



# Society Strategies

Federation of Genealogical Societies

P.O. Box 200940 Austin TX 78720-0940

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Series Set VI Number 4

Rev. October 1999

## Set VI Strategies for Program Chairpersons

### When Your Speaker IS Your Program

by Desmond Walls Allen and Marsha Hoffman Rising

## Supplemental Page

This strategy paper, written some years ago, is an FGS *Classic* that contains ideas and strategies still relevant today in society management.

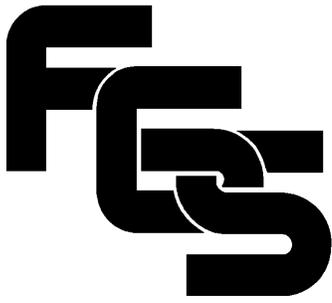
The paper discusses the speaker program where one outstanding speaker presents several talks as a major event for the society. This paper details selecting a speaker suitable for your group, negotiating the contract, and outlines the several little tasks which make the society-speaker experience a happy and productive one.

The information on page 4 which directs the interested person on how to obtain copies of this paper is incorrect.

The FGS office no longer reprints the SSS papers, and has phased out paper copies of the SSS papers altogether.

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## Set VI Strategies for Conferences When Your Speaker IS Your Program by Desmond Walls Allen and Marsha Hoffman Rising

### INTRODUCTION

Your society has decided to produce a conference or workshop for society members and guests. You have been assigned the responsibility to arrange for a speaker. What plans do you need to make? How should you negotiate with the speaker? What details will you have to remember? This paper will aid you in making those plans and decisions.

### FINDING A SPEAKER

The society's conference committee probably has established some guidelines about the possible topics of interest to members. Your job is to find the experts on those topics. A starting point is to contact the following organizations or businesses for names and lecturing information about their members. Determine if a *Directory* is published or if data on speakers appears on a Web site.

- *Speakers List*, The Genealogical Speakers Guild, 2818 Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 159, Washington, DC 20007. Web site: [www.genspeakguild.org](http://www.genspeakguild.org)
- The Board for Certification of Genealogists, P.O. Box 14291, Washington, DC 20044. Web site: [www.genealogy.org/~bcg](http://www.genealogy.org/~bcg)

- *Directory of Professional Genealogists* published by the Association of Professional Genealogists, P.O. Box 40393, Denver, CO 80204-0393. Web site: [www.apgen.org/](http://www.apgen.org/)
- Ancestor Detective Speakers' Bureau, P.O. Box 6386, Plymouth, MI 48170-0386. Web site: [www.ancestordetective.com/bureau.htm](http://www.ancestordetective.com/bureau.htm) (A commercial firm specializing in Web site listings for speakers.)

While these references can be helpful, some of the best speakers are located by asking for recommendations from individuals. Seek suggestions from previous speakers, society officers or genealogical groups who have already presented successful workshops.

Many well-known speakers have produced audio tapes at various conferences. These tapes can be purchased **for personal review only** from:

- Repeat Performance, 2911 Crabapple Lane, Hobart, IN 46342.
- *Index to NGS and FGS Conferences and Syllabi*, compiled by Joy Reisinger, indexes FGS and NGS national conference presentations by title, topic, and speaker. Instructions are given to order the tape and the

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handout for each session. *Index* may be purchased from the FGS Business Office, P.O. Box 200940, Austin, TX 78720-0940. Web site: [www.fgs.org](http://www.fgs.org)



### CONTACTING AND NEGOTIATING

When you find potential candidates, call and ask about their schedules and fees. Don't be bashful about mentioning money. You are paying a professional for services. Money is important. If you can't afford a particular speaker, find one within your price range rather than ask for a discount. If you want the expert in a particular area, consider raising your workshop fees.

Discuss topics. It is important for the speaker to know whether an already prepared lecture or workshop outline can be adapted to your audience, or whether a new presentation will be required. Be specific about the length of the suggested presentation. Asking for an "all-day" workshop is too vague—"four one-hour lecture segments with thirty minutes for questions at the end of the day" gives the candidate a better notion of your expectations.

Ask speakers to send a list of those topics on which they are prepared to speak. Be sure to ask if the lecturer has any particular preferences. It is important the speaker, as well as the audience, be enthusiastic about the subject. If you need to consult with a workshop committee about the speaker's proposals, do so quickly and renotify the speaker with acceptance or regrets.

If you have spoken with a potential speaker about a workshop, courtesy dictates that you follow up with information about your final decision. Speakers are often negotiating with several societies concurrently. If you have decided **not** to use a particular individual for this conference, do send "regrets" as soon as your decision is made.



### MAKING THE AGREEMENT

If either the speaker or your society requires a contract, complete the paperwork so there are no misunderstandings. If a formal contract isn't required, you still need to write the speaker a letter and re-state all the important items you covered on the phone. Include the specific time, place, fee, topic(s), travel arrangements, lodging, meals, and hospitality plans.

If air travel is required, decide who will make the reservations and who will pay for the tickets. If the society expects the speaker to use a discounted fare, perhaps you, as the society officer responsible, should make the reservations and pay for the tickets in advance. Some speakers prefer to use a travel bureau with whom they are familiar. If the speaker wants to make individual travel arrangements, the board needs to approve the air fare early enough that the speaker can arrange the most convenient travel at the most economical rate. Speakers who organize their own travel plans are always pleased to receive reimbursement from the society as soon as the tickets are purchased.

Who will make motel reservations? Please don't expect your speaker to double-up with a potentially incompatible roommate or to stay in a stranger's home. Most speakers prefer privacy for lecture preparation in order to be at their best on workshop day. If your society wants the speaker to submit receipts for reimbursable expenses, state that clearly in your letter or contract.

Be sure everyone understands who will transport the speaker from the airport to the motel; from the motel to the conference site and back. If the speaker is to make individual arrangements, the society should pay for transportation and/or parking fees incurred. Please remember that

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speakers must also pay for transportation and/or parking between their home and the airport.

Settle the “what-ifs.” What if the conference is canceled? Will the society reimburse the speaker for airline tickets if they have already been purchased and are non-refundable? The society may need to consider paying the speaker a partial fee because another engagement for the same date may have been refused. What if the speaker cannot come because of a personal emergency? (That possibility is every conference supervisor's nightmare and fortunately, rarely happens.) If it does, happen perhaps the speaker has a back-up plan or suggestion for a substitute speaker. Consider what will happen if the speaker breaks a leg the day before the conference? Do you have a back-up plan? You will sleep better if you settle the what-if's in advance.

You and the speaker should agree upon deadlines for receiving lecture outlines and master copies of handouts. Be specific about what you expect to receive, when you will need it and exactly where to send it. Send the speaker copies of press releases, registration flyers, and conference notices as soon as they are available. This not only serves as a reminder to a busy speaker, but informs the lecturer that you are doing your part to insure a successful conference. Speakers are well aware that good publicity is absolutely essential to a good conference no matter how illustrious the speaker's prior reputation.

Most professional speakers have photographs available which reproduce well in newspapers or flyers. Be sure to request these early in preparation for your conference. Photographs on your flyers will catch the eye of potential registrants.

Advertise the lectures or workshop from the outlines you receive from the speaker. If your speaker's framework states the topic is an “Introduction to Federal Land Patents” don't advertise “Land Records” which may lead your audience to have false expectations.

Does the speaker permit the audience to audio tape the lecture(s)? Ask in advance and announce the speaker's policy at the start of the workshop as well as printing that policy on the registration flyers. If you would like to have the workshop professionally taped with either audio or video devices, be sure to make prior arrangements with the speaker regarding the sale of the tapes and royalties to the lecturer. Although professional recording requires more work for the society, it can be a significant fund raiser for all concerned.

For guidance, review the “Taping Resolution” developed by the Genealogical Coordinating Committee. Copies may be obtained from the Genealogical Speakers Guild, 2818 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20007.



### LAST MINUTE ARRANGEMENTS

The week before the big event, call the speaker and check to see if any last minute arrangements need to be handled. Perhaps your guest requires a non-smoking motel room or prefers a ground-floor room. The person responsible for picking up the speaker should send a photo or communicate something easily identified by the speaker scanning a crowd. If the speaker is driving, send a map with explicit directions to both motel and workshop site.

Be sure plans have been made for the type of media your speaker will be using. Ask in advance for specifics about overhead projectors, slide projectors, and microphones. Ask if the speaker has a preference for a stationary or lapel microphone. Are back-up bulbs for the projectors on hand? Extension cords should be in place and taped to the floor. Good speakers will want to arrive early and examine the area for acoustics, blind spots, lighting, and media visibility. In the event your speaker does not have this opportunity, try to anticipate and solve any problems well in advance.

## When Your Speaker IS Your Program

Arrange privacy time for the speaker. Do not feel that you must fill every minute of the speaker's visit with social activities. Ask the individual about hospitality activities including meals and tours of the library and local attractions. Few speakers have the energy for more than one evening of entertainment. Lecturing is an exhausting activity. Although you may introduce the speaker informally to individuals during the day, assign someone to formally introduce the speaker at the beginning of the conference.

When the conference is over, see that your brain-dead speaker is stowed on the return airplane or tucked away in the motel. Say thanks. Be sure the agreed upon fee is available before the speaker departs.

## AFTERWARD

Write the speaker reviewing the best aspects of the program. Make positive, constructive suggestions if appropriate. An evaluation form should be sent for the conference. Not only should the speaker receive a summary of the results, but an evaluation form can help the society plan future programs and topics.

If the response to your speaker was as good as you expected it would be, share this with the speaker in your Thank You note. The speaker will be especially pleased if you include permission to share the letter with other societies.

As soon as the conference is over, sit down and write your objective reaction as to how the meeting progressed and how it could have been better—not just the speaker's performance, but the whole experience. Finally, it is absolutely essential that you pass your notes along to the poor soul who has the responsibility for next year's conference.

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