a son.”

(Very long pause) “I thought I was his son.”

“Elma took my hand in hers. She said, “You don’t understand. You are the son that he would never have had, that’s why he loved you so much. Why he was so proud of you.”

The little boy in me, scared, self-hating, guilty-feeling little boy that could never live up to his father’s expectations...sobbed uncontrollably.

Both Sandra Ziegler and Richard Spencer demonstrated mastery of momentum—how to speed up and how to slow down for maximum impact. Great speakers do both.

The next speaker illustrates a different skill, and one that is indispensable to making your message memorable. Dacia Jones-Nickerson shows us the value of a personal story. However, she does something even more impressive by taking a personal story

and finding a parallel with someone--more prominent--that gives *her* story greater impact.

Parallel structure

1998	Dacia Jones-Hickerson	start:	3:19	When Bill Clinton	total clip: 0:48
		stop	4:06	and I did it!	

When Bill Clinton was in high school he was one of two students chosen from his school to go to Boy's Nation, to take over the government for a week. He met President Kennedy in the Rose Garden. He returned home with a burning desire to become president. He did it. He did it.

When I was in high school, I was one of two students chosen from my state to go to Girl's Nation. I met President Truman in the Rose Garden. I returned home with a burning desire to plant a rose garden. And I did it. I did it!

Dacia's story by itself was good, but by comparing it with Bill Clinton's similar experience, her story moved from good to great. The two stories together combined to make a wonderful memory and a powerful point.

There is a speaker's adage: "Don't tell us, *take* us." That means the speaker should bring the listeners into the moment as if we were actually there. One of the best examples I've seen of this is from Brad Ballinger. Watch as he sets the scene and takes us into a very exciting, yet tender moment.

Don't tell us; take us

1991	Brad Ballinger	start	2:04	The Special Olympics	total clip: 2:21
		stop	4:25	then went in!	

The Special Olympics gives both children and adults with mental retardation an opportunity to participate in international athletic competition. Perhaps it's for this reason that they are also known as the Smiling Olympics. In fact, at what other world event will you see the crowd cheer more loudly for the last place finisher than for the first place winner?

And nowhere else was this spirit of the Special Olympics shown more real to me than at a basketball game at which I was working. I was the water server for one of the teams, which, unfortunately, found themselves at the short-end of a very lopsided score. To make matters worse, their best player (*gestures high*) had to leave the game with an injury.

In came (*gestures low*) their replacement. A young boy with Down's Syndrome who was no taller than my chest. While he was out there on the court it came apparent to everyone in the arena that he was struggling that day. He didn't know where he should be standing, which person he should be guarding, not even which basket he should be shooting at.

I looked on with awe at what followed. The opposing team’s members were placing him into the proper positions and telling him which person to guard. His own team members were giving him the ball more frequently, even though they were losing, just so that he could have the opportunity to make a basket.

Even though he was getting all this help and encouragement, he still wasn’t playing very well. He hadn’t made a shot the entire game. But, with one minute remaining, he was fouled.

As he stepped up to that free throw line, the crowd rose and began to cheer. His own teammates were standing and waving their towels. The opposing team members were hollering out words of encouragement.

The referee handed him the ball. He looked up at his target, licked his lips, brought the ball back, and hurled it towards the basket.

(Long pause) I wish I could tell you that the ball went straight in, but it didn’t. It bounced around on the rim a little bit...and THEN FELL IN! (Audience cheers)

How many of you felt the excitement? How many of you could visualize the scene? That’s the result of good story telling—Brad *took* us there and made the moment come alive.

The next clip is the longest of this program. It’s three and a half minutes, or almost exactly half of his seven-minute speech. The speaker is Rick Brunton and he uses a more than two dozen of images and examples but they all flow together seamlessly. Watch how skillfully he introduces the “big yellow bus” metaphor, sets it aside, and then returns to it. He covers a lot of ground, but notice how smoothly he keeps the different and divergent examples tied together. This is masterful writing.

Extended metaphor

1998	Rick Brunton	start	1:20	The truth is	total clip: 3:34
		stop	4:54	where you left me.	

The truth is, I haven’t done that much dreaming since I married the girl of my dreams twenty-two years ago. But when I was young my dreams were my best buddies, and I took them with me wherever I went. And when I wasn’t edging them out, they were never any further away than my very next thought.

But then, as I grew up and became more responsible, I found that my dreams became less a part of my everyday life. And while I never completely let go of them, I eventually hooked them to a chain that got longer and longer as the years went by.

It’s like this old farm couple driving into town in their old pick-up truck. As the wife rolls down the window from the passenger’s side she turns to her husband of 47

years and says, “Pa, remember when we was younger how we used to snuggle up next to each other in the seat when you was drivin’?”

And a big smile comes to the old man’s face as he turns to his wife. “Well, Ma, I ain’t moved.” (laughter)

And that’s the way it is with our dreams. When we let go and let dreams do the driving, we snuggle up next to them and nothing brings us more joy than that journey.

Unfortunately, many of us begin to slide across that seat to make room for passengers that we take on along the highway of life. Passengers in the form of obligations, responsibilities, and relationships. And then comes that fateful day when we come to the decision that we should be doing the driving. And we box up our dreams and toss them into the backseat.

Finally, with a house payment, two car payments, three children, one needing braces, college tuition, and retirement planning—before we know it we find ourselves driving a big, yellow bus with our dreams silently seated in the last row, out of sight, all but forgotten.

I remember the U.S. women’s gymnastics’ team that competed in the 1996 Olympics. They had an athlete by the name of Kerry Strug. Kerry was the one with the heart of a giant and the voice of a Munchkin.

She was the last competitor in the final event, the women’s vault. Unfortunately, Kerry injured her ankle on her second-to-last attempt. But if her team was going to win its first-ever gold medal, she would be required not only to complete her last jump, but she must stick the landing as well.

I can still see her in my mind. Pounding down that runway, ankle bandaged, a look on her face of a wounded warrior with her dream on the line. And when she hit that vault, pushed off of it and began to spin in the air. It seemed like the entire world stopped to watch her.

And then an amazing thing happened. While she was up there spinning in mid-air, she somehow transformed herself into 87-pounds of heart and determined will. And when she hit that mat and struggled through her pain to find her balance, finally standing tall, on one leg.

How many of you felt a shiver up your back? Or felt Goosebumps run up your arms? That shiver? Those Goosebumps? Those are your dreams standing up from the last row of your bus, saying, “Hey! Remember me? I haven’t left you. I’m still right here where you left me.”

Rick’s writing in that clip is as good as any I have seen in the last decade of contests.

We'll close the program with three great examples of the effective use of humor. First, Evelyn Peyton illustrates an unusual ability to get multiple laughs out of a single personal story. Notice that there are no traditional "jokes" in this clip, yet in three minutes, the audience laughs more than a dozen times. It's her combination of observation and attitude that make this moment so magical.

Personal story; universal lesson

1997	Evelyn Peyton	start	1:43	When I was 13	total clip: 3:13
		stop	4:56	was the fun of the dive.	

When I was 13, a public pool opened in my neighborhood. We were all very excited on opening day. After we came out of the changing room, everyone was accounted for, but my younger brother, Pat.

With a quick scan of the area, I found him, standing confidently and poised on the high dive above 12 feet of water. This was a 9-year-old urban kid who, until that day, had only seen enough water to fill a bathtub—and we couldn't get him in there! (laughter)

Yet, there he was—poised. I had no idea machoism started so young! (laughter) To make matters worse, he jumped in. Oh! I was very concerned. Not for him, for me. I was the one who would have to explain this to our mother. (laughter)

Now, I love my brother. But I decided, right then and there, if that little boy survives, I'm going to kill him myself. (laughter)

But you know, there's something about having 12 feet of water over your head that suddenly gives you abilities you didn't even know you possessed. (laughter) Pat started doing some kind of weird-looking doggie paddle and he made it to the other side of the pool with the lifeguard close behind. She had some pretty stern words for him. But it was nothing compared to what I had waiting for him. (laughter)

Afterwards, Pat looked at me with a mischievous smile on his face and he said, "Evelyn, wasn't that a great dive?" (laughter) And you know, it really was. (laughter)

Now I share this particular memory with you because to me it symbolizes what the journey of life is really about. Pat was so excited about getting on that board that he didn't even bother to learn how to swim. (laughter) He was courageous. He stepped outside his comfort zone to experience a pool of possibilities.

It was a mistake. And he knew it the minute his scrawny, little body slid under that water. (laughter) But he took responsibility, and he had the power. He decided what it was he truly wanted—which at this point, was to survive. (laughter)

He set a goal—to get out of the water—he made an effort and achieved. Pat believed in himself and his abilities. Oh, the lifeguard has his back, but God was watching out for that little boy. He almost died that day—twice. (laughter) Yet, all he could talk about was the fun of the dive.

To be able to sustain that many laughs in only three minutes is masterful. And the fact that every laugh is uniquely hers make it even more special.

Finally, two moments to close the program, both illustrating the power of humor at moments when we need it most. Good speakers know how to create tension—great speakers know how to relieve it.

V.J. Smith, for example demonstrates the precise moment to deliver a knockout punch.

Humor when we need it most

1996	VJ Smith	start:	2:17	Divine intervention	total clip: 1:36
		stop:	3:53	more Smiths!	

But then came Divine Intervention. On Superbowl Sunday 1983, my wife peered through the glass vial of an early pregnancy test, saw a little blue ring and let out a shriek. We were going to be parents!

Everywhere I went to spread the good news I was greeted with the same. “Well, you’re hoping for a boy, aren’t you?”

At this point I could no longer control destiny. I resorted to using that old, stock answer. And I’d say, “We just want the baby to be healthy.”

On September 10, 1983, my wife gave birth to Molly Katherine Smith. When I took her around to show my friends they’d say, “Yeah, she’s cute. But you’re still going to try for that boy, aren’t you? After all, she’ll never hit a homerun.” I’d smile a courtesy smile. But inside I ached for my little girl.

Three years later my wife informed me we were going to be parents for a second time. My friends greeted the news with, “For your sake, V.J., I hope it’s a boy. Think of the wedding expenses!” (laughter)

“No,” I’d say, “We just want the baby to be healthy.”

I’m proud to announce on October 9, 1987, Kelly Marie Smith joined our family. (laughter)

Once again, I'd hold this child out for inspection and got the same thing. "Well, you're still going to try for that boy, aren't you?" Or my favorite, "A man has to have a son to carry on the family name."

Just what the world needs—more Smiths. (laughter)

Why did that line work so well? It was timing. Not only was it delivered crisply, it came at a moment when we desperately needed a release. That's one critical use of humor—to bring the audience back up when you've taken them down.

Similarly, Jeremiah Bacon does the same in the following magic moment. This is the final clip in today's program, and it's one of my all-time favorites. This is tension-relieving humor at its best.

1997	Jeremiah Bacon	start	3:47	...and all was going well	total clip: 1:48
		stop	5:37	you don't cheat.	

And then one day, my sister was sent to a Catholic school for girls and I was placed in an orphanage. It hit me like a ton of bricks. We were poor. They only put poor kids in orphanages.

But, I couldn't understand how she could give us up like that?

Later, when I had children of my own, I couldn't understand. I could never give up my children no matter how tough times were. I never understood. But I never had the courage to ask.

After she died, while going through her personal belongings, I found a letter to the city father's that said, "Please take my son. You see, he's at that vulnerable age now where so many things can go wrong without the guidance and the structure and the materials things that I cannot provide."

That courageous woman swallowed her tremendous pride and let us know we were poor. What do you say about a woman who loved her children so much that she was willing to give them up?

It's interesting; no matter how negative the world was towards my mother, she would always reframe everything to be positive when it came to her children.

I remember my first year in the orphanage when I showed her my report card. It was the worst report card I ever had. She looked at that report card, she looked at me, and she smiled and said, "I'm proud of you, son. I can tell by your grades that you don't cheat." (laughter)

Just as VJ Smith did, Jeremiah Bacon took us down, but with skillful use of humor, brought us back up.

I hope you enjoyed some of the most magic moments from the last decade of International Speech Contests. These speakers showed that any speech can contain moments of brilliance, and every speech is worthy of study.

And, I hope you have learned that if you take a speech--any speech--and take it apart, you can discover treasures hidden within.

(end)