



The Maungakiekie Mouthpiece



The Maungakiekie Mouthpiece

Vol 19 Issue 10 - 4th November 2008

Maungakiekie Toastmasters Meeting Report

Opening Bangs

With the first of what were to be many bangs on this eve of Guy Fawkes' Night, this one being that of the gavel on an innocent, harmless table, Sergeant at Arms **Helen Korte** launched us into a "sparkly evening" pretty much dead on 7:30pm. President **Judit Nikolic** then promptly introduced our Chairman for the night, **Robert Wong**.

Robert announced that we were "off with a bang" and treated us to a quotation from Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, he of American Civil War fame: "Be slow to raise the sword. But when you do, throw away the scabbard." Apparently this can be interpreted as plan things carefully, work out what can go wrong, then be quick and decisive in implementing it.

Prior to the meeting, Robert had arranged assorted ordnance around the tables, and we had been eyeing it expectantly. Robert now gave us the word, and we jumped at the opportunity like Sarah Palin faced with the prospect of something to kill. A volley of Party Poppers was let loose, and as the reverberations gradually diminished we were left wondering who was going to clean up afterwards.

Official Big Noises

Apologies were received from Andrew Reynolds, Anne Malcolm, Cynthia Mitchell, Pippa Mitchell and Judy Gillett. Motion to accept moved by **Robert Wong** and seconded by **Helen Korte**.

Robert then announced an addition to the programme, a speech by **Mike Diggins**, evaluated by **Andrew Pass**.

Hospitality

Roger Mingers then introduced our third-time guest and future member, **Lydia Huggard**. Roger went on to tell us what he had learned in his 6 months or so of membership.

Grammarian

Paul Aked advised that he would be keeping an ear out for "pesky little fillers", provided he could stay awake, and listening for "nice use of English". His word of the night, very appropriate, was "explosive", a word that can be applied to a person's emotions as well to bombs and fireworks.

At this point we expected a warm up, but since we had an extra speaker chairman Robert Wong made an executive decision (without asking his wife) and canned it. Aww...



The Maungakiekie Mouthpiece



Officer Reports

We are having a club dinner next Tuesday, 11th November, at 7:00pm, as Sergeant at Arms **Helen Korte** informed us. It is at Mongolian Barbeque Genghis Khan, Manukau Road, Epsom, at the very reasonable price of \$28.90 per person. Partners, neighbours, vague acquaintances welcome, but please advise Helen beforehand.

President **Judit Nikolic** reminded us about the rapidly approaching District Convention, on 14th-16th November, in Dunedin. More details at http://www.toastmasters.org.nz/index.cfm/events/district_conventions.html

Next, VP Membership **Andrew Pass** moved a motion to extend an invitation to **Lydia Huggard** to join Maungakiekie Toastmasters, seconded by **Mike Diggins**. Carried unanimously. Welcome Lydia!

General Business

Mike Diggins thanked **Sarah Scott, Helen Korte, Finda Hope** and **Paul Aked** for helping with the Impromptu Speaking Workshop at MiTe speakers. It was deemed a great success. At this Robert recalled a sermon by the minister at his church saying that most people were more afraid of public speaking than dying, thus at a funeral most people would prefer to be in the coffin than delivering the eulogy.

The Big Bangs

Toastmaster **Helen Korte** introduced the session, looking forward to both new and advanced members as speakers tonight.

The Lucky Kiwi Kid

Tony Simpson, doing his "Icebreaker", the first speech from the Competent Communicator Manual, was The Lucky Kiwi Kid.

Like most children growing up in 1970's New Zealand, Tony was encouraged to try things. Born in Auckland, Tony is a Jafa, a Westie, and proud of it. It was a great time and place. The street was his playground, where he made friends for life and roared around on a trolley made with wheels stolen from his sister's pram. Tony fondly recalled the time when all the children would be called home to dinner, their names called in order somewhat in the style of a muslim cleric calling the faithful to prayer.

Tony started going out with his future wife, Paula, at 17. After spending a lot of time and money travelling, especially on their honeymoon in Europe, they now have two children, Madison "totally glamorous" and Laughlin, a would-be Jedi knight. They have grown-up responsibilities, but still enjoy Christmasses in New York and Europe. Being able to spend more time with his family was one of the motivations behind Tony's selling his business.

Tony hopes that his children will also be lucky kiwi kids.

Mike Diggins evaluated Tony, commending his personal memories about the things that made up luck, but suggesting that he use the opportunities within his



The Maungakiekie Mouthpiece



content to expand vocal variety. However, Mike enjoyed the humour and sense of fondness in the recollections.

Rumsfeld's Rumbblings

Jim Harknett, doing the "Apply Your Skills" speech from the Competent Communicator Manual, invited us to cast our minds back to February 2002 and Donald Rumsfeld's now-famous pronouncements about the relative merits of known knowns, known unknowns, and, the most dangerous of them all, the unknown unknowns. As Jim observed, we think we know what he means but we don't know that we know for sure. Rumsfeld was subsequently presented with the "Foot in Mouth" award from the Campaign for Real English, an outrage in Jim's opinion.

Jim set out to analyse the Rumsfeldian tongue twister by means of the 2 x 2 matrix (yes, really), by which knowing is plotted against knowing. In a security situation this can be quite explosive, with the unknown unknown quadrant being the home of classic terrorism.

As if this wasn't scary enough, Jim suggested our new-found knowledge of the 2 x 2 matrix might be useful on the eve of an American election.

Stephen Thorpe evaluated Jim, thinking the speech a novel idea. Jim used a range of skills, but could have benefited from some visual aids. He might watch the clasped hands as a barrier, and work on the vocal variety. Great humour though.

Target the Market

Mike Diggins was doing the "Confrontation: The Adversary Relationship" speech from the Speeches by Management manual (one of the advanced suite). He was addressing a crowd of journalists (us) on the subject of Auckland's transport woes.

It was "time for straight talking about transport management", said Mike, observing that the only significant change had been brought about by the cost of fuel, rather than council policies.

Mike went on the talk about the law of diminishing returns (after 2 x 2 matrices the evening was becoming a mathematical revelation). With the aid of a chart, Mike explained that more cars means slower speeds, and that what we really need is more people per vehicle, but it must be more attractive to us to convince us.

He said that we need to define a target market, i.e. the people who must be convinced to lose their cars and embrace public transport. It would comprise those living in the central isthmus, who travel to the city regularly, and for whom driving alone must be made as abhorrent as smoking 40 a day. He was not talking about the "I live in Waiuku and work in Warkworth so I can't use the bus brigade". Those people have a legitimate reason to use cars.

"Will he invest in infrastructure?", asked **Roger Mingers** in the Q&A session.

"What incentives will he create?", asked **Grant Hamill**, who felt threatened but wasn't sure by what.



The Maungakiekie Mouthpiece



Helen Korte, Joan Hook and **Paul Aked** joined in with related questions, to be told that the current mechanism was to be made prohibitively expensive but roads wouldn't be outlawed as such.

Andrew Pass evaluated Mike, commending Mike's willingness to do a speech at short notice to fill up the agenda. Such enthusiasm and drive too. However, the speech might have been helped if the adversary relationship had been defined better and Mike developed his solution as well as he defined the problem. Mike was very adept at handling the questions and interjections, controlling the audience.

Developing a Mission

President **Judit Nikolic** gave us an educational from the Advanced Leadership Excellence series.

Our lives are full of distractions, which must be ignored by a successful leaders in favour of missions. Most corporations have them, and so does our club (if you've forgotten, you can find it on our homepage at <http://www.toastmasters.net.nz/>). Judit made the distinction between mission and vision: a vision is a mental picture of what an organisation aspires to be. A mission explains how the organisation will achieve its vision.

It is important to keep communication the vision and mission, to explain the benefits, and to be enthusiastic while going it.

We can practice leadership skills as Toastmasters, there are lots of opportunities to grab. The Competent Leader manual gives us a second opportunity for feedback on how well we are leading, the first being verbal feedback from the Master Evaluator. Just encouraged us all to bring and use our CL manuals at each meeting.

Sarah Scott evaluated Judit in the Master Evaluation. She commended Judit for putting the educational in her own words, but felt that the topic strayed from mission to CL manual.

Quick Fire

Our Table Topic Master tonight was **Grant Hamill**, with an election theme to his topics.

Joan Hook, candidate for the Workers Party, explained why we "Need More Public Holidays".

"Up the workers!" began Joan, humorously but ambiguously, before ranting about blokes buzzing about in beehives. Can we survive on 4 weeks holiday?

Apparently not according to Joan, who would welcome Guy Fawkes' Night being brought forward to August to brighten us up.

Finda Hope, candidate for New Zealand First, was asked to "Explain the difference between 'Yes' and 'No'" (the two words being printed on cards, a la Winston Peters' antics).

Can she explain? [No]

Finda explored the double meanings, as is common in her household and no doubt many others. Both she and her husband often say one thing but mean the other.



The Maungakiekie Mouthpiece



Tim Orr, candidate for the Green Party, spoke on a topic practically filling the allotted time on its own: “fireworks upset animals and create unnecessary carbon emissions; why haven’t they been banned?”

“Because they’re so much fun”, said Tim, after threatening to shoot Grant with a unexploded Party Popper. Later, he lamented the rocket-propelled recycling bins flying around his neighbourhood and landing in his spa pool.

Andrew Pass, candidate for Act, spoke on “I like the 3 strikes and you’re in law and order policy; how about 3 lies and you’re out for politicians?”

Our short period of government (3 years, cf 4 and 5 in America and England respectively) would end up even shorter if politicians had to give up after 3 lies. We would end up without a government, like we did when MMP first arrived, but was that such a bad thing?

Pot Shots

Table Topic Evaluators **Paul Aked** (“I’m odd”), and **Judit Nikolic** took some pot shots at the speakers. Paul liked Joan for being clear, concise and clear (again), and found Tim amusing. Judit liked Finda’s nice examples.

Backfire

Timekeeper **Joan Hook**, felt the business session sparkled and filled her report with firework allusions too numerous to mention (in truth, the reporter’s hand-writing-averse fingers couldn’t take the pace).

Grammarians **Paul Aked** returned to comment on the number of explosions and award the Um Boot to Roger for his, um, ums.

Finally, it was the turn of our loose cannon, Master Evaluator **Sarah Scott**, to put a bomb under those deserving.

Judit’s elusive meeting report was considered comprehensive, despite the fact that she can’t spell her own name. Helen is a forceful Sergeant at Arms but could use the force to shut the doors before the meeting. The decisive Robert might like to produce an agenda easier to read.

Roger was commended for using his time fruitfully. Paul, less decisive when it comes to ending his role, got down to detail with ums and ahs. Helen, as Toastmaster, could give us more “why this speaker, why this speech”, but was otherwise careful with details.

The evaluators were warm and friendly but could have improved. Was Mike’s recommendation relevant? Stephen recapped rather a lot, and Andrew should have been bolder and said what he meant.

Table Topic Grant could be less attached to the lectern.

Pertinent recommendations all, but enveloped by heartfelt words of praise and commendation.

And to cap it off, the awards:

- Best Toastmaster Helen Korte
- Best Evaluator Stephen Thorpe
- Best Table Topic Finda Hope
- Best Speaker Tony Simpson



The Maungakiekie Mouthpiece



Your faithful reporter, **Andrew Pass**