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# Speechwriter's Newsletter

S/N

November 15, 1991 No. 618

THE WEEKLY VOICE OF THE SILENT PROFESSION

## LETTERS

The Clarence Thomas hearings may be history, but opinions are still flying. A sample of some of the letters *S/N* has received in response to an article on the hearings in its October 25 issue:

**Andrew Wilson, McDonnell Douglas Corporation, St. Louis, Missouri:** The Clarence Thomas hearing was certainly one of the most riveting spectacles in Congressional history. But it lacked the cut-and-thrust of great debate or inspired invective. There was nothing to compare with the way John Wilkes—one of the wittiest and most rakish of 18th century British politicians—parried a thrust from the Earl of Sandwich, a parliamentary rival of almost equal notoriety. The earl, who is said to have invented the sandwich as a means of nourishment at the gaming tables, forecast that Wilkes would surely perish either of the pox or on the gallows. "That depends, sir," Wilkes shot back, "on whether I embrace your mistress or your principles."

**Andy Neimers, Insurance Corporation of British Columbia:** Whatever you Yanks think of the whole affair, let me point out that many of us Canucks are envious of the fact you do at least have a formal hearing process for appointing Supreme Court judges! Up hereabouts we get them named by the federal cabinet as a *fait accompli* and their backgrounds, views, and history of judgments are only known by some sector of the legal community. It's very much a case of "getting to know you" after the fact for the general populace.

For what it's worth, I thought Ms. Alvarez did project a "studied" sincerity in her testimony. I also wonder how many of the speakers' hands would have shook from honest emotion if they'd had to hold their texts in their hands? Just wonderin'.

### Calling all speechwriters

*S/N* wants to see copies of your speeches. Won't you please send us your most recent speech today?

## Visuals—their use and overuse

*A picture may be worth a thousand words—but does it help or hurt the speech? Hint: Sometimes less is more*

Abraham Lincoln didn't use slides of the Union dead to punctuate his delivery of the Gettysburg address. Winston Churchill didn't flash pictures of the beaches, the fields, the hills and the streets on which the British would fight and never surrender in 1940. But not all speeches are as stirring and not all speaking situations are as dramatic as these, and many speeches given in corporate America today do lean heavily on slides, video and other visual tools.

Many speechwriters would just as soon avoid visual aids altogether. Doug Cochran of Virginia Power says, "My personal motto is, 'avoid all unnecessary slides, and all slides are unnecessary.'" But Cochran does prepare speeches for delivery with slides, when the occasion—or the speaker—demands it.

The nature of some speeches—technical, financial—almost seems to require some sort of visual help. Brian Vachon of National Life Insurance uses a lot of slides in the speeches he writes, mostly because "they have a lot of figures that are not worth memorizing, and it helps the audience and speaker to see them visually." Brian Craven, of United Telephone of Florida, uses slides or video when the speech is introducing a new topic, or discussing something that may be hard for an audience to visualize. A recent speech he prepared on the company's directory recycling program is a case in point. Using either slides or video (slides for a larger audience where a bigger screen is used), the visuals show, in about a minute and a half, the process whereby used directories go into a recycling plant and come out as paper. Says Craven, "Video is great when it's not overused."

That sentiment is echoed by speechwriters in virtually every industry. "Visuals are overused if they're improperly used," says Kim Lind of National Car Rental. The chief offenses are putting too much information up on the screen, and using them to repeat, not reinforce, the thrust of the speech. Lee Doyle, a speechwriter for the New York Stock Exchange: "I've seen some that look as if the speaker just decided to put his notes up on the board, with 50 words on a slide."

What's to be done? If the speaker must use some kind of visual, United Telephone's Craven recommends backing away from high-tech and giving the speaker a blackboard or flipchart for writing figures or bullet points during the speech. "You need a very good, very animated speaker, but it works better than a canned slide or transparency." On the opposite end of the spectrum, writer and teacher Kathleen Hall Jamieson, of the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communication, pushes speakers to go even more high-tech with video-computer interfaces that let speakers create and manipulate images on the spot. To Jamieson, all other forms of visual aid are obsolete.

But speechwriters dead set against the whole idea of visuals might follow one speechwriter's example: "I got my CEO to stop using slides by telling him, 'George Bush doesn't use slides, why should you?'" It worked.

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## SPEAKING OUT

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### PC or not PC? The 'assault' on freedom of speech

On May 4, at the University of Michigan, President Bush stated: "Ironically, on the 200th anniversary of the Bill of Rights, we find free speech under assault throughout the United States, including on some college campuses. The notion of 'political correctness' has ignited controversy across the land."

Is freedom of speech really in danger from the political correctness trend? It sounds farfetched to me. But when I was in college, I was more concerned about my right to drink vast amounts of beer than I was in anything remotely involving political correctness. A friend of mine tried to start an Association of White Students on campus—the administration nixed that right away. I suppose, like many of us, I took freedom of speech for granted.

But all the coverage of the PC trend made me curious enough a week or so

ago to start calling some speechwriters at corporations and college campuses across the country. I can't say that anything I found out would stand up to a rigorous, scientific examination, but it does make me think that the "assault" is somewhat less dramatic than the President characterized.

For most of the speechwriters on campus that I talked to, budgets and money are more pressing topics than political correctness. "I think everyone's very much aware of the issue," Deborah Brown of Radford University told me, "but I don't believe it's had much effect. The major issue is economics—budget cuts."

In the corporate sector, the situation is a little different. Most companies go out of their way to avoid offending a potential customer, but few speechwriters wanted to call that political correctness. To Joanne Tracy of Bell of Pennsylvania, it's "not a matter of offending people, but just being sensitive."

And that kind of is sensitivity is hardly objectionable. Ed Stanulis of

General Motors notes that "Ethnic, racist, and sexist jokes are out, and there's more consciousness of using phrases like 'His and Hers,' and not calling everyone 'guys.'" Still, it can lead to some troublesome situations. Stanulis recalls, in a previous job, telling his speaker to avoid the phrase "individual achievement." Says Stanulis. "I told him that it's considered a code word for the assumption that blacks can't make it individually, that success is always the result of a group effort. He laughed and said, 'Oh, Christ, I'll be damned if I change it.'"

But in general, I don't think freedom of speech is in danger in the U.S. The "freedom" to be insensitive may be, and that's probably good—although it does open up the question of whose sensitivities come first. But if we're really going to become a kinder, gentler nation, a greater sensitivity to the attitudes and opinions of our various audiences makes a good first step. —JC

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## OPENING GAMBITS

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### 'This is a story about a sign'

**Raymond M. Fino, VP, Corporate Human Resource, Warner-Lambert, to the Railroad Personnel Association:**

A few months ago, one of my colleagues, Lodewijk de Vink, opened a speech to securities analysts with a dramatic line—"This is a story about a sign." He then went on to talk about the sign in front of Warner-Lambert's main building. It's a sign that proclaims our site as Warner-Lambert World Headquarters. I like his speech, so I'm borrowing his opening line. I too want to talk about a sign.

...My sign stands in front of a miniature gold course, on Route 22, near my home in Bridgewater, New Jersey. Now, this particular course was built during the miniature golf craze of the 1960s. It had seen glorious days. But recently, it was in a state of serious disrepair. You know what I mean—

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the clown on hole three was missing a chunk of fiberglass hair. The windmill on hole twelve was short a vane. The crowning touch, the Statue of Liberty on hole eighteen, had a burned-out torch and a broken nose. Now, I'm not the sentimental type, but I ask you—is there anything sadder than a miniature golf course gone to seed?

Anyway, back to the sign. Four weeks ago, I went on vacation. Two weeks later, when I returned, I noticed that the miniature golf course had been magically reborn. It was a sea of bright green felt and polished wood, shiny chrome and well-crafted statuettes. And it had, above it, the sign that said it all. Emblazoned in black letters on an orange banner were these four carefully chosen words:

NEW OBSTACLES

LOWER RATES

That sign and those words struck me. New obstacles, lower rates. Think for a second—these four words are the perfect capsule summary of the past decade in your business, and in mine.

*Speechwriter John Santoro, Warner-Lambert, 201 Tabor Rd., Morris Plains, NJ 07950.*

# Speechwriter's Newsletter

November 15, 1991

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## IDEA FILES: QUOTES FOR YOUR SPEECHES

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**Getting good  
players is  
easy. Getting  
them to play  
as a team is  
another  
story.  
—Casey  
Stengel** .25

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### Economists

Economists' unanimity that bad business is ahead is the most reassuring news possible. It's very unlikely that this will be the one time they're right.

—Malcolm Forbes .01

### Sexual harassment

It's not easy to pull yourself up by the bootstraps when your boss has his hand on your leg.

—Naomi Wolf, writer .02

### Business

Business has to have a scoreboard. It doesn't matter what anybody says. Warren Bennis [of the University of Southern California Business School] says there's too much relating business to sport. I'm sorry, Mr. Bennis—professor—I don't agree with you.

—David Johnson, CEO of Campbell Soup .03

### Government

There's no trick to being a humorist when you have the whole government working for you.

—Will Rogers .04

### Japan

Japan is a country committed to learning. The U.S. isn't—and it shows.

—Thomas P. Rohlen, Stanford University .05

### Leadership

Leadership is not a magnetic personality—that can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not “making friends and influencing people”—that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher sights, raising a person's performance to a higher standard, building a personality beyond its normal limitations.

—Peter Drucker .06

### Ethics

We are not here to predict the future but to change it for the good. We are not here as helpless creatures but as sons and daughters of Adam—capable of affecting our own fate. We are not here to avoid decisions but to make hard choices between good and evil by using an ethical system not invented by man but by our Creator—a framework of truth and moral guidance through which we can find deliverance from despair.

—Oliver North .07

### Work

To love what you do, and to feel that it matters—how could anything be more fun?

—Katharine Graham .08

### Peace

Peace is not something you wish for. It is something you make, something you do, something you are, and something you give away.

—Robert Fulghum .09

### Expendables

The graveyards are full of indispensable people.

—Charles de Gaulle .10

### Money

I think kids should have enough money to be able to do what they want to do, to learn what they want to do, but not enough money to do nothing.

—Warren Buffett .11

### Presidents

It is a great advantage to the President, and a major source of satisfaction to the country, for him to know that he is not a great man.

—Calvin Coolidge .12

# Speechwriter's Newsletter

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## QUOTES FOR YOUR SPEECHES

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Continued from previous page

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**Knowledge is  
more  
valuable than  
morals.  
—Maxim  
Gorky** .26

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### Wealth

There are three primary roads to wealth in America today: be born with the right set of parents and, through no cleverness, uniqueness or facility of your own, outlive them; deal off the bottom of the deck or short-weight people often enough so that you can place what you steal from them in your own bank account and later buy respectability with it; and (at last!) perceive a need, find a unique way of filling it and doggedly pursue it your entire life. This last group I find fascinating.

—Joseph L. Shaefer, *Bringing Home the Gold*

.13

### Failure

Sometimes I even look forward to the next failure. Your true test comes when you hit bottom.

—Bud Hadfield, co-founder and chairman of Kwik Kopy Corp.

.14

### Habits

A man spends the first half of his life learning habits that shorten the other half.

—Ann Landers

.15

### Optimist

An optimist is a man who has never had much experience.

—Don Marquis

.16

### Imagination

Among all human constructions the only ones that avoid the dissolving hands of time are castles in the air.

—Frederico de Roberto

.17

### Days

I try to take one day at a time, but sometimes several days attack me at once.

—Ashleigh Brilliant

.18

### Equality

As long as there is poverty in the world, I can never be rich, even if I have a million dollars. As long as diseases are rampant and millions of people in this world cannot expect to live more than 28 or 30 years, I can never be totally healthy—even if I just got a good checkup at the Mayo Clinic. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the way the world is made.

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

.19

### Mirth

Then I commanded mirth because a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, drink and be merry.

—Ecclesiastes

.20

### Comedy

God writes a lot of comedy.... The trouble is, he's stuck with so many bad actors who don't know how to play funny.

—Garrison Keillor

.21

### Perspective

Perhaps one has to be very old before one learns how to be amused rather than shocked.

—Pearl S. Buck

.22

### Humor

You can turn painful situations around with laughter. If you can find humor in something, you can survive it.

—Bill Cosby

.23

### Leadership

Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.

—George S. Patton

.24

We invite readers to send in their favorite quotes, anecdotes, humor, and statistics for speeches.

# Speechwriter's Newsletter

November 15, 1991

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## IDEA FILES: STATISTICS FOR YOUR SPEECHES

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**Americans  
spent \$3.7  
billion on  
athletic  
footwear in  
the first four  
months of  
1991.**  
—American  
Sports Data,  
Inc. .15

### Organ transplants

More than 22,000 patients are awaiting organ transplants in the U.S. this year. About 2,000 patients are added to the waiting list each month. Since 1987, there has been a 42 percent increase in the number of people waiting for kidney transplants, a 100 percent increase in the number of people waiting for liver transplants, and a 144 percent increase in the number waiting for heart transplants. About one-fourth of the patients on the list for heart transplants die before receiving a new heart.

—University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics .01

### Cheating

In a poll of 15,000 juniors and seniors at 31 universities, more than 87 percent of business majors admitted to cheating at least once in college, the largest such percentage.

Engineering students came in second, with 74 percent admitting to cheating. Next came science students, with 63 percent. Humanities majors, at 63 percent, are least likely to cheat.

—The Conference Board .02

### Exercise

One mile of walking or running is equal to three miles of bicycling, one-quarter mile of swimming, three-quarters of a mile of cross-country skiing, eight to twelve minutes of rowing, aerobic dancing, or jumping rope, or 20 minutes of playing a sport.

—Donnelly News .03

### Japanese cars

There are 6,945 Japanese auto retailers nationwide, a 29 percent increase from 1987.

—Ward's Automotive Reports .04

### Sex discrimination

For every dollar earned by men this year, women earned 73 cents. That's up from 59 cents in 1976. Percentages of male salary earned by women in the same occupation:

<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Accountant	75
Advertising sales	85.2
Bookkeeper	83.8
Computer analyst	83
Engineer	85.7
Lawyer	87.8
Psychologist	83.1
Secretary	73.5
Social worker	90.3
Teacher (elementary)	90.3

—Women in Business .05

### Garbage

In 1988, Americans generated 180 million tons of garbage, of which 23.5 million tons was recycled. Recycling recovered 18.4 million tons of paper; 2.2 million tons of metal; 1.5 million tons of glass; and 1.4 million tons of miscellaneous items.

—Environmental Protection Agency .06

### National debt

The \$10.6 trillion national debt amounts to a \$42,227 IOU for every man, woman and child in the U.S.

—A Nation in Debt, published by the Tax Foundation .07

### California

The 1990 census counted 29.8 Californians. This confirmed that during the 1980s California added six million residents, more than any other state has ever gained in one decade.

—California Population Characteristics .08

# Speechwriter's Newsletter

## STATISTICS FOR YOUR SPEECHES

Continued from previous page

**Of the more than 20,000 objects fired into orbit since 1957, fewer than five percent remain operational.**  
—Office of Technology Assessment

.16

### Workers compensation

The average cost of providing workers compensation coverage in the U.S. is \$500 per employee. The average medical claim on lost-time cases rose 157 percent in the 1980s, from \$2,100 in 1981 to \$5,400 in 1989.

—Business Insurance .09

### Hotel rooms

The world's ten largest hotel chains, and the number of rooms they controlled as of Dec. 30, 1990:

Hotel	Rooms
Holiday Inn Worldwide	320,599
Best Western International	268,140
Choice Hotels International	201,140
Accor	159,877
Hospitality Franchise System	138,122
Marriott Corp.	131,238
ITT Sheraton Corp.	130,862
Days Inns of America, Inc.	129,907
Hilton Hotels Corp.	94,232
Hyatt Hotels/Hyatt International	76,794

—Hotels .10

### Metrics

If the metric system were to be adopted by the United States, some of our favorite sayings would read:

Peter Piper picked 8.81 liters of pickled peppers.

It hit me like 907 kilograms of bricks.

A decigram of salt.

Beat him to within 2.54 centimeters of his life.

All wool and 91.4 centimeters wide.

Give them 2.543 centimeters and they'll take 1.609 kilometers.

—The National Journal .11

### Water

About 70 percent of a person's weight is water: five percent in blood, 15 percent in between cells, and 50 percent inside of cells. A 150-pound person is 105 pounds of water. The average sedentary person loses about 10 cups of water a day through the lungs, kidneys, and gastrointestinal system.

—Hope Heart Institute .12

### Quality

A success rate of 99.9 percent would mean that: The IRS would lose two million documents a year.

103,260 income tax returns would be processed incorrectly.

22,000 checks would be deducted from the wrong bank accounts in the next 60 minutes.

1.314 phone calls per minute would be misplaced by telecommunications companies

2,488,200 books would be shipped in the next twelve months with the wrong cover.

18,322 pieces of mail would be misdirected every hour.

107 incorrect medical procedures would be performed every day.

315 entries in Webster's Third New International Dictionary would be misspelled.

—Training .13

### Traveling

The cost of lunch, dinner, and a hotel room for one night in London averages \$364, making it the most expensive city for business travelers in Europe. Paris, once the leader, is now second (\$332), followed by Stockholm (\$313), Copenhagen (\$302), Milan (\$287) and Frankfurt (\$276). The least costly cities are Budapest (\$143), Lisbon (\$191), and Munich (\$204).

—The Conference Board .14

We invite readers to send in their favorite quotes, anecdotes, humor, and statistics for speeches.

### Broadcast transcripts ... job openings ... 'rabbit hunting' ... political correctness

Did you ever catch the last half of a great segment on TV or the radio and want to get the whole thing? You call the station, only to find that tapes or transcripts may take weeks to get to you. Don't despair—call Video Monitoring Services of America. "Radio and TV are not in the business of providing people with information in this form, so we're geared up to provide it as fast as possible," says VMS vice president Mike Farley. VMS monitors news, talk shows, and public affairs programming on national, local and cable networks in 150 markets. A 5-minute video cassette of a TV segment from a major market costs \$95; audio cassettes up to 15 minutes run \$40; transcripts are \$35 for 100 lines. In addition, you can register topics of interest with VMS, and they'll contact you when anything comes up in your field. You pay only when you actually order a tape or transcript. For more information, call Farley at VMS-Chicago, 312-649-1131. ... **Job opening:** Director of Corporate Relations for conservative, international, industrial services corporation based in New York City. Will handle investor relations, annual reports, media relations. Should be hands-on manager with good investor relations/annual report preparation background. Salary: \$80,000—\$100,000. Send résumé with current salary information to Marshall Consultants, Inc., 360 E. 65th St., Suite PHB, New York, NY 10021. Contact: Larry Marshall. No phone calls, please. ... "Clearly, we have to become world leaders in the high-tech fields of rabbits, sponges and tar-babies." So says Howard Dingle, General Manager of Research and Technology for Esso Resources Canada, in a recent speech. Rabbits, sponges and tar-babies? We called speechwriter Jeff Flood for an

explanation. Flood was instructed by the speaker to research three areas: exploration, oil production, and recovering oil from smaller pools of petroleum. Flood found that geologists call looking for oil reservoirs "rabbit-hunting," and that people who work recovering oil from petroleum reservoirs call themselves "tar-babies." "And 'sponges' was an analogy I came up with myself, because a petroleum reservoir is kind of like a sponge of interconnected channels, filled with oil natural gas and salt water." Flood was looking for a technique that would make the audience sit up and say "What's he talking about?" After all, says Flood, "If you said, 'I want you to remember hunting for reservoirs and enhancing

our oil recovery efforts,' they'd be asleep in five minutes." ... **Walt Disney Company** speechwriter Dan Wolf keeps three files on his computer: one for jokes, one for quotations, and one for facts. "If something makes me laugh, it goes in the joke file. If it makes me think, it goes in the quote file. If something just sounds interesting, it goes in the fact file. I'm not necessarily thinking of how this will fit into a particular speech. If it gets a response from me, I put it in." One fact that provoked a response, used in a speech for Disney CEO Michael Eisner at a conference on transportation: "Consider the case of New York City. According to a traffic study made in 1907, horsedrawn vehicles in Manhattan moved at an average speed of 11.5 miles an hour. Today, the average daytime rate of travel for automobiles is just six miles an hour." Where does Wolf find his material? "Well, I get something

### Overcoming the challenges

*Sometimes a nightmare has a happy ending. Here are stories from two speechwriters who stared disaster in the face and lived to tell about it.*

**A speechwriter** who prefers to remain nameless recalls a major product announcement speech he once had to write, and the major disagreement between the CEO and the senior vice president of Marketing on how the product was to be positioned. "Their positions were so different, I would show a draft to one, and he would look at me like I was crazy. So I'd change it to fit his scenario, then take it to the other officer and get the same response." Finally the speechwriter, although new to the corporation, threw up his hands and wrote a memo to both, asking them to please get together so they could go forward. "And they did." We love a happy ending. ... **Skip Boyer of Best Western** writes speeches for the yearly-elected chairman of the board. Last year's chairman was a "wonderful bear of a man whom everybody

loved, but he was an absolutely brutal public speaker. And he knew it." The speaker's major problem: losing his train of thought during the speech. At an Orlando convention, the chairman had to make a major address, but what to do to cover the lapses? "What we worked out was, we built the speech around the Declaration of Independence, and at five different occasions, with graphics flashing in the background, the chairman would stop and there'd be an offstage voiceover of Thomas Jefferson reading excerpts from the Declaration of Independence, and other writings." Boyer played Jefferson for the voiceover. The strategy added emphasis, and gave the speaker time to stop and regain his equilibrium. Boyer says, "The nightmare was wondering, 'Will it work?' And it did."

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## STRICTLY SPEAKING

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called *Speechwriter's Newsletter*...." Modesty forbids us from quoting further. ... **In the most politically correct introduction** you'll ever come across, cartoonist Garry Trudeau opens a speech at Yale University with: "Dean Kagan, distinguished faculty, parents, friends, graduating seniors, Secret Service agents, class agents, people of class, people of color, colorful people, people of height, the vertically constrained, people of hair, the differently coiffed, the optically challenged, the temporarily sighted, the insightful, the out of sight, the out-of-towners, the Eurocentrics, the Afrocentrics, the Afrocentrics with Eurail passes, the eccentrically inclined, the sexually disinclined, people of sex, sexy people, sexist pigs, animal companions, friends of the earth, friends of the

boss, the temporarily employed, the differently employed, the differently optioned, people with options, people with stock options, the divestitourists, the deconstructionists, the home constructionists, the homeboys, the homeless, the temporarily housed at home, and, God save us, the permanently housed at home." ... **A staff of six people** writes for this president, who speaks almost every day, sometimes twice a day. President Bush? No, John Bryson, chairman and CEO of Southern California Edison. Bryson's speeches are chiefly written by Steven Jay or Martha Hartley, though others help out on occasion. After each speech, Bryson and Hartley sit down to discuss and critique each other's work. From a speech written by Hartley—or was it Jay?—for the ElecTec 91 Conference: "Once young

Benjamin [Franklin] was curiously watching his father storing the family's food provisions in casks so food would be plentiful during the long winter. Little Ben thought it would be a good idea for the family to say grace over the cask, right then and there, to save time later at each individual meal. It was that sense of efficiency that led to so many of Franklin's inventions. In fact, I think he would have felt right at home here today." ... **A note on speech length:** "I take the view, and always have done, that if you cannot say what you have to say in twenty minutes, you should go away and write a book about it." —Lord Brabazon.

**Job openings for speechwriters** at your corporation? Send the listing to S/N. We'll run it free of charge.

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## COMING UP

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**Nov. 20:** Conference Board workshop: "Employee Communications: Communicating Organizational Change." Location: New York City. Call 212-339-0290... **Nov. 20-21:** Public Affairs Council conference. Location: Chicago. Theme: "Using All the Corporate Public Affairs and Public

Relations Resources." Speakers include former CBS executive VP Van Gordon Sauter. For details, call 202-872-1790. ... **Dec. 4-6:** National Association of Government Communicators annual conference. Location: Arlington, Virginia. Theme: "Looking Through the Kaleidoscope: The Many

Facets of Communications." Contact Debbi Trocchi at 703-519-3902. ... **Dec. 10:** Conference Board Workshop: "Managing Corporate Communications During Turbulent Times." Location: Chicago. For information, call 212-339-0290.

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## IN CONCLUSION...

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Politics-makes-strange-bedfellows department:  
"You all have another advantage over me.  
At least all of you have met a Democratic president.  
I've never had that honor yet."

—Jimmy Carter, at the opening of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, which he attended with President Bush and past presidents Nixon, Carter, and Reagan.

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# Speechwriter's Newsletter

## S/N

November 22, 1991 No. 619

THE WEEKLY VOICE OF THE SILENT PROFESSION

### LETTERS

Glynn Young, Monsanto Company, St. Louis, Illinois: This is probably best left alone, but if you're open to a response to Alan Perlman's letter (*S/N* 11-8), I have one. First let it be said that Alan and I have a mutual admiration society going, for I have the greatest respect for him as a speechwriter, even if he is WAY WAY OFF BASE on this one.

Back in July, *S/N* asked for reader reactions to Senator Tom Harkin's use of an epithet in his political speeches. *S/N* wasn't running a "yea or nay" opinion poll, but instead asked for readers' reactions. Reader Joe Beckham provided his reaction to the question, which included a statement of his religious beliefs—and another reader objected to it, saying that *S/N* should have used "judicious editing" so as not to offend some of its readers.

My defense of Beckham's letter was based on the idea that freedom of speech is not limited to the politically correct. I was defending his freedom of speech, and indirectly *S/N*'s freedom to publish.

My comment about the honesty of Beckham's letter was because I like to know the context in which something is said—whether it's a speech by a Senator, a letter to the editor, a quotation, an opinion, or whatever. In this case, I could judge Beckham's statement and why he was saying it, testing it against my beliefs, opinions, values and experience. I didn't have to agree with it. I might even be offended by it, but at least it left no doubt as to the why of what he said. I can't say the same for Senator Harkin.

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### Survey results: Average salary is \$57,000

*The annual survey, conducted at the 1991 Speechwriters Conference, measured salary, workload, and other issues*

Speechwriters frequently toil in isolation and anonymity, with no way to see where they stand in comparison with their colleagues. The 1991 Speechwriter Survey, distributed at the Fourth Annual Speechwriters Conference in Chicago, provided some useful data for those who feel lonely in their field.

The survey was distributed to some 256 speechwriters at the conference. In between sessions listening to speechwriting instructor Jerry Tarver, scribbling down thirty ideas presented in a thirty-minute lunchtime session, or listening to chief White House speechwriter Tony Snow, 175 people managed to at least partially complete the survey form. The 68 percent response rate was somewhat higher than 1990's (60 percent), but the same as the rate at the 1989 conference.

The salary results were, as usual, of the greatest interest. The average speechwriter has been doing the job for 6 years, and makes a salary of \$57,000. The figure is almost identical to last year's \$56,300. For comparison, a survey of speechwriters in the Chicago area, carried out by the Chicago Speechwriter's Forum earlier this year, reported an average salary for corporate speechwriters of \$65,000. Steve Hallmark, then president of the Forum, remarked at the time that Chicago seemed to be "a pricey neighborhood for speeches."

The highest salary reported was \$150,000, by a speechwriter with 12 years of experience in corporate work. The lowest salary: \$18,000, reported by a speechwriter only in the job for two months.

The results of the survey are far from scientific. As Steve Hallmark noted, a salary of \$18,000 for a speechwriter "is hardly enough to pay for subscribing to all the publications you need."

The average speechwriter's workload came to 25 speeches per year. One respondent reported writing 270 speeches, though, as pointed out by some, it's unclear whether that reflects the work of a single person or a department. On the other extreme, one conference-goer reported writing a mere two speeches per year.

More results: Most speechwriters reported working in Corporate Communications departments, followed closely by Public Relations, Investor Relations, and Internal Communications. Twenty-eight said they have the somewhat unusual job title of "Speechwriter."

Few reported writing speeches exclusively. On average, speechwriters at the conference spend about 60 percent of their time on speeches. Almost twice as many of the speeches they do write are for external audiences: 62 percent, as opposed to 38 percent composed for internal publics.

Further information on the survey will be reported in future issues of *S/N*.

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## SPEAKING OUT

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### They're everywhere! Speechwriters can pop up all over the place

The interesting thing about my job as editor of this newsletter is how often it creeps up and grabs me from behind when I least expect it. Like reading a good Stephen King novel, it can be a disconcerting feeling, but I enjoy it.

For example, *S/N* readers may recall that last year I mentioned (repeatedly) an episode of CBS-TV's *Murphy Brown* that used a presidential speechwriter as a character. I remember vividly the feeling of sitting at home, relaxed, watching one of my favorite TV shows, *S/N*'s offices a thousand miles away in my mind, when a guest star walks into Murphy's apartment and introduces himself as a White House speechwriter. WHAM! All of a sudden I'm yanked from my leisure mode and flung back to work. My head is spinning the way it does when the alarm clock rings too loudly

and you leap from bed too quickly. The episode is ruined—all I can think about is how to work the guest character into the newsletter somehow.

Ringling alarm clocks bring to mind another example. A week ago the clock radio woke me up at 6:40 to hear National Public Radio's Bob Edwards interview a man who has compiled an audio collection of the great speeches of the 20th century. One minute I'm in dreamland—never mind what I'm dreaming—and the next I'm wondering how I can get in touch with this guy to interview him for *S/N*.

I've got one more example. I was channel surfing (flipping randomly through TV stations with my remote control) a few nights ago, and paused to rest on CNN during a segment of the Larry King show. One of King's interview subjects was James Miller, who during the Reagan administration was director of the Office of Management and Budget. It so happens that I know the person who used to write his

speeches, Hal Gordon, who's now a freelancer and an *S/N* subscriber. I won't try to tell you I sat glued to the screen for the rest of the hour, but it did make watching a few minutes of the show a little more interesting.

People in the petroleum industry, or insurance, or utilities, must have the experience of seeing their industry or profession depicted in the media—sometimes accurately, frequently not. Imagine how a police officer feels after watching a rerun of *T.J. Hooker*. So I'm not reaching toward any profoundly original conclusions here. But incidents like these remind us that we're not working in an isolated, insulated void. In my position, it's kind of fun to realize that speeches are everywhere and speechwriters can pop up unexpectedly. We sometimes take for granted that speechwriting is an invisible, silent profession. Exceptions that prove (i.e., test) that rule are valuable—and make life more fun.

—JC

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## NEWS TO USE

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### Translation tips for speechwriters

As a follow-up to *S/N*'s front-page story on translating speeches into foreign languages, Berlitz Translation Service has made available some general guidelines to writers working on projects for translation:

Scan the copy for ambiguous word clusters of the type "modifier + noun + noun (i.e. "plastic widgets and fasteners"). These are commonplace in English, but for languages like Spanish and French, where modifiers must follow their nouns, it is critical that the translator know whether "plastic" refers both to the widgets and the fasteners, or only to the widgets. ...A good way to check is to reverse the nouns: If "plastic fasteners and widgets" is correct in the context, let the translator know that both items are plastic by penciling in "(plastic)" before "fasteners" in the original phrase.

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If you send photo captions for translation, include the photo itself. Without seeing the visual, a translator does not know whether "widget assembly" means "widget unit" or "widget being assembled." In Spanish, for example, "assembly" would be translated as "conjunto" in the first case, but "ensamblaje" in the second. You might wish to send Polaroid pictures, drawings or sketches. ...An innocent word like "valve" has different translations in most foreign languages, depending on its appearance, purpose or even size. In French, for example, "soupape," "clapet," "vanne," and "robinet" are all equivalent to the English "valve." A translator must know what the device looks like and what its function and relative dimensions are in order to select the correct French word.

Remember that most translations "grow." The translated version may take up anywhere from 125 to 150 percent of the space of an English version. Indonesian can take as much as 200 percent. Chinese, on the other hand, with a writing system in which nearly every character represents a complete word, will frequently be shorter than the English.

# Speechwriter's Newsletter

November 22, 1991

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## IDEA FILES: QUOTES FOR YOUR SPEECHES

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**Well done is  
better than  
well said.**  
—Benjamin  
Franklin .28

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### Art

The arts are a force that keeps violence and despair in check, that keeps hope alive.  
—Lynn Taylor-Corbett, choreographer .01

### News

News is what a chap who doesn't care much about anything wants to read.  
—Evelyn Waugh .02

### Generosity

Money giving is a very good criterion, in a way, of a person's mental health. Generous people are rarely mentally ill people.  
—Dr. Karl Menninger .03

### Sales

A salesman has got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory.  
—Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* .04

### Incumbents

The rhetoric on this floor and the House floor is so disgusting the American people ought to rise up and toss every incumbent out until we start doing our work.  
—Senator Jake Garn .05

### Patience

Once a man would spend a week waiting patiently if he missed a stage coach. Now he rages if he misses the first section of a revolving door.  
—Simeon Strunky .06

### Wrinkles

Wrinkles merely indicate where smiles have been.  
—Mark Twain .07

### Life

This life is a test—it is only a test. If it had been an actual life, you would have received further instructions on where to go and what to do.  
—unknown .08

### Punishment

When the anger of the gods is incurred, wealth or power only bring more devastating punishment.  
—Euripides .09

### Inferiority

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.  
—Eleanor Roosevelt .10

### Wall Street

Wall Street is a place where the day begins with good buys.  
—*Salomon Today* .11

### Change

If a company has had a long history of success with certain assumptions about itself and the environment, it is unlikely to want to challenge or reexamine those assumptions. Such assumptions now operate as filters that make it difficult for key managers to understand alternative strategies for survival and renewal.  
—Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* .12

### Greatness

Greatness, after all, in spite of its name, appears to be not so much a certain size as a certain quality in human lives. It may be present in lives whose range is very small.  
—Phillips Brooks .13

# Speechwriter's Newsletter

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## QUOTES FOR YOUR SPEECHES

*Continued from previous page*

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**Accomplishing  
the  
impossible  
means only  
that the boss  
will add it to  
your regular  
duties.**

**—Doug  
Larson** .29

### Peace

Perhaps the single most important point to be made today is that the only real peace dividend is, quite simply, peace.

—Margaret Thatcher .14

### Conscience

The disease of an evil conscience is beyond the practice of all physicians of all countries in the world.

—William Gladstone .15

### Land

We love this earth as a newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. So, if we sell you our land, love it as we have loved it. Care for it as we have cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you receive it. Preserve the land for all children and love it.

—Chief Seattle of the Dwamish tribe of the Pacific Northwest, 1852 .16

### Illusion

What if everything is an illusion and nothing exists? In that case, I definitely overpaid for my carpet.

—Woody Allen .17

### Success

I couldn't wait for success—so I went ahead without it.

—Jonathan Winters .18

### Yesterday

Yesterday's gone on down the river, and you can't get it back.

—Larry McMurtry .19

### Mistakes

We're all proud of our little mistakes. It gives us the feeling we don't make any big ones.

—Andy Rooney .20

### Dream

All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible.

—T.E. Lawrence .21

### Human resources

This is the lesson of the new paradigm: If people are your greatest resource and creativity is the key to success, then business results cannot be divorced from personal fulfillment.

—Frank Rose .22

### Character

You can easily judge the character of others by how they treat those who can do nothing for them or to them.

—Malcolm Forbes .23

### Sports

Sports is the only place we have left where we can start even.

—Bear Bryant .24

### Command

Men are of no importance. What counts is who commands.

—Charles De Gaulle .25

### Fortune

The tallest trees are most in the power of the winds, and ambitious men of the blasts of fortune.

—William Penn .26

### Optimism

Optimism is the content of small men in high places.

—F. Scott Fitzgerald .27

*We invite readers to send in their favorite quotes, anecdotes, humor, and statistics for speeches.*

## Say it ain't so: Bush departs from text—the less-than-kind campaign begins

*Personal attacks by Senate Democrats leave Bush 'stuttering mad'—and willing to stray from his speechwriters' prepared texts*

**Speeches, by George:** One sure sign that an election is around the corner: George Bush is ad-libbing his speeches. In four political speeches in early November, the president and his writing team have come up with the formula for next year's campaign. The surprise is the president's role in the process.

Speaking at fundraisers in Houston and Dallas, Mr. Bush strayed from his prepared text (on cue cards, no teleprompters) to launch into personal assaults against Senate Majority Leader George J. Mitchell and Massachusetts Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. Before the Dallas event, Mr. Bush had seen Sen. Mitchell on TV, criticizing the president as being insensitive to the needs of average Americans. "He sees these as personal attacks," says a White House speechwriter, "and it really gets under his skin and gets him stuttering mad in front of a microphone."

A week later, in a political spin through Missouri, Mr. Bush's ad-libs had been refined to a less kind, less gentle stump speech that includes Mitchell, Kennedy and Congressional liberals en toto. The new speech is the handiwork of Curt Smith, who along with Mary Kate Grant crafts the White House political rhetoric. Smith wrote the speech Mr. Bush used at a fundraiser for Missouri Sen. Kit Bond. The Kansas City speech—a foreign policy discussion at the Future Farmers of America's national convention—was authored by Joe Duggan.

**Meanwhile, back at the ranch:** No word yet from the speechwriters as to when Bush '92 formally swings into action. "Nobody has said a peep here about the campaign as far as organization or even the legal question of where speechwriters can work," says a White House scribe.

**Best bet:** The two political writers (Mary Kate Grant and Curt Smith) move over to Bush '92, while Joe Duggan and Dan McGroarty stay at 1600 Pennsylvania. Duggan, who was brought over from the State Department, handles both foreign and domestic policy. McGroarty, deputy director to chief speechwriter Tony Snow, doubles on

foreign policy and editing (Communications Director David Demarest also wields a blue pencil, we're told). One sign things are moving: White House Chief of Staff John Sununu called in the writers for a talk on Nov. 18, presumably to discuss the recent political speeches and map out strategy for the coming weeks.

**Where's the Justice?:** What was different about William P. Barr's opening statement before the Senate Judiciary Committee? The Attorney General-designate's script was not the product of Justice Department speechwriters but, rather, the agency's Office of Policy Development.

Barr's speech played the political straight and narrow, detaching him from the BCCI scandal and his controversial predecessor, Dick Thornburgh. "He didn't give a speech as much as an explanation of what he's been doing for a long time," says Justice speechwriter Chris Collins, who moved over to Justice from the National Conservative Foundation a couple of months ago. "Barr is so up to speed on his subjects that he probably didn't need much coaching."

### What We've Heard:

- That Charles Sweeney, a speechwriter over at the Democratic National Committee, came up with the slogan, "George Bush went to Rome and all I got was this lousy recession." The slogan was printed on t-shirts, 10,000 of which were sold by the DNC at \$10 a pop.
- That Bruce Reed, formerly with the Washington-based Progressive Policy Institute, has signed up as policy director for Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton's presidential campaign. Reed is the author of "The New Covenant," the Clinton speech that insiders rate as the best speech in the pre-Mario Cuomo stage of the campaign.
- That Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin's editorial in *The Washington Post* lambasting Cuomo for playing Hamlet with the Democratic Party was written by the senator himself. Harkin, who works off notes, will not hire a full-time speechwriter until early next year.

# LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

*(Continued from previous page)*

- That Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey is actively recruiting a speechwriter. The early frontrunner is Paul Begala, one of the masterminds behind the winning Wofford campaign in Pennsylvania.
- That no new writers are welcome in the campaigns of Virginia Gov. L. Douglas Wilder or former California Gov. Jerry Brown. Seems both have a serious Svengali factor: Wilder's speeches are crafted by Virginia Democratic Chairman Paul Goldman, Brown's by former Jimmy Carter pollster Pat Caddell. Brown and Caddell deny any orchestration, but insiders point out that Caddell was "in the shoot" at Brown's announcement speech.
- That word of a speechwriting opening at the Education Department was news to education officials. Lamar Alexander, the new secretary, does not use speechwriters and prefers to work off cards and notes. How does that compare to other agencies? HUD Secretary Jack Kemp has two full-time writers, Energy Secretary James Watkins has four, and HHS Secretary Louis Sullivan employs six.
- That Energy is looking to add another writer to its stable, but no time soon. Seems the extra hire is caught up in red tape. Congress is presently on its third continuing resolution for funding federal agencies, so the DOE budget picture is cloudy.
- That Bush writers are trying to get the president to lose his caribou fetish. In 1988, then-candidate Bush used the animal to defend his pro-drilling stance on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, saying Alaskan caribou were "rubbing up" against the oil pipeline. Recently, in Houston, Mr. Bush revisited the caribou. This time they were "leaning against the pipeline making love all day."
- This reminded Bushies of another speech in 1988 when the prez-to-be strayed from his text and said about Ronald Reagan: "We have sex."

**You say Tomato:** "When it comes to ethics, the Democratic Party has selective moral outrage. They are unconvinced that John Kennedy might have schemed with Chicago and Texas politicians to steal the 1960 Presidential election. They do not ask how Lyndon Johnson, who was born into poverty and spent a career in public service, managed to retire as a multimillionaire. But when the topic turns to Republicans in general and Ronald Reagan in particular, suddenly those Democrats make Cotton Mather look like Hugh Hefner."

—Rep. Bob Livingston (R-La.)

On the House floor, November 4, 1991

**Isay Tomato:** "George Bush can spend all the time he wants at \$1,000-a-plate fundraisers, at 6th Avenue and 53rd Street, or viewing America at 30,000 feet through those oval windows on Air Force One. But he does it too far removed from the lives and concerns of average Americans. And the hallmarks of his presidency will be the frequent flyer coupon and the capital gains tax cut, not a growing economy or jobs for Americans."

—Rep. Larry Smith (D-Fla.)

On the House floor, November 13, 1991

**Let's Call the Whole Thing Off:** "The plain truth is that a Republican president cannot implement domestic policy because a Democratic Congress will not let him. No wonder he prefers the foreign policy arena. And a Democratic Congress cannot implement policy because a Republican president will not let it. Result — paralysis and doubt. The Democrats yearn for a Democratic president next year and we Republicans yearn for a Republican Congress. The potential tragedy for the country is that we may both get our wish and thus preserve the status quo ante — a divided and paralyzed government."

—Rep. Bill Clinger (R-Penn.)

On the House floor, November 12, 1991

## Technical speeches ... computers ... military speechwriters ... ethical questions

The Chicago Speechwriters' Forum met in November to listen to Lew Smith, public affairs officer to General Norman Schwarzkopf during the Gulf War. Smith's duties for Schwarzkopf included scheduling press conferences and interviews with the general, and acting as liaison to the 1700 members of the media covering the war. He also stood a watch in Schwarzkopf's war room during the 100-hour ground war, and recalls being called upon by the general for his opinion there. Schwarzkopf was thinking about what to say at the press briefing, and he needed a zinger for a punchline. "How about if I say, 'Tomorrow morning, we'll be one hundred miles from Baghdad?'" he asked. Smith's life flashed before his eyes as he scrambled to think of an answer. He finally responded, "I don't know about the press, but the troops would love it." (For more about Smith's wartime experience, see *S/N*'s interview with him in the 8-30-91 issue) ... **When writing a speech on a technical subject**, how do you translate scientific language into everyday English? Rick Roose of Abbott Laboratories, a worldwide health care company, admits it can be difficult. "What I do, after talking to the scientist, is I go to that person's boss, or maybe their boss's boss, and say, 'From an administration point of view, can you let me know if I'm on the mark with this about what's really important?'" Another source on information: the marketing department. "They generally have some sort of scientific background, but they bridge both worlds, and they have to communicate both ways." ... **Fear of flying?** Some jokes about travelling via small airplanes from *The Laugh Connection* newsletter: "There was a luggage rack on the roof and a bug screen on the

front windshield. ... A sign at the entrance said, 'Please have exact change ready.'" ... They did not have movies. Instead, the pilot put on a puppet show and showed slides of his vacation." For a sample copy of *The Laugh Connection*, contact Bob Ross and Associates, 3643 Corral Canyon Rd., Bonita, California 91902, telephone 619-479-3331. ... **Military speechwriters** might find interesting the October 1991 issue of the U.S. Army's *Monthly Update*. The issue highlights speechwriting, with former Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan, a

how-to article by Colonel James McDonough (author of the books *Platoon Leader*, *The Defense of Hill 781*, and *The Limits of Glory*), and a survey on speechwriting instruction at three major U.S. universities. Says Captain Dave Stockwell, *Monthly Update*'s editor: "We get a steady stream of calls from the field, 'I've just been tasked to write a speech, what should I do?'" In the military, as in the corporate sector, speechwriters seem to mostly learn by doing. "It comes down to, whoever can do it, does it," says Stockwell. For a copy of *Monthly Update*, contact Stockwell at the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. 20310-1510, telephone 703-697-0050. ... **Doesn't**

### It happened to me...

*Maybe it wasn't the end of the world—but it seemed like it at the time.  
Speechwriters share stories of days when all their hard work came to nought.*

**Peter Delwiche** of Dairyland Power Cooperative once spent long hours preparing a slide presentation for an awards banquet to honor employees' years of service. The slides were arranged in reverse order on the slide carousel, from most years of service to least. But the nightmare arose when the master of ceremonies decided it would be more dramatic to go in the other direction. "All of a sudden, our slides were out of order. The woman running the projector tried to reverse them, but it couldn't be done." Lesson learned: When using slides, make sure the speaker understands that their order can't be changed at a moment's notice. ... "The worst thing that ever happened to me is so common I hesitate to mention it," says Promus Companies' Randy Baker. At a previous job with a PR firm, Baker worked with a client who held a yearly press conference to summarize the annual business results. Baker wrote the speech. "Well, one year the president got up to give the speech and it was just obvious that he'd never

looked at the document before. He usually was very good about looking over drafts ahead of time, but he'd been travelling and just hadn't had time. He stumbled over sentences, inverted clauses, everything. I wanted to hide under the table. I felt truly embarrassed—more for him than for me." ... **Eugene Ritchie**, now with KPMG Peat Marwick, once was an account executive for a large public relations agency. One of his clients was making a presentation at a major trucking conference, and Ritchie had written the speech and prepared the slides, planning to use a two-projector dissolve. One of his client's competitors also brought slides, and when their projector died, Ritchie's client generously agreed to let them borrow one of his. "But it threw ours completely out of whack when our client gave his presentation. The slides didn't match what he was saying. We had to shut down the slides and do the speech without them." In the client's words, "I guess we made the ultimate sacrifice."

## STRICTLY SPEAKING

everyone use a computer these days? Says Bill Lamneck, a speechwriter for Nationwide Insurance: "We have some speechwriters who work in longhand, and I write on a manual typewriter." Nationwide's speechwriters all have terminals for E-Mail and other functions, but many are not attuned to composing on computer. "I find my manual typewriter therapeutic," says Lamneck. "I can pound away all my frustrations on it." ... "The paradox of the public relations job market today is that there is still lots of work, but not many jobs," says Elaine Goldman of the executive search firm The Goldman Group. "The one growing job sector seems to be freelancing, and many individuals are doing surprisingly well even though they never intended to become entrepreneurs." The Goldman Group

is in New York City, telephone number 212-685-9311. ... **Dr. Joseph Hankin**, president of Westchester Community College, sends a newspaper article on speechwriting by speechwriter John B. Donovan. One piece of advice: "Finally, check through your text for minor glitches, such as pages being out of sequence. Otherwise, you might find yourself in the predicament of an absent-minded U.S. Senator, who mounted the podium not only with his speech but with a press release intended to be distributed afterward. He had the press release on top, and with a booming voice, he started off, 'For immediate release! Washington, D.C.!' and so on, 'til about three sentences later his brain registered what he was doing." Oops. ... A speech delivered by the Coastal Corporation's Executive VP

Dennis Juren poses an ethical dilemma for an audience of MBA/Law students at Texas A&M University: What to do when a visiting foreign minister whose government can make or break your business venture in his country demands you find him a "date" for the evening. In fact, says speechwriter Bill Shaffer, the speaker worked for a company where that very scenario came to life. The foreign minister got his date, but a lawsuit many years later revealed the impropriety. Shaffer says the speaker wanted to use the anecdote to draw lessons about "what kinds of things can happen in the global marketplace."

**Job openings for speechwriters at your corporation? Send the listing to S/N. We'll run it free of charge.**

## COMING UP

**Dec. 4-6:** National Association of Government Communicators annual conference. Location: Arlington, Virginia. Theme: "Looking Through the Kaleidoscope: The Many Facets of Communications." Contact Debbi Trocchi at 703-519-3902. ... **Dec. 10:**

Conference Board Workshop: "Managing Corporate Communications During Turbulent Times." Location: Chicago. For information, call 212-339-0290. ... **May 24-27, 1992:** International Association of Business Communicators annual conference.

Location: San Francisco. For information, call 1-800-PRO-IABC.

### Calling all speechwriters

S/N would like to see copies of your speeches. Won't you please send or fax us your most recent speech today?

## IN CONCLUSION...

### Not just another pretty face

"If there is a plastic surgeon who claims to be responsible for this face, then New York State will decertify him immediately."

—Mario Cuomo, debunking rumors of plastic surgery

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# Speechwriter's Newsletter

S/N

November 22, 1991 No. 619

THE WEEKLY VOICE OF THE SILENT PROFESSION

## LETTERS

**Glynn Young, Monsanto Company, St. Louis, Illinois:** This is probably best left alone, but if you're open to a response to Alan Perlman's letter (*S/N* 11-8), I have one. First let it be said that Alan and I have a mutual admiration society going, for I have the greatest respect for him as a speechwriter, even if he is WAY WAY OFF BASE on this one.

Back in July, *S/N* asked for reader reactions to Senator Tom Harkin's use of an epithet in his political speeches. *S/N* wasn't running a "yea or nay" opinion poll, but instead asked for readers' reactions. Reader Joe Beckham provided his reaction to the question, which included a statement of his religious beliefs—and another reader objected to it, saying that *S/N* should have used "judicious editing" so as not to offend some of its readers.

My defense of Beckham's letter was based on the idea that freedom of speech is not limited to the politically correct. I was defending his freedom of speech, and indirectly *S/N*'s freedom to publish.

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The results of the survey are far from scientific. As Steve Hallmark noted, a salary of \$18,000 for a speechwriter "is hardly enough to pay for subscribing to all the publications you need."

The average speechwriter's workload came to 25 speeches per year. One respondent reported writing 270 speeches, though, as pointed out by some, it's unclear whether that reflects the work of a single person or a department. On the other extreme, one conference-goer reported writing a mere two speeches per year.

More results: Most speechwriters reported working in Corporate Communications departments, followed closely by Public Relations, Investor Relations, and Internal Communications. Twenty-eight said they have the somewhat unusual job title of "Speechwriter."

Few reported writing speeches exclusively. On average, speechwriters at the conference spend about 60 percent of their time on speeches. Almost twice as many of the speeches they do write are for external audiences: 62 percent, as opposed to 38 percent composed for internal publics.

Further information on the survey will be reported in future issues of *S/N*.

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## SPEAKING OUT

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### They're everywhere! Speechwriters can pop up all over the place

The interesting thing about my job as editor of this newsletter is how often it creeps up and grabs me from behind when I least expect it. Like reading a good Stephen King novel, it can be a disconcerting feeling, but I enjoy it.

For example, *S/N* readers may recall that last year I mentioned (repeatedly) an episode of CBS-TV's *Murphy Brown* that used a presidential speechwriter as a character. I remember vividly the feeling of sitting at home, relaxed, watching one of my favorite TV shows, *S/N*'s offices a thousand miles away in my mind, when a guest star walks into Murphy's apartment and introduces himself as a White House speechwriter. WHAM! All of a sudden I'm yanked from my leisure mode and flung back to work. My head is spinning the way it does when the alarm clock rings too loudly

and you leap from bed too quickly. The episode is ruined—all I can think about is how to work the guest character into the newsletter somehow.

Ringling alarm clocks bring to mind another example. A week ago the clock radio woke me up at 6:40 to hear National Public Radio's Bob Edwards interview a man who has compiled an audio collection of the great speeches of the 20th century. One minute I'm in dreamland—never mind what I'm dreaming—and the next I'm wondering how I can get in touch with this guy to interview him for *S/N*.

I've got one more example. I was channel surfing (flipping randomly through TV stations with my remote control) a few nights ago, and paused to rest on CNN during a segment of the Larry King show. One of King's interview subjects was James Miller, who during the Reagan administration was director of the Office of Management and Budget. It so happens that I know the person who used to write his

speeches, Hal Gordon, who's now a freelancer and an *S/N* subscriber. I won't try to tell you I sat glued to the screen for the rest of the hour, but it did make watching a few minutes of the show a little more interesting.

People in the petroleum industry, or insurance, or utilities, must have the experience of seeing their industry or profession depicted in the media—sometimes accurately, frequently not. Imagine how a police officer feels after watching a rerun of *T.J. Hooker*. So I'm not reaching toward any profoundly original conclusions here. But incidents like these remind us that we're not working in an isolated, insulated void. In my position, it's kind of fun to realize that speeches are everywhere and speechwriters can pop up unexpectedly. We sometimes take for granted that speechwriting is an invisible, silent profession. Exceptions that prove (i.e., test) that rule are valuable—and make life more fun.

—JC

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## NEWS TO USE

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### Translation tips for speechwriters

As a follow-up to *S/N*'s front-page story on translating speeches into foreign languages, Berlitz Translation Service has made available some general guidelines to writers working on projects for translation:

Scan the copy for ambiguous word clusters of the type "modifier + noun + noun (i.e. "plastic widgets and fasteners"). These are commonplace in English, but for languages like Spanish and French, where modifiers must follow their nouns, it is critical that the translator know whether "plastic" refers both to the widgets and the fasteners, or only to the widgets. ...A good way to check is to reverse the nouns: If "plastic fasteners and widgets" is correct in the context, let the translator know that both items are plastic by penciling in "(plastic)" before "fasteners" in the original phrase.

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If you send photo captions for translation, include the photo itself. Without seeing the visual, a translator does not know whether "widget assembly" means "widget unit" or "widget being assembled." In Spanish, for example, "assembly" would be translated as "conjunto" in the first case, but "ensamblaje" in the second. You might wish to send Polaroid pictures, drawings or sketches. ...An innocent word like "valve" has different translations in most foreign languages, depending on its appearance, purpose or even size. In French, for example, "soupape," "clapet," "vanne," and "robinet" are all equivalent to the English "valve." A translator must know what the device looks like and what its function and relative dimensions are in order to select the correct French word.

Remember that most translations "grow." The translated version may take up anywhere from 125 to 150 percent of the space of an English version. Indonesian can take as much as 200 percent. Chinese, on the other hand, with a writing system in which nearly every character represents a complete word, will frequently be shorter than the English.

# Speechwriter's Newsletter

November 22, 1991

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## IDEA FILES: QUOTES FOR YOUR SPEECHES

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**Well done is  
better than  
well said.  
—Benjamin  
Franklin** .28

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### Art

The arts are a force that keeps violence and despair in check, that keeps hope alive.  
—Lynn Taylor-Corbett, choreographer .01

### News

News is what a chap who doesn't care much about anything wants to read.  
—Evelyn Waugh .02

### Generosity

Money giving is a very good criterion, in a way, of a person's mental health. Generous people are rarely mentally ill people.  
—Dr. Karl Menninger .03

### Sales

A salesman has got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory.  
—Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* .04

### Incumbents

The rhetoric on this floor and the House floor is so disgusting the American people ought to rise up and toss every incumbent out until we start doing our work.  
—Senator Jake Garn .05

### Patience

Once a man would spend a week waiting patiently if he missed a stage coach. Now he rages if he misses the first section of a revolving door.  
—Simeon Strunky .06

### Wrinkles

Wrinkles merely indicate where smiles have been.  
—Mark Twain .07

### Life

This life is a test—it is only a test. If it had been an actual life, you would have received further instructions on where to go and what to do.  
—unknown .08

### Punishment

When the anger of the gods is incurred, wealth or power only bring more devastating punishment.  
—Euripides .09

### Inferiority

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.  
—Eleanor Roosevelt .10

### Wall Street

Wall Street is a place where the day begins with good buys.  
—*Salomon Today* .11

### Change

If a company has had a long history of success with certain assumptions about itself and the environment, it is unlikely to want to challenge or reexamine those assumptions. Such assumptions now operate as filters that make it difficult for key managers to understand alternative strategies for survival and renewal.  
—Edgar Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* .12

### Greatness

Greatness, after all, in spite of its name, appears to be not so much a certain size as a certain quality in human lives. It may be present in lives whose range is very small.  
—Phillips Brooks .13

# Speechwriter's Newsletter

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## QUOTES FOR YOUR SPEECHES

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*Continued from previous page*

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**Accomplishing  
the  
impossible  
means only  
that the boss  
will add it to  
your regular  
duties.**  
—Doug  
Larson .29

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### Peace

Perhaps the single most important point to be made today is that the only real peace dividend is, quite simply, peace.  
—Margaret Thatcher .14

### Conscience

The disease of an evil conscience is beyond the practice of all physicians of all countries in the world.  
—William Gladstone .15

### Land

We love this earth as a newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. So, if we sell you our land, love it as we have loved it. Care for it as we have cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you receive it. Preserve the land for all children and love it.  
—Chief Seattle of the Dwamish tribe of the Pacific Northwest, 1852 .16

### Illusion

What if everything is an illusion and nothing exists? In that case, I definitely overpaid for my carpet.  
—Woody Allen .17

### Success

I couldn't wait for success—so I went ahead without it.  
—Jonathan Winters .18

### Yesterday

Yesterday's gone on down the river, and you can't get it back.  
—Larry McMurtry .19

### Mistakes

We're all proud of our little mistakes. It gives us the feeling we don't make any big ones.  
—Andy Rooney .20

### Dream

All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dreams with open eyes, to make it possible.  
—T.E. Lawrence .21

### Human resources

This is the lesson of the new paradigm: If people are your greatest resource and creativity is the key to success, then business results cannot be divorced from personal fulfillment.  
—Frank Rose .22

### Character

You can easily judge the character of others by how they treat those who can do nothing for them or to them.  
—Malcolm Forbes .23

### Sports

Sports is the only place we have left where we can start even.  
—Bear Bryant .24

### Command

Men are of no importance. What counts is who commands.  
—Charles De Gaulle .25

### Fortune

The tallest trees are most in the power of the winds, and ambitious men of the blasts of fortune.  
—William Penn .26

### Optimism

Optimism is the content of small men in high places.  
—F. Scott Fitzgerald .27

*We invite readers to send in their favorite quotes, anecdotes, humor, and statistics for speeches.*

## Say it ain't so: Bush departs from text—the less-than-kind campaign begins

*Personal attacks by Senate Democrats leave Bush 'stuttering mad'—and willing to stray from his speechwriters' prepared texts*

**Speeches, by George:** One sure sign that an election is around the corner: George Bush is ad-libbing his speeches. In four political speeches in early November, the president and his writing team have come up with the formula for next year's campaign. The surprise is the president's role in the process.

Speaking at fundraisers in Houston and Dallas, Mr. Bush strayed from his prepared text (on cue cards, no teleprompters) to launch into personal assaults against Senate Majority Leader George J. Mitchell and Massachusetts Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. Before the Dallas event, Mr. Bush had seen Sen. Mitchell on TV, criticizing the president as being insensitive to the needs of average Americans. "He sees these as personal attacks," says a White House speechwriter, "and it really gets under his skin and gets him stuttering mad in front of a microphone."

A week later, in a political spin through Missouri, Mr. Bush's ad-libs had been refined to a less kind, less gentle stump speech that includes Mitchell, Kennedy and Congressional liberals en toto. The new speech is the handiwork of Curt Smith, who along with Mary Kate Grant crafts the White House political rhetoric. Smith wrote the speech Mr. Bush used at a fundraiser for Missouri Sen. Kit Bond. The Kansas City speech—a foreign policy discussion at the Future Farmers of America's national convention—was authored by Joe Duggan.

**Meanwhile, back at the ranch:** No word yet from the speechwriters as to when Bush '92 formally swings into action. "Nobody has said a peep here about the campaign as far as organization or even the legal question of where speechwriters can work," says a White House scribe.

**Best bet:** The two political writers (Mary Kate Grant and Curt Smith) move over to Bush '92, while Joe Duggan and Dan McGroarty stay at 1600 Pennsylvania. Duggan, who was brought over from the State Department, handles both foreign and domestic policy. McGroarty, deputy director to chief speechwriter Tony Snow, doubles on

foreign policy and editing (Communications Director David Demarest also wields a blue pencil, we're told). One sign things are moving: White House Chief of Staff John Sununu called in the writers for a talk on Nov. 18, presumably to discuss the recent political speeches and map out strategy for the coming weeks.

**Where's the Justice?:** What was different about William P. Barr's opening statement before the Senate Judiciary Committee? The Attorney General-designate's script was not the product of Justice Department speechwriters but, rather, the agency's Office of Policy Development.

Barr's speech played the political straight and narrow, detaching him from the BCCI scandal and his controversial predecessor, Dick Thornburgh. "He didn't give a speech as much as an explanation of what he's been doing for a long time," says Justice speechwriter Chris Collins, who moved over to Justice from the National Conservative Foundation a couple of months ago. "Barr is so up to speed on his subjects that he probably didn't need much coaching."

### What We've Heard:

- That Charles Sweeney, a speechwriter over at the Democratic National Committee, came up with the slogan, "George Bush went to Rome and all I got was this lousy recession." The slogan was printed on t-shirts, 10,000 of which were sold by the DNC at \$10 a pop.
- That Bruce Reed, formerly with the Washington-based Progressive Policy Institute, has signed up as policy director for Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton's presidential campaign. Reed is the author of "The New Covenant," the Clinton speech that insiders rate as the best speech in the pre-Mario Cuomo stage of the campaign.
- That Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin's editorial in *The Washington Post* lambasting Cuomo for playing Hamlet with the Democratic Party was written by the senator himself. Harkin, who works off notes, will not hire a full-time speechwriter until early next year.

# LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

(Continued from previous page)

- That Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey is actively recruiting a speechwriter. The early frontrunner is Paul Begala, one of the masterminds behind the winning Wofford campaign in Pennsylvania.
- That no new writers are welcome in the campaigns of Virginia Gov. L. Douglas Wilder or former California Gov. Jerry Brown. Seems both have a serious Svengali factor: Wilder's speeches are crafted by Virginia Democratic Chairman Paul Goldman, Brown's by former Jimmy Carter pollster Pat Caddell. Brown and Caddell deny any orchestration, but insiders point out that Caddell was "in the shoot" at Brown's announcement speech.
- That word of a speechwriting opening at the Education Department was news to education officials. Lamar Alexander, the new secretary, does not use speechwriters and prefers to work off cards and notes. How does that compare to other agencies? HUD Secretary Jack Kemp has two full-time writers, Energy Secretary James Watkins has four, and HHS Secretary Louis Sullivan employs six.
- That Energy is looking to add another writer to its stable, but no time soon. Seems the extra hire is caught up in red tape. Congress is presently on its third continuing resolution for funding federal agencies, so the DOE budget picture is cloudy.
- That Bush writers are trying to get the president to lose his caribou fetish. In 1988, then-candidate Bush used the animal to defend his pro-drilling stance on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, saying Alaskan caribou were "rubbing up" against the oil pipeline. Recently, in Houston, Mr. Bush revisited the caribou. This time they were "leaning against the pipeline making love all day."
- This reminded Bushies of another speech in 1988 when the prez-to-be strayed from his text and said about Ronald Reagan: "We have sex."

**You say Tomato:** "When it comes to ethics, the Democratic Party has selective moral outrage. They are unconvinced that John Kennedy might have schemed with Chicago and Texas politicians to steal the 1960 Presidential election. They do not ask how Lyndon Johnson, who was born into poverty and spent a career in public service, managed to retire as a multimillionaire. But when the topic turns to Republicans in general and Ronald Reagan in particular, suddenly those Democrats make Cotton Mather look like Hugh Hefner."

—Rep. Bob Livingston (R-La.)

On the House floor, November 4, 1991

**I say Tomato:** "George Bush can spend all the time he wants at \$1,000-a-plate fundraisers, at 6th Avenue and 53rd Street, or viewing America at 30,000 feet through those oval windows on Air Force One. But he does it too far removed from the lives and concerns of average Americans. And the hallmarks of his presidency will be the frequent flyer coupon and the capital gains tax cut, not a growing economy or jobs for Americans."

—Rep. Larry Smith (D-Fla.)

On the House floor, November 13, 1991

**Let's Call the Whole Thing Off:** "The plain truth is that a Republican president cannot implement domestic policy because a Democratic Congress will not let him. No wonder he prefers the foreign policy arena. And a Democratic Congress cannot implement policy because a Republican president will not let it. Result — paralysis and doubt. The Democrats yearn for a Democratic president next year and we Republicans yearn for a Republican Congress. The potential tragedy for the country is that we may both get our wish and thus preserve the status quo ante — a divided and paralyzed government."

—Rep. Bill Clinger (R-Penn.)

On the House floor, November 12, 1991

## Technical speeches ... computers ... military speechwriters ... ethical questions

The Chicago Speechwriters' Forum met in November to listen to Lew Smith, public affairs officer to General Norman Schwarzkopf during the Gulf War. Smith's duties for Schwarzkopf included scheduling press conferences and interviews with the general, and acting as liaison to the 1700 members of the media covering the war. He also stood a watch in Schwarzkopf's war room during the 100-hour ground war, and recalls being called upon by the general for his opinion there. Schwarzkopf was thinking about what to say at the press briefing, and he needed a zinger for a punchline. "How about if I say, 'Tomorrow morning, we'll be one hundred miles from Baghdad?'" he asked. Smith's life flashed before his eyes as he scrambled to think of an answer. He finally responded, "I don't know about the press, but the troops would love it." (For more about Smith's wartime experience, see *S/N*'s interview with him in the 8-30-91 issue) ... **When writing a speech on a technical subject**, how do you translate scientific language into everyday English? Rick Roose of Abbott Laboratories, a worldwide health care company, admits it can be difficult. "What I do, after talking to the scientist, is I go to that person's boss, or maybe their boss's boss, and say, 'From an administration point of view, can you let me know if I'm on the mark with this about what's really important?'" Another source on information: the marketing department. "They generally have some sort of scientific background, but they bridge both worlds, and they have to communicate both ways." ... **Fear of flying?** Some jokes about travelling via small airplanes from *The Laugh Connection* newsletter: "There was a luggage rack on the roof and a bug screen on the

front windshield. ... A sign at the entrance said, 'Please have exact change ready.'" ... They did not have movies. Instead, the pilot put on a puppet show and showed slides of his vacation." For a sample copy of *The Laugh Connection*, contact Bob Ross and Associates, 3643 Corral Canyon Rd., Bonita, California 91902, telephone 619-479-3331. ... **Military speechwriters** might find interesting the October 1991 issue of the U.S. Army's *Monthly Update*. The issue highlights speechwriting, with former Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan, a

how-to article by Colonel James McDonough (author of the books *Platoon Leader*, *The Defense of Hill 781*, and *The Limits of Glory*), and a survey on speechwriting instruction at three major U.S. universities. Says Captain Dave Stockwell, *Monthly Update*'s editor: "We get a steady stream of calls from the field, 'I've just been tasked to write a speech, what should I do?'" In the military, as in the corporate sector, speechwriters seem to mostly learn by doing. "It comes down to, whoever can do it, does it," says Stockwell. For a copy of *Monthly Update*, contact Stockwell at the Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. 20310-1510, telephone 703-697-0050. ... **Doesn't**

### It happened to me...

*Maybe it wasn't the end of the world—but it seemed like it at the time. Speechwriters share stories of days when all their hard work came to nought.*

**Peter Delwiche** of Dairyland Power Cooperative once spent long hours preparing a slide presentation for an awards banquet to honor employees' years of service. The slides were arranged in reverse order on the slide carousel, from most years of service to least. But the nightmare arose when the master of ceremonies decided it would be more dramatic to go in the other direction. "All of a sudden, our slides were out of order. The woman running the projector tried to reverse them, but it couldn't be done." Lesson learned: When using slides, make sure the speaker understands that their order can't be changed at a moment's notice. ... "The worst thing that ever happened to me is so common I hesitate to mention it," says Promus Companies' Randy Baker. At a previous job with a PR firm, Baker worked with a client who held a yearly press conference to summarize the annual business results. Baker wrote the speech. "Well, one year the president got up to give the speech and it was just obvious that he'd never

looked at the document before. He usually was very good about looking over drafts ahead of time, but he'd been travelling and just hadn't had time. He stumbled over sentences, inverted clauses, everything. I wanted to hide under the table. I felt truly embarrassed—more for him than for me." ... **Eugene Ritchie**, now with KPMG Peat Marwick, once was an account executive for a large public relations agency. One of his clients was making a presentation at a major trucking conference, and Ritchie had written the speech and prepared the slides, planning to use a two-projector dissolve. One of his client's competitors also brought slides, and when their projector died, Ritchie's client generously agreed to let them borrow one of his. "But it threw ours completely out of whack when our client gave his presentation. The slides didn't match what he was saying. We had to shut down the slides and do the speech without them." In the client's words, "I guess we made the ultimate sacrifice."

## STRICTLY SPEAKING

everyone use a computer these days? Says Bill Lamneck, a speechwriter for Nationwide Insurance: "We have some speechwriters who work in longhand, and I write on a manual typewriter." Nationwide's speechwriters all have terminals for E-Mail and other functions, but many are not attuned to composing on computer. "I find my manual typewriter therapeutic," says Lamneck. "I can pound away all my frustrations on it." ... "The paradox of the public relations job market today is that there is still lots of work, but not many jobs," says Elaine Goldman of the executive search firm The Goldman Group. "The one growing job sector seems to be freelancing, and many individuals are doing surprisingly well even though they never intended to become entrepreneurs." The Goldman Group

is in New York City, telephone number 212-685-9311. ... **Dr. Joseph Hankin**, president of Westchester Community College, sends a newspaper article on speechwriting by speechwriter John B. Donovan. One piece of advice: "Finally, check through your text for minor glitches, such as pages being out of sequence. Otherwise, you might find yourself in the predicament of an absent-minded U.S. Senator, who mounted the podium not only with his speech but with a press release intended to be distributed afterward. He had the press release on top, and with a booming voice, he started off, 'For immediate release! Washington, D.C.!' and so on, 'til about three sentences later his brain registered what he was doing." Oops. ... **A speech delivered** by the Coastal Corporation's Executive VP

Dennis Juren poses an ethical dilemma for an audience of MBA/Law students at Texas A&M University: What to do when a visiting foreign minister whose government can make or break your business venture in his country demands you find him a "date" for the evening. In fact, says speechwriter Bill Shaffer, the speaker worked for a company where that very scenario came to life. The foreign minister got his date, but a lawsuit many years later revealed the impropriety. Shaffer says the speaker wanted to use the anecdote to draw lessons about "what kinds of things can happen in the global marketplace."

**Job openings for speechwriters at your corporation? Send the listing to S/N. We'll run it free of charge.**

## COMING UP

**Dec. 4-6:** National Association of Government Communicators annual conference. Location: Arlington, Virginia. Theme: "Looking Through the Kaleidoscope: The Many Facets of Communications." Contact Debbi Trocchi at 703-519-3902. ... **Dec. 10:**

Conference Board Workshop: "Managing Corporate Communications During Turbulent Times." Location: Chicago. For information, call 212-339-0290. ... **May 24-27, 1992:** International Association of Business Communicators annual conference.

Location: San Francisco. For information, call 1-800-PRO-IABC.

### Calling all speechwriters

S/N would like to see copies of your speeches. Won't you please send or fax us your most recent speech today?

## IN CONCLUSION...

Not just another pretty face

"If there is a plastic surgeon who claims to be responsible for this face, then New York State will decertify him immediately."

—Mario Cuomo, debunking rumors of plastic surgery

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# Speechwriter's Newsletter

S/N

November 29, 1991 No. 620

THE WEEKLY VOICE OF THE SILENT PROFESSION

## LETTERS

**J. Lee Carrier, South Central Bell, Birmingham, Alabama:** In reference to Jerry Brown's speech in Philadelphia [discussed in *S/N*'s 11-8 issue]: How the hell do you footnote a speech? Is the speaker supposed to stop and say, "Footnote number seven reads ..."? Footnotes in a speech are a joke. I often give my speaker background material for a Q&A session that expands on material in the speech, but nothing goes into the speech that would require the speaker to read a footnote.

A speech is an oration, not a college thesis. If you steal an idea or quote, you have to tell the audience and a written footnote does not accomplish that purpose in a verbal delivery.

Politicians employ "professional" speechwriters for the same reason CEOs do—they don't have the time to prepare the talks themselves, and, sometimes, they don't have the talent. When someone pays us to prepare a talk, we're not only getting paid for the brilliant words and great research, we're also getting paid to keep the speaker's behind out of trouble. The fault lies entirely with the speechwriter. The words are marvelous and Jerry Brown cannot be faulted for wanting to use them. He should not have to ask his speechwriter if every line was stolen and he should not have to wade through footnotes to see if there is something in the speech that's going to get him into trouble.

There's an old axiom in speech-writing that the audience never has a chance to reread a sentence. They also never have the chance to read a footnote.

## When less is more: Writing the 'mini-speech'

*Not all speeches are created equal. A three-minute speech may be more difficult to write than a 20-minute model. Here are some tips.*

Everyone knows the saying: "I'm sorry this letter is so long; I didn't have time to write a shorter one." When it comes to speeches, the shorter ones can be the most time-consuming. Press statements, welcomes, introductions—speechwriters are called upon to create these "mini-speeches" almost as often as they write full-length, 20-minute works.

Speeches lasting only two, three, or five minutes have their own rules. Getting to the point is crucial. Says Steve Palkovitz, a speechwriter for the FBI: "In a 20-minute speech, you can ramble around, there's a little more leeway. [With a shorter speech] you've got to hit the nail on the head right away." A shorter speech requires less redundancy; the speechwriter doesn't need to repeat and reinforce key ideas three times. "You just sort of blast it out."

For some, a shorter speech is an opportunity to get away with a little more style. Dennis Whalen, of the Ohio State Bar Association, looks for a visual image that will "crystallize" a situation. "The best short speeches I've heard, or written, are those that find one image, or one word picture, or an anecdote." In remarks for a ceremony swearing in a group of new lawyers, for example, Whalen's speaker cautions his audience that "We should never forget that the true measure of our character and our professionalism isn't how we perform when the bright lights are on and thousands are watching—but how we perform alone at the end of the day, when no one else will ever know."

The short speech may have more to do with motivation than information. When welcoming an audience to a conference, for example, the goal is not just to tell people why a particular event is important, but to get the audience excited about the occasion. Says Billy Dugger, of the Mississippi Power Company, "We want to tell them how we hope they'll feel, think and act when they leave." Similarly, the goal may be to congratulate a group—employees returning from duty in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm—or to persuade, as when the CEO opens the annual United Way banquet. In all these cases, information is less important than mood.

But for a statement to the press, information is the key component. "There has to be enough meat to generate questions," says Steve Drake of the American Soybean Association. How do you write a statement that will do that? Put on your "journalist's cap," advises Drake, and ask why the event is newsworthy. "Make sure you know what the positioning is." If you're introducing a new product, be sure you know what segment of the market it's aimed at. If you're announcing a corporate action, how does the company want it to be perceived?

Humor may or may not be an important element of the short speech. More crucial is setting the tone of the event, establishing the mood. And the prime consideration for that is the relationship between the speaker and the audience. Formal or informal? Friendly or hostile? Says Cindy Leiberman of Beltone

*Continued on page 2*

## SPEAKING OUT

### Some basics of speechwriting, from an old pro

The following is adapted from an article by John Heinz, a former contributing editor to *S/N*:

One widely acknowledged tenet for speechwriting is to use simple and direct sentence structure and to keep sentences as short as feasible. There is nothing remarkable about that; but the fact is that sentence structure that is commonly accepted in writing for print—that, in fact, is not only stylistically impeccable but is virtually indispensable to expert writers—can be taboo to speechwriters.

I refer, for example, to something along the following lines: "Although the economy is in extremely poor shape, my company has been reporting excellent financial results." That is what we speechwriting gurus call bass-ackward sentence structure.

What is wrong with it? The problem is that the point of a statement should ordinarily come first. If your company is reporting impressive financial results, say so right out front, then add the impressive fact that this success has been achieved despite a weak economy. Serve the entree first, let the other courses follow.

This is even true of the proper treatment of modifiers. Suppose one wants to brag that his company has just completed a new, state-of-the-art, \$250-million, completely computerized, 2,000-foot-long reverberating furnace. It should never be put that way! A long string of modifiers is frustrating and confusing to listeners; they want to know—right off—what the speaker is talking about. Good speech style calls for: "My company just completed a new, state-of-the-art reverberating furnace. It cost \$250 million. It's 2,000 feet long. It's ..." etc.

The speaker should get to the point, and get there with maximum effectiveness, which is why signaling is an indispensable technique in any speechwriter's bag of tricks. While one would never write "Would you like to guess how much our new reverberating furnace cost my company? No takers? Well, listen carefully and I'll tell you ...," that is excellent speechwriting style if only because challenging the audience in a sprightly conversational manner tends to awaken snoozers and invigorate the lethargic. On a more positive note, there cannot be any question of the value of alerting audiences that information worth listening to is forthcoming.

While on that particular subject, how about restating something that

has just been said? Good form! "That furnace cost us \$250 million. That's right, I said a cool \$250 million!" Consider it a rule that facts and figures that a serious reader would reread in a printed text should be repeated orally in a speech. If one thinks—or looks—back over a few of the points I have made, the reader will realize that speech texts—or at least important passages within such texts—often are longer and wordier than comparable writings for print, and necessarily so. After all, speakers have to rely entirely on audience comprehension through hearing, and a speaker's words skitter by so swiftly!

Finally—and this may come as the most unkindest cut of all to purists—most speeches call for use of conversational, colloquial English. Most speakers, on most speaking occasions, should sound natural, not pedantic. "We're going to do it" is more natural, and sounds more natural, than "We will do it." Similarly, "We've got to do it" is more natural than "We must do it." I would hazard a guess that scores of words and phrases in virtually every one of the 750 or so executive speeches I have written through the years would be criticized by most high-school English teachers. But rest easy, Miss Dalrymple, when I reread speech scripts for print publication, I always revert to good old academically pure English usage.

## THE 'MINI-SPEECH'

*Continued from page 1*

Electronics, "If you get the tone right, it won't be too bad no matter what the speaker says. If you get it wrong, if you speak informally to a formal audience, it can be a disaster."

Is the mini-speech easier or harder to write? Janilee Johnson of Nynex finds short speeches "infinitely more

difficult." Because there's less time to build logical arguments, Johnson finds the form "not as meaty—there's no depth." Others find the short speech easier, because the topic is usually very concrete and less research is required. Says Beltone's Leiberman, "What you need is a hook, and that can come to you when you're driving home or taking a shower."

Not all corporations even bother scripting short remarks. Executives may have the option of speaking extemporaneously. "In many cases, executives wing it," says one speechwriter. "We try to get them away from that—because we've heard them."

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# Speechwriter's Newsletter

November 29, 1991

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## IDEA FILES: QUOTES FOR YOUR SPEECHES

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**Amusement  
is the  
happiness of  
those who  
cannot think.  
—Alexander  
Pope** .29

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### Information

I was brought up to believe that the only thing worth doing was to try to add to the sum of accurate information in the world.  
—Margaret Mead .01

### Goals

Everyone goes to the forest; some go for a walk to be inspired, and others go to cut down the trees.  
—Vladimir Horowitz .02

### Ignorance

If you don't know, it's not always necessary to admit it.  
—Malcolm Forbes .03

### Life

Ancient religion and modern science agree: We are here to give praise. Or, to slightly tip the expression, to pay attention.  
—John Updike .04

### Worth

The real measure of your wealth is how much you'd be worth if you lost all your money.  
—unknown .05

### Crisis

There cannot be a crisis next week. My schedule is already full.  
—Henry Kissinger .06

### People

I love animals and children. People I could do without.  
—Zsa Zsa Gabor .07

### Risk

Those who'll play with cats must expect to be scratched.  
—Cervantes .08

### Questions

No one should ask anyone else about anything, because questions only oblige one to lie.  
—B. Traven .09

### Life

Each human life must work through all the joys and sorrows, gains and losses, which make up the history of the world.  
—Thomas Mann .10

### Thought

Thought depends absolutely on the stomach; but, in spite of that, those who have the best stomachs are not the best thinkers.  
—Voltaire .11

### Unemployment

This is a call to arms, a call to wage war. The enemy is unemployment, a menace which cannot be met by complacency. The army of unemployed is greater than any army this nation was ever called upon to face.  
—B.C. Forbes, 1931 .12

### Good

We should all tremble at the thought that all the good we do in the world, or could possibly do, is too little.  
—Thomas More .13

### Human resources

The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels of the corporation.  
—Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline* .14

### Ambition

A man's worth is no greater than the worth of his ambitions.  
—Marcus Aurelius .15

# Speechwriter's Newsletter

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## QUOTES FOR YOUR SPEECHES

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*Continued from previous page*

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**No error is  
too small to  
ignore.  
—Japanese  
saying** .30

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### **Killing**

To live without killing is a thought which could electrify the world, if men were only capable of staying awake long enough to let the idea soak in.

—Henry Miller .16

### **Taxes**

Why does a small tax increase cost you two hundred dollars and a substantial tax cut save you thirty cents?

—Peg Bracken .17

### **Disagreement**

The ultimate test of a relationship is to disagree but to hold hands.

—Alexandra Penney .18

### **Free enterprise**

Free enterprise is a rough and competitive game. It is a hell of a lot better than a government monopoly.

—Ronald Reagan .19

### **Evil**

Evil acts of the past are never rectified by evil acts of the present.

—Lyndon Johnson .20

### **Respectability**

I've always thought respectable people scoundrels, and I look anxiously at my face every morning for signs of my becoming a scoundrel.

—Bertrand Russell .21

### **Clarity**

If you can't write your idea on the back of my calling card, you don't have a clear idea.

—David Belasco .22

### **Judgment**

Give us clear vision that we may know where to stand and what to stand for; because unless we stand for something, we shall fall for anything.

—Peter Marshall .23

### **History**

The Union sacrificed more men than the entire United States did in any other war to put down a rebellion by a less populous section that it outproduced in 1860 by 30 to 1 in firearms, 24 to 1 in locomotives, and 13 to 1 in pig iron.

—Donald McCluskey, economist .24

### **Reality**

The real world is not easy to live in. It is rough; it is slippery. Without the most clear-eyed adjustments we fall and get crushed.

—Clarence Darrow .25

### **Business**

One of the first declarations of business philosophy I heard from my father, soon after I came to work at Neiman-Marcus in 1926, was, "There is never a good sale for Neiman-Marcus unless it's a good buy for the customer."

—Stanley Neiman .26

### **Greatness**

There is a great man who makes every man feel small. But the real great man is the man who makes every man feel great.

—G.K. Chesterton .27

### **Power**

I sit here all day trying to persuade people to do the things they ought to have sense enough to do without my persuading them.

—Harry S. Truman .28

*We invite readers to send in their favorite quotes, anecdotes, humor, and statistics for speeches.*

## **Forget the candidates—this year, the speechwriters won on November 5**

*As the political mood of the country changes, so does the language of speeches—and maybe the role of political speechwriters*

Consider a few winners from this year's crazyquilt of elections. Harris Wofford, the former civil rights activist and Kennedy New Frontiersman, overcame a 40-point deficit to defeat former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh in the Pennsylvania senate race. And Kirk Fordice, a Republican businessman, became the first GOP chief executive in Mississippi since Reconstruction.

But those are the obvious choices. Now, for a surprise winner: political speechwriters. For as this year's elections may have demonstrated, the era of lofty, high-minded rhetoric—the oratorical counterpart to the go-go '80s—quite possibly came to a grinding halt on Nov. 5.

The candidates who fared best on Election Day were the ones who cast themselves as outsiders—outsiders who have not lost touch with the common man. "What we have right now is people sensing that the political climate has changed," says Paul Begala, a Democrat speechwriter who managed Wofford's Senate campaign. "There's a new playing ground, whole new rules for the '90s and they want to find the words that work within that environment."

The Pennsylvania Senate race typifies the change in political oratory. Political observers considered the race, which pitted the outsider Wofford against Thornburgh, a close friend of President Bush, as a precursor to next year's presidential race. What they got was a surprise. The expectation was that Thornburgh would push the "hot buttons" that usually work so well for GOP candidates in socially conservative states like Pennsylvania: racial quotas, abortion, gun control and foreign policy.

Instead, it was Wofford who seized the agenda. Wofford hired three experts on the art of oratory: Begala, James Carville and Bob Shrum. Carville is a Louisiana Cajun who is sometimes called the "Democrats' Lee Atwater" for his slash-and-burn tactics. Begala, who also works part time for House Majority Leader Richard A. Gephardt, was the campaign's lead

speechwriter. Shrum's résumé includes Gephardt and Massachusetts Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. The trio came up with the best line of the year, Wofford's query: "Every criminal has a right to a lawyer, shouldn't you have a right to a doctor?"

"Everybody's been looking for the 'vision thing' and the game has been to hire a visionary," notes John Roberts, a Republican speechwriter with the public relations firm Sawyer-Miller. "What the Wofford campaign did was convert the anti-incumbent mood and also the notion that there's economic nationalism out there. It also points to a lot of themes and language that you want to weave into speeches to show that you have a candidate who's connected to the voters he represents."

The change in rhetoric did not go unnoticed in Washington. The question is what if any changes the White House will make in its approach to speechwriting now that the oratory has changed. Unlike the Reagan White House, where the speechwriters enjoyed high profiles, Team Bush is not as reliant on oratory. Bush did not make a major speech during the Gulf War, for example. His only memorable speech with regard to domestic policy was an appearance earlier this year at the University of Michigan. Whereas Ronald Reagan preferred the Oval Office and national addresses, George Bush is more comfortable with drop-bys at the White House press room.

Speechwriters from both parties give Bush the same handicap: It's not so much a choice of words as it is a lack of choices. "The problem has less to do with speechwriters than it does with policymakers. There's only so artful a way you can say, 'I'm not sure,'" complains a GOP speechwriter. "If [the White House] is sitting around thinking their problem is the tenor of Bush's language, they're wrong. The notion that Bush, to prove he's in charge and takes problems seriously, should try to give Jimmy Carter-like speeches, well, you figure it out."

In 1980, voters did.

## Presidential candidates— some serious, some not

*Jerry Brown survived his bout with plagiarism—not so Joe Biden. The reason? Different standards for different candidates*

The promising presidential campaign of Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.) went up in flames four years ago in a firestorm sparked by revelations he plagiarized the words of British Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock.

More recently, Jerry Brown was caught using the lyrics of the Australian rock band Midnight Oil—sans attribution—in launching his 1992 presidential bid. [See *S/N* 11-8 for details.]

Biden was forced out of the race and still suffers the ignominy; Brown's deed is generally ignored and laughed off by the few familiar with the details.

What's the difference? Several things, among them:

Biden appropriated not just Kinnock's words, but his whole up-from-the-working-class life style.

Biden's action was part of a pattern that included the earlier use of remarks by Robert F. Kennedy without attribution and a scene at a New Hampshire coffee klatsch, captured on C-SPAN, where he embroidered on his résumé.

The Kinnock incident played into doubts among the political press corps and beltway pundits about the depth of Biden's convictions. There was a view in some circles that the senator was something of an empty suit, tailored by his pollsters and political strategists.

But most important: *Biden was considered a serious candidate.*

Brown, plagued by his spacey Gov. Moonbeam image, is treated as a joke not just by the Jay Lenos and Johnny Carsons, but virtually the whole political establishment. Just mention Brown's name among political insiders and you're guaranteed to get a laugh.

Different rules apply to candidates taken seriously and those considered irrelevant. Remember Gary Hart/Hartpence back in 1983 when he was an asterisk in the polls? Of course not. Who cared? And you didn't hear much about Donna Rice when Hart was making his comeback long after the rest of the 1988 field passed him by.

Which is not to say the rules haven't changed. One result of the media's closer attention to proper attribution: a fetish for footnoting. When Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey recently outlined his national economic agenda

in a widely covered speech at the National Press Club, he made sure to give Rep. Leon Panetta, D-Calif., due credit for his plan to radically reduce the size of the federal government by consolidating a number of cabinet departments.

**Feeling the heat:** President Bush had originally planned to kick off his re-election fundraising drive on Oct. 31 with a platitudinous, feel-good speech before the good burghers of Houston, his adopted home town.

Instead, a piqued Bush tore into the Democrats and "demagogues" who run Congress in a stemwinder half-delivered, half-shouted before a crowd of about 850 who paid \$1,000 a plate to attend in lieu of treat-or-tricking.

Originally set to talk for ten minutes, Bush went on for nearly an hour. Not coincidentally, the fusillade followed a White House meeting that morning in which White House Republicans wrung their hands over the state of the economy and expressed their concern about the political impact and the perceived non-response from the president.

Playing to the home-town crowd (read: Big Oil), Bush resurrected one of the weirder lines from his 1988 campaign. Pitching his proposal to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil exploration, Bush spoke again of the erotic benefits for the native fauna.

He noted that naysayers worried about the detrimental effects the original trans-Alaska pipeline would have on the birds and bees. "Today, you have to shake [the caribou] away with a stick," Bush said. "They're all making love laying up against the pipeline."

**Advice best ignored:** At a recent appearance before a group of condominium leaders in south Florida, one woman asked the campaigning Kerrey, "What are you going to say when they throw the L-word at you?"

Before the Nebraska Democrat could respond, a voice from the crowd shouted, "Throw the F-word at them!"

**Neologism watch:** "I don't want to over-cheerlead on the economy, but I don't want to talk people into a further lack of confidence, because it's a good time to buy a house, frankly." —Bush at Houston fundraiser.

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## STRICTLY SPEAKING

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### Using film clips ... failing to change ... job openings ... cow paths as a metaphor

"The challenge and the pleasure of writing a speech is finding the right rhythm and nuance to fit the speaker, the right quote and the right metaphor to carry forward the argument of the speech." That's Rich Greb, freelance speechwriter, in a "First Person" interview in a recent *Chicago Tribune* Sunday magazine. Every week, "First Person" interviews an individual about his or her occupation. Greb's interview came about as a result of his association with the Chicago Speechwriters' Forum. The most gratifying part of the experience, says Greb, has been having a number of people tell him that it's one of the most substantive "First Person" interviews in recent memory. "And people were pleased to see the money figure in there," says Greb—\$2,500 for a 20-minute speech, including research, first draft, and one rewrite, representing about 32 hours' worth of work. ... **Are we speechwriters or speech writers?** asks Annmarie Geddes of the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation. Her dictionary, Webster's New World, 3rd College Edition, lists "speech" "speech clinic," "speechmaker," and other permutations, but not "speech-writer," nor, for that matter, "speech writer." *S/N*'s preference is clear from looking at our nameplate on page one. What do you folks think? ... **Film clips** from the movie *The Bad News Bears* highlight a speech by Richard D. Farman, chairman of the American Gas Association. How did the idea develop? Speechwriter James Showalter explains: "I was describing to a colleague over the lunch the way the gas industry sometimes seems to be operating, fussing with each other over minor stuff. And he said, 'Sounds like the Bad News Bears.' I bought him lunch that day." Showalter was surprised the concept got through the

approval process, but it definitely brightened up the speech. One note of caution, though: "You should be very sure you observe copyright law. Our legal department told us that many of the major studios and TV networks have people on hotel staffs who basically act as moles"—reporting on any unauthorized use of commercial movie footage at a speech or meeting. "So we made sure everything was legal and documented. It wasn't cheap." ... **Oops.** The Washington-based PR firm of Robinson, Lake, Lerer and Montgomery is *not* looking to fill a speechwriting position, as reported in *S/N* 11-8. *S/N* regrets the error. ... **"When we fail to change, we fail,"** says Michael McKinley, as quoted in *S/N* 11-8's Idea Files. "Who

is Michael McKinley?" you ask, as have several *S/N* readers. McKinley, 48, is a professional speaker based in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. "I try to help people understand that change goes on even when they don't know it. I talk a lot about coping measures." McKinley was a corporate president for 15 years before turning to speaking as a profession. "I was speaking a lot while I was doing my job, and one day I decided to do it fulltime. It's been a tremendous journey." Call McKinley at 715-832-2488. ... **"You can't write off Duke's voters as racists. Duke is talking about things people really care about: high taxes, crummy schools, crime-ridden streets, welfare dependency, equal opportunity. A lot of politicians aren't talking about these things."** That's White House chief speechwriter Tony Snow, as quoted by columnist Clarence Page. ... **The days of the long speech** aren't over yet. Dave Crehore, a writer for the

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### Nightmares and bad dreams

*Maybe you don't have a "worst nightmare story," but we all have headaches and worries as speechwriters. Three speechwriters share their experiences.*

"My biggest worry is trying to inject humor when a speaker is ill-prepared, or has bad delivery," says Paul Stansel of First Brands Corporation. It happened to him once, as he heard after the fact. His speaker, fatigued from travelling, told a joke and looked around for a laugh, and didn't get one. "A friend who was there said there was absolute dead silence. I said, 'Oh, hell.' My friend said, 'Yeah.'" The speaker was gracious and didn't blame Stansel, but the speechwriter learned a lesson: "If I'm going to use humor, or something risky like that, I'm going to prepare and spend time with the speaker." ... **Mike Lynch** of the American Academy of Pediatrics once had a speech pronounced "unacceptable" only a few days before it was scheduled for delivery. "I waited to hear what was wrong with it, but that was it. I just had to trash the whole

speech and write a new one." Lynch took a new slant on the subject, and fortunately, his speaker loved draft two. ... **It didn't exactly happen to Ann Ober** of the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, but she witnessed it—and it could have ruined the speech. A popular political analyst was addressing a meeting at a hotel in Charlottesville when a young bellhop entered the room with a message for the speaker. "He didn't leave the message with someone at the back of the room, he leaned over and asked a member of the audience who so-and-so was, and then he went up to the podium and handed the speaker the message." The speaker accepted the message and went on without missing a beat, but speechwriters and planners may want to remember the incident when talking with hotel staff prior to the speech.

## STRICTLY SPEAKING

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, reports that he recently received a hefty speech assignment from his boss, William Selbig. "The people wanted a 45-minute speech. I argued, but the boss couldn't refuse them. It was like writing a term paper." ... **Job openings.** Two positions for Communications Managers are open, one in Boston and one in Cleveland, for individuals with 6-8 years in communications: minimum three years with a consulting firm or 8-10 years corporate communications experience with benefits background. Excellent client/project management skills, plus new-business development skills. Manage a small communications staff to develop communication campaigns, write, edit, produce and follow-through implementation for Fortune 500 clients.

Boston position: \$80,000-\$100,000; Cleveland position: \$70,000-\$80,000. *Also:* Communications consultant, Boston location. Position requires 4-5 years in communications consulting, with project, client, and new-business development skills, as well as effective communication and presentation skills, writing and production skills, and desire to market. Successful applicant will develop communication campaigns, design, write, produce and follow-through implementation. Salary: \$60,000-\$70,000 (negotiable). For all positions, call Sue Kranz at 813-264-7165. ... **Cow paths** are a metaphor in a speech by GTE Directories President Thomas Lysaught. Discussing GTE Directories' pursuit of the 1994 Malcolm Baldrige award: "In speaking to Baldrige QIT members about our self-assessment, I've used

the analogy of the cow path. If you've ever been in a city or a small town where the roads meander about, you can probably bet that those roads were once old cow paths—and what you now see are paved cow paths. Well, GTE Directories is not out to pave old cow paths. We want to design our work processes and procedures to be right for the job and company of the future." ... **Political powerhouse?** "Mr. Sununu and Mr. Darman do not want Mr. Bush's speechwriting office to be a place where ideas ferment... because that would make it an alternative power source, as it was in the Reagan years." —*The New York Times.*

**Job openings for speechwriters** at your corporation? Send the listing to *S/N*. We'll run it free of charge.

## COMING UP

**Dec. 4-6:** National Association of Government Communicators annual conference. Location: Arlington, Virginia. Theme: "Looking Through the Kaleidoscope: The Many Facets of Communications." Contact Debbi Trocchi at 703-519-3902. ... **Dec. 10:**

Conference Board Workshop: "Managing Corporate Communications During Turbulent Times." Location: Chicago. For information, call 212-339-0290. ... **May 24-27, 1992:** International Association of Business Communicators annual conference.

Location: San Francisco. For information, call 1-800-PRO-IABC.

### Calling all speechwriters

*S/N* would like to see copies of your speeches. Won't you please send or fax us your most recent speech today?

## IN CONCLUSION...

"I sometimes marvel at the extraordinary docility with which Americans submit to speeches."

—Adlai Stevenson

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