TALKS

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FOREWORD

Training is both preparation for the job and defense against staleness. Our progress in personnel training, I am sure, has had much to do with the uniformly high level of competence and esprit de corps I encounter wherever I go in the Service. We must continue to grow in our jobs, and to avoid complacency.

We shall continue to hold training courses in the areas, in the Regional Offices, and Service-wide. We must also continuously engage in self-training if we are to meet our growing responsibilities. Toward this end, training bulletins will be issued from time to time. "Tips on Your Job," aimed at orientation of the new employee, was a start on this program. "Talks" is the first of a series of training aids in interpretation.

This series is not intended merely as handbooks for naturalists, historians, and archaeologists. Each of us, in every public contact, in some way is interpreting features, procedure, policy, or even more importantly, the spirit of our Service. Bulletins in this series will help all of us to be more effective, and, I hope, more active in human relations and in communication of ideas. Service to the public is our principal reason for existence. May these bulletins help us to do a better job in this respect.

Conrad L. Wirth
Director
HOW IMPORTANT TO YOU IS SPEECH?

Have you ever considered speech and its importance to you? You utter thousands of words for every one you write, and hear hundreds for each one you see in print. There are many more occasions for use of the spoken word than for the written word, and this is especially true of rangers, historians and naturalists who meet park and monument visitors face-to-face. Effectiveness in speaking, whether to an individual or to a large audience, is a valuable asset. It is, therefore, profitable to consider how to make speech effective.

Although the following discussion is from the viewpoint of speaking from a platform, many of the ideas expressed have much broader usefulness. The procedures followed in preparation for public speaking may, for example, be just as useful in dealing with an individual, in writing a popular publication, in laying out a self-guiding trail, or of conducting a battlefield tour. These matters have application far beyond the sphere of speaking from a platform.
TO WHOM ARE YOU TALKING?

Speech is communication. For present purposes, speech is the communication of an idea, by a speaker, to an audience. Idea, speaker, and audience are equally important elements in this process. We shall give attention to ideas and their organization and development. We shall consider the speaker and some of his problems and techniques as he meets his audience and puts ideas into spoken words. But it is obvious that all this is futile unless there is an audience attuned to sound and receptive to ideas. Talk is for people, and the successful speaker is constantly aware of the nature and characteristics of the people to whom he speaks.

An Audience is Made Up of Individuals and They are Free to Withhold or to Give Attention

The listener, we assume, is present at a talk of his own volition, and he voluntarily surrenders his time, attention, and an open mind. In exchange, he is entitled to hear about something interesting, to hear it from someone who knows what he is talking about, to hear it presented in an intelligent and attractive manner, and in a voice that is pleasing and audible. If any of these obligations is not fulfilled, the speaker will lose his audience, either in person or in attention.

The Audience Has a Varied Background

All types of people, representing widely varied experience, education, and temperament, assemble in areas of the National Park System. A talk which assumes a background different from that actually represented in the audience may be delivered by the speaker, but the audience will soon lose interest. A skillful speaker is aware of the backgrounds represented in his audience. He makes his ideas meaningful by stating them in terms familiar to the audience, and by projecting those ideas into situations also familiar to them.

The Audience Has Normal Intelligence

A certain background of information and sometimes a certain vocabulary is necessary before the audience can understand and accept what you say. When the audience does not possess that background, it must be supplied. In doing so, the speaker should assume that the audience is as intelligent as himself, merely unschooled in the subject field. Your talk is to introduce your audience to something that is familiar to you and to arouse interest in it—something that you have discovered and found interesting and are anxious to share with others. There is no greater fault in speaking than that of talking down to an audience, of adopting an attitude of superiority to it.

Audience Attention is Scattered

At the beginning of a talk, the audience is interested in many things other than the speaker and his subject. Do not assume that the audience has gathered primarily to hear you talk, and is eagerly awaiting your first words of wisdom. Not infrequently your audience has gathered out of curiosity, to be entertained or amused, or merely because there is nothing better to do. Interest cannot be taken for granted. As a speaker, your first job is to attract this scattered and casual attention, and to focus it upon the subject. Your
manner of approach, your voice, and most important, what you say first, will determine whether you take the audience with you, or lose them.

The Audience Has a Short Interest Span

To focus initial attention is not enough, for attention wanders and a speaker is never more than a minute or two away from loss of visitor interest. A skillful speaker repeatedly uses techniques for pulling wandering interest back to the subject. A change in voice inflection, of pace, an illustrative story, a rhetorical question, a comparison, a quotation, a picture or an object are examples of such devices. Straight recitation of a series of facts without embellishment will lose most of the audience many times during the course of a talk.

In summary, a good speaker is aware of the expectation, interest, education, and experience levels of his audience. He approaches the audience at their level, and builds from that toward his objective.

ABOUT WHAT ARE YOU TALKING?

It is assumed that the speaker is adequately grounded in his field. He is an historian, a geologist, a wildlife specialist, a botanist, or is thoroughly familiar with national park or monument matters. This discussion is not concerned with the matter of obtaining the facts and scientific background for a talk. It is sufficient to emphasize that facts constitute the building material of talks, and without that background, obtained through study, observation, and experience, no speaker can be very successful. Assuming this background, we are concerned here with the matter of how those facts are managed in preparation for speaking. We are concerned with the selection and presentation of facts so as to give a talk unity, coherence, logical development, and climax.

Choose a Subject Interesting to You

Select a subject in which you yourself are interested, one which you believe can be made interesting to your audience, and one about which you know a good deal more than most of your audience. Your own interest will be reflected in the enthusiasm with which you present the subject, and that enthusiasm will be conveyed to and will augment the interest of your audience.

Define and Limit Your Subject

Select a phase of the general subject to develop. Perhaps you are talking about wildlife. Can you expect to cover adequately all details of the 40 mammals and 100 birds of your area? The danger is that your talk will become nothing more
than an oral catalogue. Define and limit the scope of your talk by reducing it to a phase that can be adequately handled. For example, consider the themes, "How man gets along with animals," "How animals are dependent upon each other," "Strange habits of some strange animals." In the course of the talk, you will mention many of the species present in your area, but by more closely restricting the field, you are enabled to give unity, completeness, and more apparent meaning to your talk.

Historical and archeological subjects should also be delimited. Do not select American history as a subject for one discussion, but rather concentrate upon the significant and unique aspects of a key battle in, for instance, the American Revolution. Similarly, do not select the archeology of the American Southwest as a subject, but select some tribe, such as the Navajo, or a group of ruins, as those in Chaco Canyon. Discuss the subject with reasonable completeness, at the same time showing briefly its relationship to a larger whole such as the Revolution, or the prehistoric inhabitants of the Southwest.

Look for the Conservation Aspect of Your Subject

We are not trying to make professionals or technicians of the audience. We are trying to give meaning to what surrounds the visitor in the park or monument area. Part of that meaning relates to the natural and historical aspects of that environment, and part relates to conservation and national park objectives. Every subject we discuss exemplifies in some way the use, conservation, philosophy, objectives, or values of national parks and monuments. Discover those meanings and adapt them to your discussion.

HOW WILL YOU ORGANIZE YOUR TALK?

A Synopsis and an Outline are Your Guides

You have selected your main field. You have defined in your own mind the phase of that subject which you will cover. You have discovered the related conservation aspects. Next try to express your theme in a subject sentence, or short paragraph. For example, perhaps your general field is geology, and the specific phase of that subject is to be the story of water. Your synopsis might be:

We trace the course of water from the sea to its precipitation as rain and snow, and then follow it back to the sea, noting its effects upon life and upon topography en route. Thus we learn to understand the importance of watershed protection such as is afforded by a national park.

For an example in the field of history, suppose your general subject is the American Civil War, with the limited subject being the significance of the Battle of Antietam. The specific theme to be developed might be stated as follows:

The Battle of Antietam, September 17, 1862, was fought in western Maryland on lands surrounding Antietam Creek. It ended Lee's first invasion of the North, postponed indefinitely England's threatened recognition of the Confederacy, and gave Lincoln the opportunity to issue his Emancipation Proclamation. It thus greatly affected the course of the American Civil War.
With this general picture in mind, you are next ready to plan the development of these subjects. Here an outline is most useful. Perhaps you proceed as in the following examples:

WATER

A. Introduction
   1. The water cycle defined
   2. The subject limited to the effects of water as it returns to the sea

B. The Geological Work of Water
   1. Surface water
   2. Underground water
   3. Ice and snow

C. Water and Wildlife
   1. Response and adaptations to normal and extremes of water supply
   2. Plants in relation to soil, water supply, and erosion

D. Water and Man
   1. Water and scenery
   2. Water and modern civilization

E. Conclusion

Water enhances park and recreation values, and is requisite to man's economy. Conservation of watersheds, as exemplified by certain national parks, is the best way to assist nature to provide adequate water for all these purposes.

ANTIETAM

A. Introduction
   1. Brief background of the preceding events of the Civil War

B. Lee's Maryland Campaign, 1862
   1. Reasons for first Confederate invasion of Northern territory
   2. Lee's route of march and its influence on Federal military strategy
   3. Federal attempts to turn Lee's march

C. Battle of Antietam
   1. Position of Lee's and McClellan's forces, September 17
   2. Action on the morning of September 17 to the north of Sharpsburg
   3. Action on the afternoon of September 17 at Burnside's Bridge

D. Conclusion: Results of the Battle of Antietam
   1. Immediate military results
   2. Political and diplomatic results

The outline gives your talk structure and a plan of development; it results in a story to tell in a smooth, even, and logical sequence, and bound together or given unity through the device of a plot and an objective. Without such a structure and plot and objective, a talk becomes merely the telling of a group of apparently unrelated facts.
A certain degree of organization is almost automatic in some talk subjects such as travelogues, or those in which an orderly sequence of events forms the basic structure. Flower talks, animal talks, and the like, appear to be the most difficult to organize. The life zone idea, a walk along a trail, color in Nature, the food of animals, and other such themes which rely upon ecological factors and relationships are devices which are often used to give such talks framework. It is of first importance that any talk have unity; that it be on a definite subject; that it stick to that subject; that it cover the subject with satisfactory completeness; and that the relationship of its several parts be established. To accomplish this is the function of the outline.

An Introduction Prepares the Audience and Sets the Stage

Your talk will have three parts: An introduction, a development section, and a conclusion. Assuming a 30-minute talk, you will perhaps allow about five minutes for introduction, and somewhat less for the conclusion. So far we have considered chiefly the development section. The introduction and the conclusion commonly are planned after the basic structure of the talk is completed.

The introduction should first focus audience attention on you and your subject. You don't have to startle an audience in order to attract attention, but you do need an initial statement which is in itself of commanding interest. A story, an experience, a problem stated, or a question raised --all relating to and introducing your subject and anticipating its development--are good devices for accomplishing this purpose.

Having attracted attention and interest, and having indicated the general field of your talk, next tell the audience what you are going to do with that subject. The following examples illustrate these functions of an introduction:

Have you ever wondered why this country is called Yellowstone? The story is an interesting one, and takes us back to the time of the French voyageurs who preceded Lewis and Clark. The Yellowstone we know today was long considered a myth, and before that myth was shown to be fact, many exciting adventures occurred right here where we are now. Let's look a little into the history of Yellowstone and picture in our minds some of those exciting scenes in its discovery and exploration.

or

In Ecclesiastes we read "All the waters of the land run down to the sea yet the sea is not full, whence the waters come, thither they return again." Water still evaporates, falls to earth and runs down hill, and in this cycle from land to sea to air and back to the sea, it affects the landscape, the forests, the flower fields, and the animal inhabitants of the wilderness, as well as the welfare of even those of us who live far below the mountains. Let's talk about water.

The Conclusion Ties the Talk Together and Gives Final Impetus to Your Ideas

Finish off your job. You are not a continuously playing record that can be started and stopped with
equal effect at any point. Your presentation is a single job. It has an introduction, a firm foundation in fact, a logical development, and it needs a fitting conclusion. The conclusion may be a recapitulation—a brief summation of the points you have established. It should gather those facts together in such a way as to point to the purpose of your talk—your objective. It often refers back to your introductory statement. It may, in addition, with skill and awareness on the part of the speaker, assume an inspirational tone. Your best chance of being remembered usually occurs during the last minutes of your talk. Make those minutes the minutes that count.

So the land of the Yellow Rock River of the French, its mysteries explored and explained by Colter, Washburn, and Hayden, became our first national park. Where once tourists were harrassed by the Nez Perce, millions now peacefully witness the eruptions of Old Faithful, or contemplate the colorful beauty of the Yellowstone Canyon. Once a land of mystery and tall tales, now the Yellowstone is a national park, preserved by our Nation, for the enjoyment and inspiration of all our people. Yes these riches of nature are yours and mine. They are ours to enjoy to the fullest degree, and to pass on unimpaired so that people for all time may know and enjoy the Yellowstone.

The conclusion for a talk on the Battle of Antietam could summarize its results and significance as follows:

Throughout the day of September 18, the armies faced each other without further fighting. That night Lee withdrew his army to the Potomac at Blackford’s Ford and crossed into Virginia. Neither side had gained a decisive victory, but Lee had been turned back in his first attempt to invade the North.

Lee’s failure to carry the war effectively into the Northern States or even to maintain himself in Maryland, together with the almost simultaneous repulse of Bragg’s invasion of Kentucky, caused Great Britain to postpone recognition of the Confederate Government. Probably the greatest significance of Antietam in American history, therefore, lies in the fact that if Lee had won a decisive victory it might have foreshadowed the final independence of the Confederacy. When Lee turned back into Virginia, the best, if not the last, chance of foreign intervention vanished.

Of almost equal consequence on the future course of the war was the long awaited opportunity given President Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. On September 22, 1862, five days after the favorable issue to the Federal cause of the bloody battle of Antietam, Lincoln issued his preliminary proclamation which warned the South that on January 1, 1863, he would declare free all slaves in territory still resisting the Union. Henceforth, the purpose of the war broadened. It now had two purposes: To preserve the Union and to end slavery.
The conclusion gives final impetus to your ideas. It may summarize, make an appeal, or look to the future. It may use quotation, object lesson, or illustration. It should not go off on a sidetrack, but should end with dispatch.

How do you reinforce the structure of your talk?

The working outline gives your talk structure and unity, but it is only the framework of ideas which you must decorate and embellish—the skeleton which you must clothe with living flesh and blood. Here are some devices and techniques to strengthen that structure and give your talk life and color and interest.

Connectives and Transitionals Tie the Talk Together

Perhaps the first thing to work out is the matter of tying the structure together. For example, you tie phrases and sentences together by the use of the words and, so, also, but, therefore, for example, besides, in other words, etc. Similarly develop transitional devices to move from idea to idea, from paragraph to paragraph, or from one section of your outline to the next. This suggests, in contrast to, by comparison, in the meantime, an even more interesting case, a parallel situation, as we move on to another place, at another time—these are examples of transitionals that lead from one idea to another. Transitionals give your talk a continuous flow instead of jerky, broken, and detached presentation. They help hold attention, as well as help you remember what comes next.

Develop Suspense and Achieve Climax Through Order and Manner of Presentation

Suspense is a feeling of uncertainty and expectation. It is achieved by arranging facts in order of their increasing strength of interest or of importance, by posing questions to be answered, or by the development of an idea in such a manner
as to point toward a goal that is not immediately apparent. Climax is achieved as you reveal the answer to the question you posed, or the goal or conclusion toward which your facts have been leading. Suspense and climax may characterize a single sentence, a paragraph, or a subdivision of a talk; and, by all means, the talk as a whole should utilize suspense and attain climax.

Following are some examples for study:

Old Faithful erupted as they came out of the forest. (No suspense.)

As they came out of the forest, Old Faithful erupted. (Suspense and climax.)

Cornwallis was defeated because of blockade by sea, the loss of his defense works to the land forces if Washington, sickness among his troops, and dwindling supplies. (Decreasing emphasis.)

His troops were weakened by sickness, his ammunition and supplies were nearly exhausted. Toward the sea, the French held him under blockade, and with the capture of his defenses, Washington's army brought him under direct fire by land. Cornwallis was forced to surrender. (Suspense and climax.)

Here is a peculiar situation. In the middle of a dense forest, surrounded by hilly terrain, is this flat, treeless meadow. As far as we can tell, this meadow, sharply bounded by forest, has existed without change for hundreds of years. Why does the forest not advance upon it? (Suspense--a problem stated whose solution will develop through the body of the talk to a final explanation--the climax.)

Here is a cougar. Is it a varmint? Should it be exterminated? Or, are there good reasons why we should take steps to preserve at least a few of this largest of the cats among our native animals? (Suspense through stimulated curiosity, to be satisfied by a final climax in the form of an appeal for sympathetic understanding of the status of the cougar in a park fauna.)

Supplementary Material Adds Substance to Your Talk Structure

Peoples' interest will not be held for very long at a time merely by a series of statements of facts. Recognizing this, you now devise ways to illustrate and to express facts and ideas in a manner which will give them meaning within the scope of experience of the audience. The listener must see the situation in his mind as well as hear it described. This is a function of pictures properly used. The listener needs to identify himself in the scene you describe, so you try to project him into the scene as in the following examples:

What would you have done had you been faced with this problem?

or

Hiking along the steepening trail we hear the birds, we smell the fragrance of the forests, we see the snow-capped peaks towering in every hand, we fill our lungs at every step with fresh mountain air, we are off to an adventure.

or

It's the same sort of feeling you get when you wake up in the night and all sorts of strange noises, multiplied in your imagination, convince you there's a prowler around. But now, every unfamiliar forest sound, every strange shadow suggests BEAR!
Following are other means of helping the listener to understand what you are talking about:

1. Define or explain in lay language any unfamiliar terms or concepts you will use.
2. Relate factual data in support of ideas.
3. Use anecdotes and examples.
4. Make comparisons and contrasts.
5. Cite testimony and quotation.
7. For emphasis use repetition, varying your wording.
8. Make full use of visual aids and of three dimensional objects which can be seen by the audience.

Words are Your Tools. Make Them do the Job for You Effectively

The words you use and how you use them may either dilute what you say, and divert attention from the thought you are expressing, or they can strengthen and add color to your ideas. Use words so that they say exactly what you mean, and achieve the effect you desire. Following are some examples which will serve for study of the effect of word usages:

*Live verbs* are more forceful:

General Grant believed.

General Grant was of the opinion.

The flood eroded the mountainside.

The erosion of the hillside was the result of the flood.

*Specific words* express more precise meanings:

They climbed the mountain . . . (or, did they scale, rope up, walk up, scramble, struggle, or stroll?)

**Simple Words**

Sometimes you will need to say with regard to, for the purpose of, with reference to, in the nature of, with view to, or to use modifying adverbs such as worked diligently, fed abundantly. Habitual speech patterns of this kind, however, result in monotony and dilution. Most of the time the single unadorned word is more forceful and more precise: About, for, like, if, to, or labored or feasted.

**Words That People Understand**

In describing military and general historical or archeological events, periods, or concepts, use the language of the layman rather than technical, professional, or abstract terms. For example, do not use "piece" for rifle or gun, or "redoubt" unless it is explained to be a type of fort, or "cannon emplacement" for cannon platform. In archeological talks, don't say "Anasazi complex" when you mean simply the life of the Pueblo Indians. Similarly the words ecology, plant succession, cirque, fault, Sonoran life zone, vulcanism, or saprophyte may not mean anything to some of your audience unless the discussion itself makes the meanings clear. This does not mean that you avoid these words. They are very useful words. People like to add new words to their vocabularies, and for you to do this for them can add to and prolong their interest in what you say. Just be sure that new words and new concepts are given meaning by what you say about them.
"It is easy to give a slide talk." Perhaps it is true that a poor speaker can "get by" by using slides, but it is the picture, not the talk, that commands attention and holds interest. There are occasions, of course, when pictures are shown for their own intrinsic interest, and in these cases the commentary quite properly is secondary. Using pictures to give greater emphasis to the spoken word is quite a different matter, and, contrary to the above quotation, requires a considerable degree of skill and very careful preparation. The illustrations will easily "steal the show" unless the speaker surmounts certain handicaps under which he labors.

First, the speaker works in the dark, and is thus deprived of the use of facial expression and gesture. To compensate, he must rely heavily upon voice inflection for emphasis and attention. A subdued light on the speaker is an aid.

Secondly, after placing himself in darkness, he gives the audience something attractive and colorful to look at. For most people, what the eye sees takes precedence over what the ear hears. People can hear and see at the same time, but unless what they hear is well coordinated with what they see, the mind will concentrate on one or the other. How often have you heard the comment "I enjoyed your pictures." Coordination of picture and commentary makes the picture more meaningful, and the picture in turn gives emphasis to the spoken word.

The temptation is great to use slides as a substitute for good organization and as a cover for poor preparation and poor presentation. Speakers who use this crutch identify themselves as they introduce each slide with "The next slide shows...", "Here we see...", or "This is a picture of...".

How do you avoid these pitfalls, and overcome these handicaps? The following procedures and techniques will be helpful.

Thorough preparation for the talk itself is the first essential. Forget about slides for the moment. Plan a talk that will stand on its own feet. Plan and organize the talk and know what you are going to say, then select and arrange your illustrations. Choose slides to fit the talk, not words to explain a series of previously arranged slides.

In the actual presentation, avoid all unnecessary reference to the slides. When you say "This scene shows", you are telling the audience to focus their attention on the screen. What you really want is for them to listen to what you say. The effect you strive for is a well organized, smooth-flowing talk which, at just the right time, is illustrated by a picture. Used in this way, pictures supplement the talk rather than compete with it.

Every change of scene on the screen is a momentary distraction from your spoken word. Try to make this work for you rather than against you. One way is to make the transition to the idea illustrated by the next slide a few seconds before the picture is changed—in your commentary, anticipate the next scene. Recognize too that some of your pictures are so impressive that they immediately steal the show. In your commentary you have anticipated the picture, then your prize shot appears on the screen and the audience concentrates its
attention on it. Continue to talk, but defer your important comment until attention swings back to you.

Expert projection is a basic requirement. Every slide up-side-down, every obvious spot or fingerprint, jerky changes, delayed changes, slides changed too soon, black intervals between slides, a blank fully lighted white screen, any unusual noise—all of these are distractions that only serve to pull attention away from the picture, and, more importantly, away from the speaker. The problems of the speaker using slides are too great for him to tolerate inexpert projection or less than complete preparedness on his own part.

NOW YOU ARE READY TO TALK

Your Appearance and Actions are Important Factors

Approach your audience erect, with a natural but lively stride, without rushing and without hesitation. Stand still, stand erect, and pause for a few seconds before you begin. During this interval do two things—establish eye contact with your audience, and remind yourself that you are communicating with people, not talking to yourself. Make yourself aware that there is a real, live audience out there in front of you. The awareness of an audience, and of communication, which you establish at this time, will assist you throughout your talk in maintaining good volume, tone, and quality of voice, and in giving naturalness to your gestures. Talk to people and gesture for people, not to and for yourself.

Do not prop yourself over a table, pace back and forth, fiddle with objects, or make meaningless motions. Movement and gestures strengthen your words when called for by what you say and when they come naturally. Use gestures when they derive from an earnest effort to communicate with an audience.

Finish your talk at its highest level, with its most important idea, pause and then take your departure. No need to rush off or to be hesitant—just walk off. Don’t apologize, and avoid killing your conclusion by changing character, or uttering unessential comments—just close your talk and be done.

Much Depends Upon How You Use Your Voice

We cannot deal extensively with the matter of training the speaking voice. However, the knowledge
of some general principles and some common pitfalls will be useful. Voice volume, voice quality, and articulation are the important factors.

Volume, in general, is regulated and controlled from the chest and diaphragm. Breathe deeply, and gain force from the diaphragm. As an aid to establishing proper volume, select some person in the rear of your audience, and talk to him. You don't have to look at him all the time, but bring your eyes back to him periodically. Your awareness of that one person will unconsciously help maintain an adequate volume. Change of volume is a technique of emphasis, and a lowering of volume is often more emphatic than a loud voice.

Voice quality is a product of overtones produced in mouth and head and added to sounds produced by the vocal cords. Without good overtones the voice may be thin, flat, colorless, harsh or nasal. Speaking from the diaphragm with clear and precise enunciation, speaking with an open mouth, and attempting to throw the voice toward the roof of the mouth are practices which aid in developing resonance, good tonal quality, the fullness of voice.

Good articulation is basic to good speaking. Volume alone will not carry your message if your words are spoken indistinctly. On the other hand, with good articulation, less volume is needed to carry the voice to the audience. A dead-pan, motionless-lip delivery will result in muffled, slurred, and indistinct tones. Good articulation is a result of active use of throat, tongue, teeth, and lips.

Your normal speaking key is generally best for you. Normal pitch places less strain on your voice, and provides the greatest latitude for expression. However, the excitement of appearing before an audience often raises the voice one or two tones above normal pitch. The very fact that the voice is too high prolongs stage fright, and the voice may never drop to its normal level. For most people, then, it is good practice at the beginning of a talk to deliberately lower the voice one or two tones. This may even place the voice below its most effective pitch, but it will soon move up to its natural level.

Mannerisms of Speech

Recordings of your voice probably will reveal certain mannerisms of speech. Some are bad, some neutral. Only you can correct them. The most common and objectionable is the habit of punctuating each pause with an "ah" or "uh". Keep your mind ahead of your voice and there will be fewer pauses and fewer occasions for "ahs". When you do pause, make it a silent interval. There is nothing wrong with a few silent intervals. Pauses properly used are oral punctuation marks. Other mannerisms include habitual use of certain words or phrases, or of a set pattern of sentence structure. Use variety --synonyms for commonly used words, a varied sentence structure--to improve the cadence and swing of your talk.

What is Stage Fright?

Most speakers, including professionals, experience an excitement commonly called "stage fright." This is not fear of an audience and it will not render you speechless. It is a stimulation, an excitement, which results as the body fortifies itself in anticipation of an unaccustomed
activity or a crisis. This stimulation can be an advantage to you. It can make your mind more alert, and add life and vigor to your delivery. Stage fright also may reflect fear of yourself, a feeling of inadequacy; complete preparation is the obvious antidote. Confidence and control come with experience, but in the meantime it is helpful to (1) firmly fix in mind your introductory statement, (2) pause, and gain eye contact with the audience before you start, (3) think about your subject, not about yourself, and (4) use a memorized outline.

During the course of a talk, sometimes your mind goes completely blank. Again, a brief pause while you collect your thoughts is not objectionable. If the next word doesn't come, step forward and repeat the last point you made, and go on from there. As a last resort, simply acknowledge that the next point has slipped your mind for the moment, and pick up your talk at the next point in your outline. If you talk from a memorized sequence of ideas, a memorized outline, rather than from a memorized speech, you can't get lost for long in any place in your talk.

Reading aloud is helpful in improving the quality of the voice and also aids in avoiding the kind of stage fright which may occur when, for the first time, you become conscious of the sound of your own voice. Recordings should be made periodically to detect faults and improve quality. Tape or wire recorders or even dictaphones are useful for this purpose.

The following references are suggested for additional study of the art of speaking effectively:

Training the Speaking Voice  
By Virgil A. Anderson, Oxford University Press, 1942

This volume covers breathing for speech, production of vocal tones, physics of voice resonance, developing clearness of speech, etc., and is comprehensive and detailed on voice culture. Some parts of it are technical in nature.

Public Speaking as Listeners Like It  
By Richard C. Borden, Harpers Press, 1935

A brief volume containing listener's laws for speech organization, speech substance, speech phraseology and speech delivery. The volume contains some excellent suggestions for successful public speaking.

Public Speaking and Influencing Men in Business  
By Dale Carnegie

This volume contains many useful suggestions in the preparation and delivery of talks.

The Art of Plain Talk  
By Rudolf Flesch, Harper and Brothers, 1946

This book tells how to speak and to write so that people understand what you mean.

Speech, Its Techniques and Disciplines in a Free Society  
By William Norwood Brigance, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1953

An excellent treatment of the theory and practical aspects of speech. It considers the audience,
the preparation and organization of the talk, the
delivery of the talk, and voice training.

Everyday Speech
By Bess Sondel, Perma Books, 1950

This is a handy little volume containing cur­
rent ideas on talking to groups.

A LAST WORD

It is said that rules are made to be broken. Certainly many of the procedures outlined above may be violated without resulting in failure. There is still a very important place reserved for individual expression and originality. By all means experiment, develop new techniques, devise methods of presentation that best reflect your own abilities and personality and that fit the local situation. However, in breaking the rules you first should know the rules, and in judging performance be sure of the criteria for the measurement of success. In interpretive work, it is not entertainment value, the beauty of a group of slides, oratorical ability as such, or public reaction to a personality that measure success. All of these may be important contributing factors, but the real measure of accomplishment is revealed as, in review of your performance, you ask:

1. Did I hold interest all through the talk?
2. Did the audience get any new ideas?
3. Were favorable attitudes toward the area, the Service, and this activity established?

Nor will this, or any other discussion of speaking in itself, give you ability as a speaker. Speaking is a skill, it is capable of improvement, and like golf or singing, it is a skill which will decline through lack of exercise. There is no way to achieve proficiency but through practice.

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