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History Speaks: A Manual on Impersonation Speaking

Robert D. Kendall
St. Cloud State University

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Robert D. Kendall, PhD.
Professor Emeritus
St. Cloud State University
St. Cloud, Minnesota

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PREFACE

In 1984, as a professor in speech communication at St. Cloud State University, I taught "Impersonation Speaking" for the first time, a course I created and developed out of my own personal and varied background.

As an undergraduate at Hartwick College and the University of Denver, I was particularly interested in what made people behave as they do, so I majored in psychology, anticipating a future in some branch of the counseling field. Then I attended Drew University Theological Seminary, and was ordained in the Methodist Church. During my thirteen years in the pastorate, as I talked with many of my colleagues, I became increasingly concerned about their perception of the diminishing effectiveness of the preaching task. Partly because of this and partly because of my own need for variety and penchant for risky innovation, I experimented with numerous methods of alternative approaches to "sermonizing." The one method which far and away received the most positive feedback, measured by informal and admittedly subjective data, was the "First Person Monolog," in which I preached *as* a specific Biblical or historical character.

When I left the pastorate for additional graduate work, I decided to concentrate on theatre, eventually receiving a Master's Degree in that field. Then, for a number of reasons, personal and professional, I shifted to Speech Communication for my doctorate, focusing my dissertation on "drama as a method of sermonizing."

In 1971, when I came to St. Cloud State University as a member of the faculty, I found myself in a rapidly growing department that encouraged creative curriculum development. After a few years of "getting my feet on the ground," and concentrating on the more traditional needs of the department and its offerings, I proposed "Impersonation Speaking" as an elective in the public speaking component of our major. Thus the course was born, after a lengthy incubation period, which included years of delivering numerous speeches throughout the Northeast and Midwest by historical characters I was asked to portray in clubs, churches, schools, and historical societies---what proved to be "persuasive modeling" opportunities showing academic decision-makers that I knew what I was talking about. Translating many of my personal interests, experiences, and training into one specific course was quite a challenge.

Both faculty and students responded positively to SPC 337: "Impersonation Speaking." It became a very popular course, and to many people's surprise, did not attract only "theatre majors!" The course was filled every time it was offered, and by students and staff from all over the campus and community, both traditional and non-traditional students. In the course, they chose to portray characters introduced to them through their own leisuretime reading as well as from their specialized fields of study

at the university. We heard speeches by historical characters from the fields of history, art, religion, military science, business, biology, women's studies, politics, music, to name just a few. They spanned time from 2000 BC to 1960 AD (this latter date being the imposed cutoff point).

Now that I'm retired, I have the time and energy (and fewer distractions!) to write about this experience. However, I've chosen not to write this manual in a "lesson-outline" college-course format. Budget cutbacks all across academia seem to be making such "non-core" courses monetarily impractical today, regardless of how helpful or educationally sound they may be. Therefore, I am writing this manual according to a "step-by-step" process, from looking at the study of history in general and choosing a character to portray, to the final presentation itself, in which the historical character speaks to a contemporary audience. Such a manual can be used by anyone who's interested in "Impersonation Speaking," whether in or outside an academic setting, or whether that person develops the character and speech as an individual working alone, or whether the presentation is developed in a classroom or workshop setting. (If the reader is also an instructor wishing to incorporate into an existing course a unit on impersonation speaking or even to design a whole course around this material, that, too, is possible. The same can be said for a workshop developer and leader.)

In this manual I will first comment on the writing of history in general and then trace the very irregular and halting history of "Impersonation Speaking" as an art, particularly as it is conveyed through "First Person Monologs." Then I will lead the reader through the specific tasks of choosing and researching an appropriate character to portray, locating the speech in time and place, and identifying the audience in order to speak to its concerns. These chapters will be followed by a discussion of self-concept, and how it affects a character's public presentation. Then comes the task of looking at the world as the chosen character saw it at that moment in time. Next is the matter of identifying the chosen character's individual style of communicating, and the process of building the character, both verbally and nonverbally. Only after all these steps in the process are accomplished, do I suggest how to put it all together in the writing of the speech. This will be followed by a chapter on rehearsing and delivering the speech, including a short discussion on the use of manuscript, notes, and speaking "off the cuff." Finally, I will briefly address the following topics of public speaking in general, applying them to Impersonation Speaking in particular: "visual image," "audience analysis," "the speaking event itself and what happens if. . .?," "the why's and how's of frequent revising," completing the chapter with a few words about publicity and the possibilities for presentation, where and when audiences can best be found and might be the most receptive.

It is my hope that this manual meets the needs of those people already interested in this specific and narrowly-defined category of public speaking. I hope, too, that the curious might read this and develop such an interest. Because of this latter purpose, as an addenda, I have included a speech I wrote

for Carl Schurz some time ago, one that I have delivered a number of times *as* Carl Schurz. It is printed here as a *sample only*, not as the prototype for Impersonation Speaking, because each character is and must remain an unique individual and each portrayer brings to the character one's own particular perceptions and perspective.

It is my continuing hope that through Impersonation Speaking more and more people will come to appreciate history as "human storytelling," through which we become exposed to the uniqueness and diversity of these perceptions and perspectives that we all hold as human beings.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

Chapter One "A Bit About History in General". 1

Chapter Two "History of First Person Monologs". 5

Chapter Three "Choosing a Character". 9

Chapter Four "Researching the Character". 16

Chapter Five "Location of the Speech in Time". 19
"Identification of the Audience"

Chapter Six "Identifying the Self-Concept". 24

Chapter Seven "Viewing the Character's World". 28

Chapter Eight "Identifying a Style". 31

Chapter Nine "Building a Character". 36

Chapter Ten "Writing the Speech". 41

Chapter Eleven "Rehearsing and Delivering the Speech". . . 46

Chapter Twelve "Pot Pourri of Additional Pertinent Points". .51
(Visual Image; Audience Analysis; The Speaking Event & What Happens If?; Revising the Speech; Publicity and Possibilities for Presentation)

Addenda "The Spirit of Reform" by Carl Schurz (1884). 60

CHAPTER ONE

"A Bit About History in General"

I debated long and hard as to where in the manual to place this chapter about history in general. In my opinion, it is important enough to include somewhere. I thought such a chapter might best fit just before the one about researching the chosen character as a warning for what the researcher will most likely find. On the other hand, I thought it could fit at the end of the manual in order to reduce any anxiety the reader might have after having written a speech that necessarily includes some "historical imagination." Furthermore, it could be placed at the very beginning of the manual to alert the reader as to my basic understanding of history and my approach to Impersonation Speaking as a vehicle with which to communicate an historical event or moment. As the reader can see, I chose the third possibility. However, I am not fully convinced this is the most appropriate placement, and would not be adverse to the suggestion that the chapter be reread prior to Chapter Four on researching and again at the end of the manual. (Good sense and printing costs dictate that the chapter not be duplicated and reprinted in those two places!)

An old cliché states: "History is written by historians." We call this a cliché because its truth is obvious, because it sheds very little light on the subject, and because the statement is overused. However, lest we discard it altogether, for a mature understanding of history, the meaning behind those words must be taken seriously. To say that history is written by historians is to admit that history is subject to the historian's perceptions of the past, each event and movement being understood against the background of the individual historian's experiences, philosophy, sources of facts, loyalties, ability to communicate, focus and purpose for writing, mood at the time of writing, relationship between author and editor, time and space limitations imposed by the publisher, etc. With all this phenomena involved, it is no wonder history books vary so much, or that researchers frequently become frustrated when looking up facts and trying to corroborate them.

Most people seem to think of history as just so many facts arranged in chronological order. When history is taught this way in our elementary and secondary schools, it is no wonder so many students are "turned off" by their history courses. Rather than looking at the past as a mosaic of interrelated happenings lived by human beings who are a complex of idealism and foibles and who are at least as irrational as they are rational, we have taught most of our children that to understand history they must memorize hundreds of dead facts and spew them back to us at exam-time or hold them in their heads ready to win at a fast game of trivia. By doing this, they, and we, have relegated history into the category of the irrelevant.

We also have conveyed to generation upon generation the idea that history is but the gathering of facts that, given enough of them, can only be interpreted *one* way and in most cases to reach a single unarguable conclusion. Too many contemporary journalists seem to behave regularly in this manner; after they have gathered their facts, their conclusion is automatic and, they believe, totally accurate. But the study of human psychology, particularly on the subject of perception, quickly debunks that approach to the facts of the past---and of the present, for that matter. In reality, we find that the interpretation *precedes* the facts, which are gathered from the vast mass of available data and organized to fit the interpretation. A quick survey of history books, or of individual historical events, written by historians from different cultures and/or nations is an education as to this truth. Reading about the Battle of the Little Big Horn is a good example. U.S. Cavalry and Sioux Nation historians have gathered contrasting "facts" that have supported different interpretations. Another disturbing example is the history of the American Revolution: accounts written by U.S.A. historians differ from Canadian accounts as to what happened to those Colonists who favored not rebelling against England. The history of Northern Ireland is another example of this dual perception, as is the history of central Africa or Nicaragua or Palestine/Israel or the Russian revolution of 1917. Interpretation comes first; then we gather the facts to support that conclusion.

While we're on the subject of "facts," we need to remind ourselves that the "fact" is not the "event." That is, a "fact" is a report about an event that has been experienced either first or second hand. A "fact of history" has already been filtered through the perception of the reporter. One event can give birth to several "facts"---statements about that event, reflections of the reporters' perceptions. Sometimes those "facts" as reported by different people contradict each other and the researcher must choose which is most accurate, based on corroborating evidence. More often than not, happily such contradiction will not occur; what will happen occasionally, however, even by the best of historians, is "leaving out" bits of information (because of "focus" or publishers' limitations, for example) that might give a different "spin" on the retelling of an event. The reader, then, must "read between the lines," or fill in "the rest of the story," as Paul Harvey regularly does in his radio broadcasts.

Historians vary as to the amount of "historical imagination" they use in their writing. Walter Nugent in his fascinating little book, Creative History (p.50; Lippencott, Philadelphia, 1973), defines "historical imagination" as "rethinking yourself backward into the past situation." As a descriptive example, Nugent suggests looking at the day Lincoln was shot. What "facts" of which we have no record or no knowledge must have occurred in Lincoln's life that day? Did he not get out of bed? Did he not go to the toilet? Did he not dress and have breakfast? Did he not speak to his wife and children? Did he read the newspaper? Did he receive callers, and who were they? Did he speak with his secretary? Etc., etc., etc. Because he was a human being, as well as President of the United States of

America, because he lived in Washington, D.C. in the White House, because it was spring, 1865, we can "fill in" the events of the day with our imagination. Many historians do just that, especially if they want their books read and their classrooms filled. A deeper question remains: Why were certain "facts" recorded, and others left unrecorded? Why do historians choose some "facts" to include in their histories, and choose not to include others? The very selection process is interpretation in and of itself, determined largely by the historian's frame of reference at the time of writing.

Nugent also reminds us that recorded history is full of interesting and sometimes misleading generalizations. Some come in the form of labels, such as "Southerners" or "Germans" or "women" or "farmers" or "immigrants." Some come in the form of periodizations, such as "modern" or "eighteenth-century" or "Victorian" or "ancient." Some come in the form of types or classes of entities, such as "capitalism" or "democracy" or "parliamentary monarchy." Some come in vague concepts, such as "struggle for freedom" or "movement toward equality" or "environmental consciousness" or "technological progress." Each of these above-mentioned terms is an example of historical generalization, based on a particular selection of "facts" (and deselection of some other facts) creatively tied together to describe, through an efficient summarization, what the historian is talking about. As much as such usage may be justifiable in a textbook or work of nonfiction, whenever terms like these are used, the writer (and teller) of history is interpreting the past for the reader (and listener).

So, how do we know what is "true" in history and what is not? The answer to this question is found in the answer to another question: "What do you accept as proof?" And the answer to that question is rooted in the question: "How much do you trust your sources?" This trustworthiness is further predicated on our trust of human perception, ours as well as others'. Therefore, "truth" in history is a highly individualized phenomenon. Because this is so, we are thrown back on the concept of "corroborated evidence" as the only operational and practical approach to determining historical truth. Facts must square with other accounts of an event, particularly with universally accepted "facts" that describe the same event. The key to that statement is the word "universally." When most (or all) historical writers we read describe an event from one particular philosophy or viewpoint, and the "other side" has no or little opportunity to input its perception, we cannot stamp those descriptions with the phrase "universally accepted." Corroborated evidence that is universally accepted seems to be the only reasonable approach to discovering truth in history. Whatever is beyond this universally accepted corroborated evidence is assigned to the category of historical imagination---that is, reading something between the lines that may or may not have actually occurred, but something that helps to make sense of an event and aids in the interpretation of that historical moment.

With all this having been said, we ask the question: "Is the writing of history an art or is it a science?" The answer? It seems to be both. The writing of history is a science insofar as it approaches

its task in a disciplined, duplicatible manner, and doesn't let the human imagination inhibit or obscure the finding and conclusions of the research. This might be termed "the scientific method applied to the writing of history." (Author's Note: The incompleteness and inadequacy of this definition betrays my own inclinations, that the writing of history may be both science and art, but I tend to emphasize more its artistic element; and I suggest that the greater emphasis on artistry is what differentiates impersonation speaking from a straight lecture.)

The writing of history becomes an art after the research is completed, when the historian begins to organize his/her "facts" and interpret them for the reader. How are these facts tied together? In what chronological order do they make the most sense? Which facts are to be emphasized, and which ones are to be left out? Can any generalizations be made, and if so, what? What do I do with inconsistent information, and even contradictory material? At what point in history do I begin, and at what point do I end? These and other questions are questions of art, how to put together the article or book (or speech for the Impersonation Speaker) in a readable (or listenable) entity, and still be accurate and truthful in using the scientifically researched material.

With this all-too-brief discussion of history, historians, and historical writing, we are now ready to look at the specific history of the very narrowly defined subject of "impersonation speaking" (or "first-person monologs") as part of the larger discipline of Public Speaking.

CHAPTER TWO

"History of First Person Monologs"

It may have begun when, around some primitive campfire, a hunter assumed the persona of the saber-toothed tiger he had just killed. It may have begun when some spiritual elder attempted to communicate to his or her tribe the words of the deity they worshipped. It may have begun when some storyteller wanted to transmit to the next generation how wise or strong some ancestor had been. Whenever and however it began, the birth of Impersonation Speaking, or First Person Monologs, has been lost in antiquity. We simply do not know; we can only guess. All we can do is to identify a few strands of this very narrowly defined form of public speaking, and let it go at that.

In ancient Hebrew times, the only way to transmit tribal history to another generation was through storytelling. Over the years it probably became more and more animated and exaggerated, as the storyteller would assume the persona of the god or the hero in his attempt to convince his audience that the story was worth hearing. The Old Testament records many of these stories: to the believer, an account of God's relationship with human beings through the history of one people; to non-believers, simply a collection of myths that have become the spiritual foundation of at least three major religions. However, believer or nonbeliever, the Old Testament is filled with stories that have been told for generations in more and more exciting ways, one of which must surely have been with the storyteller assuming the character speaking, if for only a few moments sometime in the telling. As the stories were retold over and over again by different storytellers, they changed ever so slightly by the creative contributions of each personality as they perceived the world through the character they assumed.

In the sixth century B.C.E., before the days of the great Greek playwrights, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes, audiences were enjoying choral presentations of historical and legendary events. Then, sometime during that century, as our theatre historians have taught, Thespis stepped out of the chorus and, aided by a mask held in front of his face, assumed the role of an individual speaker, as distinct from the choral leader who kept his position in the chorus while reciting his lines. That action of Thespis is credited as the beginning of theatre in our western world. He could also be credited as the western birth mother of impersonation speaking: giving a speech as if he were another person.

The American Indian (or Native American, as some wish to be called) communicated across generations with a highly developed oral tradition. They educated their young, both in ritual and spontaneously, through a mixture of storytelling, public speaking, and acting out. When the people would gather, the person given the right to speak (in some nations by being passed the "talking stick") would sometimes assume the persona of a hunter, and sometimes that of the hunted. Words and phrases

would be created to communicate the feelings and the perception of the person or animal that was bearing the message of the hunt. Sometimes masks or other symbolic paraphernalia would be used as aids, and sometimes not. Periodically, ritualistic dances would be created to accompany the message. However it was done, such an act of communication certainly qualifies for inclusion among the strands of history in the development of Impersonation Speaking.

In European medieval times, communication between towns or castles was the responsibility of the minstrel or troubadour. Lyrics were created to tell a story in a highly entertaining way, being carried along by the magic of music. Some message-bearing troubadours might well have given their message more power by impersonating, in song or in plain speaking voice, the source of the message. As primarily entertainers, such a suggestion is certainly within the realm of probability.

As some of us have traveled around the country in the last few years, we have stopped at historically preserved sites to encounter people dressed as characters from another time. Usually these individuals will converse with visitors as the characters they are portraying. One of the best known of these sites is Williamsburg, Virginia, where we see a whole community going about their business as people might in the 18th century, and conversing with tourists when questions are raised, but always attempting to stay in character. In the summertime, Fort Snelling, in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Fort Henry, in Kingston, Ontario, are other such sites where tourists can learn what it was like to live in a military outpost in the 18th and 19th centuries. One could spend years traveling across North America interacting with people of the past at historically preserved sites and regional historical museums, from Massachusetts to California, from Nova Scotia to British Columbia, from Alaska to Mexico, and still not cover them all. These examples may not be exactly Impersonation Speaking, as I have defined it, but they are close enough to be called a branch of it. Maybe "impersonation conversing" would be more accurate for most of these examples.

In recent years, we have seen some big-name entertainers (Hal Holbrook, for example) portraying in one-person shows the likes of Mark Twain, Harry Truman, Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, Sojourner Truth, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Martin Luther King, Jr., Susan B. Anthony, Jackie Robinson, Amelia Earhart, Anne Frank, and Clarence Darrow, among others. Though these mentioned characters have usually been portrayed by professional actors on a stage or on television, and the words they spoke have largely been the character's own words uttered when they were alive, researched from writings and creatively tied together by a playwright to last for an hour or more and advertised as a "show," they still deserve to be considered as another strand in the genre of monolog or impersonation speaking.

Having included the above point, a question is legitimately raised: "What is the difference between 'monolog or impersonation speaking' and a 'theatrical performance'?" I give a rather simple

answer to that question: "It's a matter of degree." The distinction is there, but it is not always easy to identify. Monolog speaking is one person making a speech to an audience of fifteen or more people (admittedly an arbitrary number), whose function it is to listen as that person gives the prepared speech. The impersonation part becomes evident when the speaker assumes the character of another person when giving that speech. Impersonation speaking becomes theatre when "show" becomes more important than a prepared speech targeted at a specific audience on a specific occasion. It becomes theatre when the presenter organizes the "speech" into "scenes" or "acts" that arbitrarily extend the presentation's time-lapse. It becomes theatre when other characters (imaginary or real) are introduced in the "plot." Impersonation speaking becomes theatre when the focus moves from "speech-making" to "acting a role." Again, the difference is sometimes only a matter of degree.

In the academic world (if the reader is interested), given the fact that public speaking and acting have been associated with one another from the beginnings of recorded history, these academic foci have evolved into three not-altogether-distinct disciplines (or, if you prefer, "sub-disciplines" of the Communication Arts): 1) Speech or Rhetoric; 2) Theatre; 3) Oral Interpretation. The latter, Oral Interpretation, as a college department, has sometimes been located within Speech and sometimes within Theatre. Then, again, once in a great while, it has been designated as a separate department in its own right. I place Impersonation Speaking within the Speech discipline, for all the reasons I have given thus far. Not in theatre because it is not primarily playing a role interacting with other actors, real or imaginary; there is no "plot" as such. I cannot place it in the Oral Interpretation discipline because the "rules" of speechmaking are different from "interpreting for an audience an author's words and written perceptions." As early as 1924, Professor Gertrude Johnson of the University of Wisconsin struggled with this problem in her text, Modern Literature for Oral Interpretation. At that time, the discipline of Oral Interpretation was attempting to define itself, and part of that struggle involved the role of impersonation in interpretation, a problem that has never been completely solved or universally accepted as solved. Johnson comes closest to defining impersonation speaking as distinct from oral interpretation with these words quoted from her Introduction: "In reading, the audience must see nothing with its eyes which detracts from its mental vision. The dramatic quality of the piece must be given just in so far as it stimulates the imagination, but never so far as to call attention to the reader as an actual personality." Of course, this is impossible in impersonation speaking, for the person speaking (ethos, in Aristotle's terminology) is very much a part of the speech event, and an audience must always perceive that.

It has come to my attention that another rather curious label has sometimes been applied to Impersonation Speaking, and in certain parts of the country is the term most used for this activity. That label is "Chautauqua." How this occurred is anybody's guess; but allow me to venture a possibility. In the latter years of the 19th century, a program of summer lectures and cultural events, including music,

art, and drama, was established at Chautauqua Lake in western New York State, a Methodist assembly ground that provided learning opportunities for families and campers. Over the years, in addition to symphonic concerts and dramatic productions, internationally renowned speakers would come to Chautauqua to deliver lectures on contemporary issues and other topics of general interest. This program has now evolved into one administered by a privatized corporate board and continues to this very day, and even has spread into other parts of the country as satellite "Chautauquas" (Bayfield, Wisconsin is but one example that comes to this author's mind.). Sometime in this evolution, some speaker must have delivered his or her lecture in the mode of impersonation. That approach to lecturing could have been so well appreciated that some other lecturers decided to follow suit. Thus, someone might have mistakenly referred to these Impersonation Speeches as "Chautauquas," a label that stuck in some listener's mind and was inappropriately applied to all Impersonation Speeches. However this labeling began, I personally consider such identification as an affront to the great tradition of Chautauqua, for people to reduce that internationally recognized program of cultural events to a single method of presentation. For that is what Impersonation Speaking is: *one* method of presentation; whereas the word "Chautauqua" refers to a full-blown schedule of cultural programs and lectures, with presentations being given in many different and varied forms, through music, drama, and art, as well as monolog speeches.

Another label that has been frequently given to Impersonation Speaking, and one with which I am much more comfortable, is "Living History." Such a label is understandable in that the purpose of impersonating an historical character is to make that person "come alive" before an audience, and is most often used these days under the auspices of historical societies, museums, history departments, and in front of "history buffs" of all kinds in many situations, events, and commemorative experiences. In this manual I will continue to use "Impersonation Speaking" as my label of choice, as I believe it serves as a much more representative term for the overall activity.

This review of the history of this narrowly defined form of public address called Impersonation or Monolog Speaking has been necessarily sketchy. Tracing its threads has been both fascinating and frustrating: fascinating to see the many and varied ways it has been used in the history of human communication, and frustrating because of the absence of a consistent definition and a dearth of specific information on the subject. Suffice it to say that "we have impersonation speaking before us as a (one) method for presenting historical information" and we are left with the challenge of how best to develop and use it. The purpose of the following chapters is to do just that.

CHAPTER THREE

Step #1: "Choosing a Character"

The first task is to choose a character to portray and for whom you will write a speech. This is a simple task, yet it has caused many a potential speaker more than one night of frustration. "There are so many historical personalities from which to choose!"

If you don't already know whom you would like to portray, I suggest you ask other people whom you remind them of in history. If you are doing the choosing on your own without the aid of a class or instructor, you might ask members of your family or your friends for their help. Ask them what historical character you might easily do. Ask them whom in history they think of when they look at you. You might assist their brainstorming by asking them to finish a sentence like "You remind me of . . ." or "I can see you as . . ."

Be prepared for anything! Their first suggestion might be something humorous, not knowing how serious you are. Their response will also depend upon their mood at the time, and your current relationship with them. Pin them down to concrete suggestions; no generalized personalities (such as "a nineteenth century military officer" or "a nun" or "a medieval peasant"). You are asking for suggestions of real people, individuals who actually lived sometime upon this earth. This means, of course, that they limit their suggestions to human beings; no animals or cartoon characters. You might give them one more limitation (or, you can delete some suggestions later on your own, those who don't meet this restriction): the character must be deceased, no longer physically living. (Attempting to portray a living person usually ends up being little else but a caricature, a comic representation of what the audience knows as "reality," often with the goal of poking fun at the character.)

Do not discount any suggestions that fall within these parameters. Write down every one of them as possibilities, even if you disagree or are a bit offended. Resist the temptation to mention whom you had thought of portraying or whom you wanted to portray, for disclosing such information would limit their imagination of the moment, and would probably delay or impair the process of choosing your character.

The process thus far can be accomplished in a group setting as well. Small groups of four or five potential impersonation speakers could sit in a circle, each person taking a turn at being the focus of the group. Participants could "throw out" suggestions that come to mind in a brainstorming manner, according to the above-mentioned parameters. The person being helped should record *all* suggestions, giving no evaluation, positive or negative, of any suggestion or perception.

With the list of possibilities in hand, from either your friends or from a group brainstorming session (including some ideas that may not have been offered by others, but you may have pondered on your own), you will begin the narrowing-down task. For example, you will have fewer problems by choosing someone of the same sex as yourself, as well as the same race. This reduces the adjustment an audience must make; they won't have as great a problem of denying what they see. The impersonation speaker needs all the help an audience can give without having to jump over the barrier of sex or race. The "willing suspension of disbelief" will only go so far!

I also suggest that impersonation speakers choose a character of approximately the same age as they are. My college students had much less trouble portraying characters in the 15 to 45 year old range, except for some older non-traditional students who could get away with impersonating an older character. I often cringe when I see children trying to portray older people (they may be "cute," but they're not very believable!). Besides, there are many children in history with whom children of the present day can identify. Also, older characters, if chosen, all had childhoods; a youngster could portray and write a "school speech" for some well-known person when that person was a pupil; thus solving the problem of age difference. There will come a time when I will need to give up portraying some of the characters I impersonate, simply because I don't want my audience to work so hard at suspending their disbelief. For example, I can cover up only so much gray before my hair, in an alliance with the wrinkles on my face, betrays the location of my speech in time and place. I could, I imagine, wear a wig; however, it must not "look like one!" Of course, I could always relocate the date of the speech to some later year (if the character was still living at that time), and "look back on my life," but that would mean an extensive rewriting of the speech. Going the other way, a younger person portraying an older person sometimes works with a generous powdering of cornstarch and a few well-placed wrinkles and lines in the face. My point, in elaborating on the obvious, is to choose a character who will give you, the portrayer, the fewest problems possible and the least amount of trouble as you help your audience to suspend their disbelief.

I am one who shudders when some impersonator attempts to speak in a different dialect and does it poorly. Unless you are skilled in the dialect of some person you might choose, one who actually spoke in a different dialect or language that is native to you, I strongly suggest you strike that person from your list of possibilities. If you insist on impersonating such a character, I strongly urge that you forget trying to do it in dialect and use your own native tongue. Speaking poorly in a non-native dialect all too often becomes little else than a humorous caricature---an obvious attempt to poke fun at the character. At the very least, poorly uttered dialect draws attention away from the character and places it squarely on the portrayer as an actor.

In settling on the character that is "just right for you," I suggest you consider the following questions. What historical era is of most interest to you? (For my characters, I am most intrigued with the latter two thirds of the nineteenth century; and, for professional reasons, New Testament times in and around the beginning of the Christian era.) Is there a specific vocational focus that interests you? (My characters are mostly clergy or other people known to be involved in some religious expression or movement, as well as some lesser-known political figures.) Is there a philosophical bent or lifestyle that would not be especially difficult to represent or communicate? (My characters seem to be men known as freethinkers and individualists, people more willing to sacrifice material gain for some moral principle.) Is there a cause or a social movement that stimulates your emotions? (In either some direct or indirect way, most of my characters have been concerned with human rights and/or personal freedom.) Is there a specific religion or denomination with which you identify? (The Judeo-Christian religions are a very integral part of my worldview, so my characters in some way put a positive spin on them.) Are you a genealogy-buff? Is there someone on your family tree who especially interests you? (Though I have yet to portray one of my ancestors, I have portrayed an individual who worked as a riverboat captain and pilot, the vocation of more than a few of my nineteenth century ancestors.)

If, after considering all these factors, you still have not discovered a character whom you wish to portray, I would suggest you peruse the list at the end of this chapter or the biography section in the public or school library. Most libraries have extensive collections of biographies and autobiographies. One of them will certainly appeal to you. Or, you might ask someone at your local historical society or museum to help you find a character that would interest you.

Furthermore, I would suggest you choose some lesser-known character to portray. It helps when the audience knows very little about a character, therefore allowing less possibility to be jarred by what they may perceive as contradictory data. In these days of television and film, many well-known people have been portrayed by professional actors and have been seen by many modern audiences. For most of us, it would be a losing battle to be compared with professional actors; and whether we like it or not, such comparisons will be made! Besides, it is often more effective to see "great personages" through the eyes of people who knew them; that is, through lesser-known associates.

I had an interesting experience choosing a character a few years ago. The local University Newman Center (a campus Roman Catholic fellowship), on an anniversary of John Henry Cardinal Newman's founding of the movement in the nineteenth century, asked me to speak as Cardinal Newman at a Mass commemorating that event. Since there was a bust of the cardinal in the narthex of the church, by which most of the congregation entered the church, and I didn't look anything like that bust, I declined the invitation on the basis that it would be too difficult for the worshippers to suspend their disbelief, during or after Mass. After considerable reflection, I suggested that I impersonate the Rev. Dr.

John Keble, Newman's one-time close personal friend and colleague in the Oxford Movement, a man who did not leave the Anglican Church and follow Newman into the Roman Catholic Church. I could look at the cardinal through the eyes of an old friend, but one who had reasons to disagree and take a different path. Keble was not a person recognizable to either the priest or the anniversary committee, but they were willing for me to come and speak as John Keble. From all reports, the "sermon" was very much appreciated from both a Roman Catholic and an ecumenical point of view, so much so that years later, I was asked to return to the Newman Center to speak as John Keble at an anniversary of Cardinal Newman's birthday.

Bringing a personal insight to your character is something to strive for; that is, attempting to enrich your audience's perception by offering a different slant on the person being portrayed. Sometimes it is very effective to break a cultural myth that's been built over the years around your character and/or the times in which that person lived. Of course, this should be done without destroying the character's importance in history. An example might be if someone would choose to portray Abraham Lincoln (something I do not encourage since some accomplished actors have done that many times and comparisons would naturally be made), and discovered that Lincoln had a rather high-pitched, squeaky voice (which he actually did!). To speak with that kind of voice would be an example of enriching an audience's perception, especially since the great actors who have portrayed Lincoln on stage, film, and television have done so with deeper resonating voices and our culture seems to associate greatness in men with deeper voices. A more accurate vocal representation would challenge an audience to rethink that myth and give them an additional insight into Lincoln's personality.

A number of years ago when I was taking a graduate course in radio drama, during the Christmas season we decided to do the Christmas story from our studio. I was assigned the role of Joseph, Mary's betrothed. Since my voice at that time was in the high baritone range, there was some concern that it was not quite deep enough to communicate an image of "manliness" that would be needed to contrast with Mary's voice. We decided that was a myth that needed to be exploded, so we stuck with our original casting.

Other "myths" that might need attention, depending upon what character is being chosen, include the physical height of a Moses or a President Monroe, both of whom were probably very short men, more the size of Mickey Rooney than Charlton Heston. Does one portray a man consistent with history or a man as imagined by our height-conscious culture? What about Judas Iscariot?---was he the human image of all that is evil in this world, or simply a reactionary fighting liberalism and change in his beloved religion? He could be believably portrayed either way and still be consistent with what he did. Clarence Darrow as a man was not always the tough character remembered in his courtroom scenes, but more often than not a very softhearted family man. How is he to be portrayed? Breaking a popular

image without destroying the person's importance in history is a real challenge for the Impersonation Speaker, but doing so often enlightens an audience and enriches its perceptions in a way no other kind of presentation can.

Concerns such as these are not uncommon when choosing a character to portray, and they must be addressed. Some of them may seem rather minor and not worth worrying about, but they can make all the difference in the world between success and failure before an audience. Addressing these concerns at the "choosing the character" stage can save a person many an hour of sweat, tears, and energy in the long run.

The Impersonation Speaker is asking the audience to "suspend its disbelief" from the beginning of the speech to its very end. Of course, the audience "knows" the speaker is not who s/he pretends to be, any more than an actor in a play is actually the character being assumed. This is pretend; it is a twenty or thirty minute historical portrayal of a character. By being in attendance, the audience is showing its willingness "to play this game of pretend," encouraging the Impersonation Speaker to succeed at being the chosen character by using every skill available to an actor. For the few minutes of the speech, the audience wants the speaker to *be* the character; they want the speaker to help them suspend their disbelief, and they'll cooperate in almost any way they can. But they'll need some help from the speaker. Choosing the "right" character to portray is one way of doing just that.

A POT POURRI OF POSSIBLE CHARACTERS

(a top-of-the-head, non-exclusive list,
in categories, but in no particular order)

Politics, Government, Law

John Hansen	Jefferson Davis	Thomas Nast
George Clinton	Victoria Woodhull	Eugene Debs
John Dickinson	Calvin Coolidge	Carl Schurz
John Adams	Herbert Hoover	MacKenzie King
Aaron Burr	Margaret Brent	Norman Thomas
Clarence Darrow	Emmeline Pankhurst	Alfred Smith
Lewis Morris	John Ross	Robert LaFollette
Hannah Arendt	Abigail Adams	Governeur Morris
Jeannette Rankin	William Penn	Alexander Ramsey
John Bradstreet	Alexander Hamilton	Floyd B. Olson
Joseph Rapoport	Red Jacket	Wendell Wilkie
Rufus Choate	John Jay	Henry Clay
Nellie Tayloe Ross	Horace Greeley	W.E.B. DuBois

The Arts

J.S. Bach	Franz Haydn	Johann Hofmann
J. Brahms	Rimsky-Korsikov	Eugene Giradet
Ludwig von Beethoven	"Grandma Moses"	Albrecht Durer
Guiseppe Verdi	Laura Knight	Joan Miro
Frederic Chopin	Grant Wood	Hermann Clementz
Giovanni Rossini	Stephen Foster	Salvador Dali
Georges Bizet	Anton Dvorak	Leonardo da Vinci
Lillian Russell	Michelangelo	May Irwin
Georgia O'Keefe	Pablo Picasso	Frank Lloyd Wright

Authors

Theodore Dreiser	Julia Ward Howe	Robert Ingersoll
H.G. Wells	Mary Wollstonecraft	C.S. Lewis
Harriet Beecher Stowe	Horace Bushnell	Beatrix Potter
Edgar Allen Poe	Charlotte P. Gilman	David Thoreau
Nathaniel Hawthorne	Henry Ward Beecher	Fanny Kemble
James Willard Schultz	Ralph Waldo Emerson	Emily Dickinson
Louisa May Alcott	Ignatius Donnelly	Thomas Paine

Religion/Reform

Biblical Characters	Father Hennepin	Jane Addams
Dietrich Bonhoeffer	Dorthea Day	Annie Sullivan
John Henry Newman	Roger Williams	Washington Gladden
Jonathon Edwards	Anne Hutchinson	Lucretia Mott
Soren Kierkagaard	Elizabeth Cady Stanton	John Brown
Peter Cartwright	Angelina Grimke	Frances Wright
Wendell Phillips	Susan B. Anthony	John Keble
Mary Edwards Walker	George Finney	Margaret Sanger
Sojourner Truth	Walter Rauschenbusch	Anna Swisshelm

Monarchs & Military

Oliver Cromwell	Joshua Chamberlain	Stephen Austin
Alvin York	Sam Houston	Winfield Scott
Admiral Dewey	Catherine the Great	Robert E. Lee
Queen Victoria	Queen Elizabeth I	Joan of Arc
John C. Fremont	Ulysses S. Grant	George Custer
Benedict Arnold	Chief Joseph	Tecumseh
Simon Bolivar	The Red Baron	A.A. Burleigh

Scientists, Inventors, Explorers, Financiers

Marie Curie	*Meriwether Lewis*	*Amelia Earhart*
Eli Whitney	Thomas Edison	Lief Erickson
John Jacob Astor	Marietta Blau	Sequoyah
Amerigo Vespucci	Gertrude Bell	Henry Hudson
Andrew Carnegie	James J. Hill	Sakajawea
Charles Darwin	John Cabot	Jay Gould
Florence Nightengale	George Pullman	Daniel Drew
Albert Einstein	Irene Joliot-Curie	Henry Ford

Educators

Marguarite Schurz	Christopher C. Langdell	Horace Mann
Elizabeth Ann Seton	Elizabeth P. Peabody	Maria Montessori
Andrew Jackson White	Charles William Eliot	Richard Henry Pratt
Mary McLeod Bethune	Elizabeth Cary Agassiz	Edward F. Sorin

Sports Figures

Babe Didrickson	Jackie Robinson	Jim Thorpe
John Heisman	Juan Belmonte	Helen Wills
Kenesaw Landis	Joshua Slocum	John Reid
Abner Doubleday	Annette Kellerman	Lou Gehrig

CHAPTER FOUR

Step # 2: "Researching the Character"

Now that you've chosen a character to portray, the next step is to find as much information as you can about that person. This means you'll need to go where the information is; you'll need to do "research" (a word of Old French derivation meaning "to seek"), to investigate extensively into the life and times of the character for whom you'll write a speech and through whom you'll give it.

Nowadays, with computers so much a part of our world, making an "online search" is probably the first place to inquire. Of course, you will start by gathering whatever information is available under that person's name. The amount of information will vary considerably, depending on how well known that person is and how much detail has been gathered about her/him (such as Thomas Jefferson compared with Squanto). Sometimes more facts have been accumulated under a pseudonym or pen name (e.g., Samuel Clemens/Mark Twain; Charles Dodgson/Lewis Carroll; Marian Evans/George Eliot; H.H. Munro/Saki). Check out all bibliographical listings to identify literary works (books, essays, articles) written about or by your character. (One student of mine found twenty-five books about the person and presidency of James Garfield alone, not to mention the large number of references to the man in periodicals and newspapers!). You might find a reference to the person under a specific social or political movement (e.g., "feminism," "abolition," or "populism"), or under a moral or ethical controversy (e.g., "human rights," "capital punishment," or "healthcare"), or under a broad topic (e.g., "baseball," "inventors," "education," "existentialism"). Remember that the broader the subject you're looking at, the more material you'll need to pour over in order to find a particular reference to your character. However, reading material on the subject in which your character was involved or interested will give you a better understanding of that person and of the times in which s/he lived.

For anyone interested in portraying someone from American history, I've found an excellent starting place to be the Who's Who In America series of books (published by Marquis Publications in Chicago). I say "starting place" because of the very brief biographical sketches of those people the editors have selected to include. Not every significant historical character is there; but many (most?) are. It's worth checking out for leads.

Other categories in which you might find some reference to your character include the professional or vocational occupation with which s/he identified. Was the person a physician? An attorney? A member of the clergy? A political leader? An author? A musician? An educator? A

member of the military? A sports figure? A philanthropist? Any of these categories would provide additional information about the kind of person your character might have been, even if that particular *name is not found there. (Sometimes, a personality characteristic can be communicated to an audience* simply by including very briefly in the speech some vocational generalization that piques an image in the minds of the audience; e.g., librarian, used-car salesman, philosophy professor.) Was your character affiliated with any organization that might be described? What organizational associations did s/he have? (Since we are a social species, with whom we associate often tells others what values we hold. E.g., the Socialist Party; the John Birch Society; the Ku Klux Klan; the NAACP; the Roman Catholic Church; the Retired Educators Association; the Rotary Club; the local Reading Group; the National Rifle Association; Habitat for Humanity; etc.)

If you don't have a computer and online access to this information, or don't know how to use it, the local community library usually provides such opportunities. I've discovered that information not available online is usually available in the library's books and periodicals, and with some digging through the many indices of the library I can uncover far more information than I could ever put into a twenty-minute speech. Also, never discount the importance of "just plain browsing" through the library's stacks. You might be surprised at what you'll find!

An often overlooked resource are the human beings all around us: those who have already studied a favorite person (the character in whom you are interested) or era; those who might have known or at least seen your character or might have known someone who did; someone genealogically related to your character; or someone in the same vocation as your character was. The possibilities are almost endless, and should be explored.

In your research, include some small, almost insignificant details from your character's life and times. Even a quick reference in your speech to some detail, new to your audience, can enhance your credibility immeasurably; e.g., "in a letter I wrote to my wife about the appalling conditions here" (John Adams), or "a rat scurried down the hallway as I opened the tenant door and the stench almost knocked me over" (Margaret Sanger). When I was a freshman in college, I became even more "hooked" on history when I heard the professor identify by name the carriage driver as well as the horses that pulled the carriage in which the Archduke of Austria was riding and in which he was assassinated, the event that precipitated the outbreak of World War I. Such detail made the recitation of events take on new life. These people about whom he lectured suddenly came to life; they ceased to be only references in a book. The same thing can happen in an impersonation speech. Words can take on real life; even the driest of speeches can throb with vitality. One of my students gave a speech as Lou Gehrig, the great baseball player of the New York Yankees. He found a reference that related Gehrig's first time at bat in the major leagues. Gehrig tripped on the dugout's steps and went sprawling onto the field when he was first

called to pinch hit for a Yankee regular, and for the next few years he was kiddingly called "tanglefoot," a story that enhanced the audience's appreciation of the man who became one of baseball's greats, to be better known as "the Ironman of Baseball."

Should one's speech include only facts that have been discovered and then arranged into a speech-format? Should the speaker be limited to history's actual quotations? Not at all. I would imagine that such a speech would not appeal to most modern audiences. However, any "imaginative fill" in a speech should be grounded in and flow from corroborated facts in the character's life. And this can be done only with time and energy spent in research.

A final note on this subject. When I was teaching "Impersonation Speaking" to college students, I included an important exercise immediately after they had finished their research labeled "Quiz the Character." Each student would sit alone in front of the class and be interviewed by the other students for about seven or eight minutes, an exercise that students anticipated with great anxiety, but one that was most appreciated after they completed it. On their course evaluations at the end of the term, they wrote that this exercise, more than any other, had helped them "get into" their character. The student being interviewed had to answer any and every question asked *as* the character s/he had researched. Sometimes the student did not know the answer to some particular question. However, if her/his character would have known the answer, the student needed to respond to the question anyway, and as the character would have answered it. Occasionally, this would mean making up the answer (but keeping it within the parameters of possibility). This would necessitate some very fast thinking, and some students were better at this than others, of course. But all without exception benefited from the experience, since they quickly learned both what an audience might be interested in and where further research needed to be done.

CHAPTER FIVE

Step #3: "Location of the Speech in Time"

Step #4: "Identification of the Audience"

The two most difficult aspects of writing and delivering an Impersonation Speech are the "Location of the speech in time" and the "Audience's identification of itself," the latter being, by far, the *most* difficult.

When writing the speech for an historical character, the object is to locate that speech at a particular date (day, month, year), if possible. For example: John Hancock might speak on July 3rd, 1976, the night before the signing of the Declaration of Independence was scheduled at the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. For most speeches, though, especially those located in the distant past, the exact identification of the day or month is not so important; however, the year *always* is. For example: Catharine the Great of Russia could speak in the year 1771, a few months after her husband died and she became the sole ruler of that vast country. The *exact* day and month would not be of great importance to a modern audience, unless one is very conversant with Russian history; however, the year would be important so the audience can fit this speech into their own knowledge of world events: a few years before the American Revolution, or during the reign of George III in England.

A challenge that tripped up more than one student in my classes was selecting out of a vast amount of research only material for the speech that was known by the speaker at the time-location of the speech. The speaker must not communicate any knowledge of events beyond the date s/he is speaking, for that person has not lived beyond that moment. This does not eliminate expressing hopes or fears of what *might* happen (which may or may not have occurred later on in the world or in the person's life). For example, if a person is writing a speech for George Washington, and locating the speech just prior to his taking charge of the Continental Army, the speechwriter must not indicate any knowledge whatsoever of the battles that would ensue or of Washington being elected the first President of the nation, for these events had not occurred. Nor should there be any knowledge of winning the nation's independence, other that a hope it would happen. Projecting hopes and dreams of the future is probably the most effective method of handling post-speech events; for example, Washington might hope that the war would be of short duration and be successful and that out of the chaos that would probably follow, a democracy would be established. Including a dream or hope that we today know was not fulfilled adds a bit of realism to the speech, as well as giving it some balance; for example, if the rebellion would be

successful, that the colonies would never attempt to withdraw from the confederation nor establish laws that the other colonies could not accept.

As I stated above, the audience's identification of itself is a much more difficult problem for the speaker to solve. Over the years of teaching Impersonation Speaking, I have expanded my approach to this challenge. I believe now that the speechwriter has two options, one considerably more involved than the other. The simpler approach, and the one I originally promoted exclusively, is what I call the "Star Trek" approach: "Beam me up, Scotty, to the beginning of the 21st century." This is the speech in which the speaker comes from his/her time and by the miracle of imagination suddenly appears before a contemporary audience, "knowing nothing" about the audience other than s/he was invited to speak here, and knowing nothing about anything that has happened between the speech's location in time and the world of the contemporary audience. (Of course, it might be perfectly understandable and acceptable to the audience if the character from the time-past would comment briefly on how surprised s/he is by all the changes that have occurred since s/he lived.) In other words, the audience remains itself, a contemporary 21st century audience; only the speaker has moved in time. Another example of this might be writing a speech for Florence Nightengale, a speaker who imaginatively appears in 2004 to a contemporary audience. She might talk to a first decade twenty-first century audience with the limited knowledge of an 1855 British nurse, just returning to England from the Crimean War. She would know nothing beyond 1855, nothing about the American Civil War (such as the American government's request for her advice on how to set up field hospitals), nothing about her lasting influence on medical procedures. In other words, she knows everything that has happened prior to the speech she's making, but nothing about what has happened afterward. However, she could share her hopes that someday the medical procedures she advocates will be put into place. The audience, in this scenario, would be itself, a contemporary early twenty-first century audience, listening to someone out of the past speak to them. Such an audience only needs to be itself.

The more involved approach attempts to move the audience into the time period of the speaker, and, *concurrently*, remain who they actually are, a contemporary audience. This is, in a sense, a "double-barreled" approach, and the writer must be particularly careful (and willing to do a number of rewrites). The first part of this "double-barreled" approach necessitates giving the audience sufficient "clues" as to who they are, and in what time period they are living. This should be done early in the speech, and can be accomplished by identifying dates and/or well-known events and/or well-known personalities, by way of a phrase or an allusion or quick reference. (In other words, it is not necessary to go into a long, drawn-out explanation of who the speaker wants the audience to be.) An example of this is found in the Addenda to this manual, in the speech by Carl Schurz. It begins: "Sixty-eight years ago, on April 30, 1816, to be exact, the great American Naval hero, Stephen Decatur, proposed a toast at

Norfolk, Virginia, with these words . . . Then forty years ago, in 1844, again in April . . . Only ten years ago, in 1874, in February this time . . ." Then, a few minutes into the speech, Schurz says, "During this last month, I have been speaking throughout the middle west on behalf of Grover Cleveland for president." These references to dates and to a presidential personality help the audience establish who they (the audience) are: a group of people listening to someone in 1884 campaign for Grover Cleveland for president.

In this more involved approach, it is much easier for the audience to be a *general* audience of another time period than to be a *specific* audience (such as, "my regiment," or "my sewing circle"). Audiences are much more willing and able to go along with the suspension of their disbelief the less *they* have to act. In other words, the Impersonation Speaker should avoid trying to identify the audience in too narrow a manner, as Schurz would have had to do if he had attempted, for example, to locate this speech at the reunion of the regiment he commanded at Gettysburg. Speaking before a general audience of potential voters does not demand that his hearers act as soldiers who have developed camaraderie in battle, only that they transport themselves as they are into the world of 1884.

The second part of the "double-barreled" approach is for the speechwriter to understand that this audience is not *really* from the time period of the speaker. When this is understood, the speechwriter will work diligently to make the speech relevant to the world of a contemporary audience; that is, there must be some connection, realized by the audience, whether or not it is identified and verbalized by the speaker, between the speaker's message coming out of another era and the contemporary world of the actual twenty-first century audience. What is there of significance that this speaker can say to this modern-day audience? Why is it important for the audience to think the message of the character speaking has anything to do with the modern world? The answer to this question, one that is all-too-often overlooked by people today, is that there are many issues with which people of numerous eras have wrestled and with which people struggle today. For example: feminism (Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792), freedom (Frederick Douglas in 1875), justice (John Marshall in 1832), success (Margaret Mead in 1926), relationships (Margaret Sanger in 1916), power (Catharine the Great in 1771), patriotism (Carl Schurz in 1884), authority (Julius Caesar in 68 BCE), hopes and dreams (Narcissa Whitman in 1842), etc., etc. It is up to the speaker to help the contemporary audience to see this connection while simultaneously being an audience and speaker from another era. This is why this "double-barreled" approach is so much more difficult to accomplish. However, when it is done successfully, it often becomes much more memorable and, in the end, believable.

A few words about the process of analyzing one's immediate audience might be in order here. What steps does any successful speaker go through in the attempt to identify the audience to which s/he will be speaking, be the situation a "normal" one or one in which someone is being impersonated? Since

effective audience-analysis is important to any successful public-speaking event, what do I suggest? It's helpful to keep in mind the "demographics" of one's audience: number of people in audience, general age range, homogeneity of the audience, their interests, their expectations from the speech or speaker. It's helpful to know whether the audience is present out of choice or if attendance is required. Furthermore, it is very helpful to know if the audience is friendly or hostile, and especially if their attitude might be that they "really don't care," this latter being the most difficult audience to address because overcoming apathy requires the most energy on the part of any speaker. (A "Why should I care what you have to say?" audience poses the greatest of challenges to any public speaker.) There are many more questions that can be asked in any extensive audience analysis. What does this audience know about me (as the character who is speaking) or know about the years and world in which I lived (1776 in Pennsylvania or 1849 in St. Cloud, Minnesota)? How much detail will they require? Is there conflicting evidence about my character that they might have read or heard about?

What does this particular audience expect me to say? As a "category-representative;" that is, as a military person, as a politician, as a person of an oppressed minority, as an outlaw, as whatever? What do they expect me to say as a particular individual (your character) living in that time? What do they expect me to say as a "performer;" that is, as a person from another time and place speaking in the *real* world of today? How much do I want to fulfill or break these expectations?

How will this particular audience react to what my character says? Will it be laughter (as Will Rogers or Calamity Jane might elicit)? Will it be applause (as Frederick Douglas or Dr. Mary Edwards Walker might receive)? Will it be anger (as Heinrich Himmler or Eva Braun might stimulate)? How about tears (as Chief Joseph's story or Mary, Queen of Scots' last days might inspire)? Or am I likely to receive no noticeable reaction at all (as might result from a speech by President James Garfield or First Lady Lucy Hayes)? What reactions will I most likely receive, and what reaction do I strive for? Other questions can be addressed as the Impersonation Speaker analyzes the audience. What are their main interests today? Are they concerned about the same things today as your character was then? What is happening in their lives at this moment in time that occupies their minds? What are they anxious about? What will "turn them on" to your character? What can your character do and say that will enhance the relationship you desire and promote the message you want to share? How can you guide them to appreciate your character as much as you do?

A final suggestion on the process of analyzing one's audience might be appropriate here. Rehearsing the speech before an audience of one or two representative "guinea pigs" can be very helpful. When this rehearsal speech has been completed, the speaker can involve this small audience in the process of analysis, particularly with questions such as: "Who were you (the audience) when I (the speaker) was speaking?" "What went through your mind when I said thus and so?" "How much more

detail would you suggest I include?" "When I finished my speech, how did you feel? And what did you want to do?" The answers to questions such as these (many of which can apply to any public speaking situation, not just impersonation speaking) should help in whatever rewriting that must be done. As an Impersonation Speaker, you will then have the opportunity to go back over the speech and rewrite for consistency and clarity, from a listener's point of view as well as from your own self-criticism and evaluation.

CHAPTER SIX

Step #5: "Identifying the Self-Concept"

My longtime friend and colleague, Chuck Vick, when we were first getting acquainted over thirty years ago, and when he was asked, "What are you teaching this term?" answered, "I teach Chuck Vick One, Chuck Vick Two, and Chuck Vick Three." Then he smiled and waited for a response. I don't remember how I reacted to his answer, but I do know he expressed a too-often-overlooked truth in those twelve words.

That truth is this: every communicator's (public speaker, classroom teacher, small group facilitator or participant, conversationalist) primary message is the self. That is to say, as much emphasis as we put on the content of a message, when it comes right down to it, every message sent, every lecture or speech given, contains in large part ourselves, and every message received is never devoid of a heavy dose of the communicator's self. Indeed, it was true, and it still is true, that when we speak, we transmit to the listener many good-sized fragments of ourselves, of who we are, or at least who we think we are, our feelings, our thoughts, our values, and our perceptions. Indeed, in a very real sense, Chuck did teach CV I, CV II, and CV III. He communicated, every time he encountered his students, inside or outside the classroom, his perception of himself, as well as his understanding of the subject he taught. He communicated to his students his self-concept.

Before we go any further, it might be wise to look at some of the basics of the term "self-concept." What is it? Then, we'll look at why it is such an important subject for the public speaker, particularly the impersonating speaker, to consider. Self-concept is how you see yourself. It includes how you were brought up, and what your beliefs and your values are. It includes what you think was expected of you, by your parents especially. It includes how you think others (particularly your parents, siblings, and peers) perceived you. It includes your hopes, dreams, and goals. It includes what you judge to be the peak experiences in your life. And it includes how time has affected and modified your view, how your self-concept has evolved over the years. Lastly, but by no means of least importance, your self-concept includes how well you like what you see. Are you "happy" with your image of yourself?

George Shapiro suggests that every speaker asks certain self-concept questions of an audience. The first is "Who am I?" (in this situation). Second is "Who are you, the audience?" (in this speaking situation). The third, "What do you think of me?," is followed by three possible answers to the question: "Do you want to help me?;" "Do you want to hurt me?;" or "Don't you care?" All of these questions and

answers bear upon one's self-concept in the communicating situation. How the speaker answers such questions will have an impact upon the writing as well as upon the delivering of the speech.

Marshall McLuhan has often been quoted, erroneously, as saying, "The medium is the message." (He actually wrote, "The medium is the massage.") However, I believe both statements are true, and my emphasis in this chapter is on the truth of the misquotation: "The medium is the message." A speaker is always both the medium and the message. A person speaking as another person, as in Impersonation Speaking, needs always to be aware of this fact in the preparation of the speech. As most of us have discovered, sometimes to our dismay, political campaigners are primarily selling themselves; the content of the message is secondary. When I am speaking as Carl Schurz, my audience is learning as much about Carl Schurz as they are about the meaning in the words that he is uttering. He is both the medium and the message.

Erving Goffman wrote a fascinating little book back in 1959 titled Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. In it he argued that every expression we make, both verbally and nonverbally, is part of a drama that we present to an audience. Expressions (or communications) are vehicles of the inner self. How (and, to a degree, what) we communicate reflects accurately our inner self, once the code is understood. In other words, he is saying that we, as real people, all wear masks that supposedly help us communicate our perception of self to an audience. He contends that we choose our masks carefully, as if our lives depended on it---and maybe they do! Then, with these masks in place, we "go out" and meet the world (our public).

It seems to me that Goffman's theory is psychologically sound. However, not everyone, on first reading, can either understand or accept this approach to communication. Usually the first reaction, as some of my college students rather defensively challenged me, is "I don't wear a mask! I'm always myself. What you see is what you get." (Or maybe it would be more accurate for them to say, "What I hope you see is what I want you to get.") My usual response to statements like these is "Do you talk the same to your pastor, or to your mother, or to a professor, as you do to your classmate or to your drinking buddy at a party? Do you dress the same in daily life as for a job interview?" I could expand these questions to non-students: "Do you talk the same to a client as you do to a fellow worker at the water cooler? Do you talk the same to a child as you do to your spouse? Do you communicate the same way to a fundraiser on the phone as to your neighbor? Do you converse the same way across the table at your favorite restaurant as you do to the survivors of a friend in the funeral parlor? Do you interact the same with the new couple on the block as you do over the fence to a neighbor you've had for a number of years? Or, for those with some military experience, do you speak the same way to a high-ranking officer as you do to someone of your own rank or below?" Of course, the answer to all these questions is "No,

of course not." And why not? Because you put on a mask (costume, smile, behavior, etc.) appropriate to the message you wish to convey---the image or self you wish to convey.

Goffman believes that we are constantly giving a performance that depends heavily upon our perception of the environment and upon the goal we have in mind. As mentioned above, some people are greatly bothered by this view of human communication. They wonder if all interacting people are basically "phony," if everyone attempts to deceive their fellow human beings, if they cannot ever get to know others "as they really are." Goffman's view is that the word "phony," as we have come to know it, has less to do with artificiality than it has to do with "being out of sync" with the demands of the moment. Phoniness on stage is that criticism of an actor who doesn't quite fit the part s/he is trying to play. S/he doesn't speak the words as the character would speak them; doesn't interact with the other characters as the part would indicate as normal. The demands of the moment are not being met; the actor is "out-of-sync" or "phony."

Likewise, as are actors on a stage, we are conditioned over the years to understand what people will respond positively and negatively to. The performances we give every moment of our interacting life make use of socially accepted behaviors, conventions with which to present our selves to our public; that is, what is appropriate to the moment. With our choices of clothing, hairstyle, makeup, gait, gestures, and facial expressions, we exit our private places and enter our public places. Several television programs have focused on this public/private behavioral difference, most especially one of a few years ago called "Candid Camera." When we're not aware of being on camera, we often act differently, without masks appropriate for the public moment. What might have been appropriate in the privacy of our own world suddenly is not appropriate in the public world. We are "caught off guard." And our behavior changes in order to put a more socially acceptable "spin" on the image we want others to see and believe.

To put it another way, there is the *ex*pression that a person "gives," and the *im*pression that a person "gives off." The closer these two are, the more "real" or "authentic" the person is perceived to be. In one of the classic televised Benny Hill episodes, the scene is a public beach. Benny, paunch and all, is strolling along and comes onto a bevy of bathing beauties. What does he do? He sucks in his breath and his flabby stomach, sticks out his chest, puts on what he thinks is an alluring smile, and parades past the women. When he gets past them, he exhales, relaxes and lets it all hang out again. When the women see what happens and realize that Benny's *ex*pression and their *im*pressions are so dissimilar, they perceive him as "phony" and, giggling, turn their attention to the next "hunk" that might come along, someone more authentic as a communicating human being.

What has all this to do with Impersonation Speaking? Simply stated, this: self-concept and self-image, and how we communicate them to others, is as basic to an Impersonation Speaker's chosen

character as it is to any communicator in any other human situation. Developing a self-concept is a natural part of human maturation, and a process through which we all move as we interact with others. Being aware of the private self and the public performance is essential in effectively portraying an historical character.

Therefore, I suggest that you put the character for whom you are writing a speech through the same process. In your preparation to give an authentic speech as your character might have given it, as you become that person and work at giving her/his public performance, these are a few questions paraphrased from the preceding discussion that you should ask, and a few answers you need to discover: What masks does your character usually wear, and would be worn in front of this audience? What impression does your character want to give? What behaviors does your character choose in order to express this image to this particular audience? In other words, I'm suggesting you do for your character what you *naturally* do for yourself in your daily communicating life: *select the most appropriate masks for the situation* in which your character finds her/himself and include them in the writing of the speech as well as its presentation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Step #6: "Viewing the Character's World"

John Donne, four hundred years ago, wrote "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. . . any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." Ernest Hemingway, in more recent years, borrowed from John Donne's words the title for his book, For Whom the Bell Tolls. Both of these writers were acknowledging a well-known fact of life: there is a world out there beyond my physical body and I am affected by it.

This chapter will look briefly at the world of the impersonated speaker, what s/he sees and how s/he feels about it. We will also look at how and why such a view is important to the writing and the delivering of an historical presentation.

Whenever any person communicates with another, s/he does it in context; that is, in a particular setting, during a particular season of the year, in front of a particular audience, and at a particular moment in history. It is this latter, the particular moment in history, that I wish to highlight here. What is happening in your character's world at the moment s/he is speaking, and how does the speaker view these happenings? Out of all the events "of the day," what does your character choose to include in this particular speech? What events would have the most influence on her/him? What would your character not know, therefore you could not include, since an event hadn't yet occurred?

A speech being written by Aaron Burr, for example, might include a description of the running argument he was having with Alexander Hamilton, and some comment about Thomas Jefferson and whether or not the president agreed with him. It might include something about the vast land in the southwest, and what Burr had in his mind to do with it. Napoleon Bonaparte was very much in the news in Burr's day, and it was a fact that could not be ignored by any politician. The U.S. Military Academy at West Point had just been established. The great jurist, John Marshall, was now Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and his decisions were certainly affecting the direction of this new nation. There are many important events of the day that could be selected as bearing on Burr's mind and influencing how he viewed his world. The speech would not include, of course, anything about the Civil War, since it was not to take place for more than half a century in the future, although some of the controversies and tensions that fueled that conflict were felt by most Americans at the time. Nor would the speech include any mention of the second war with Britain, called the War of 1812; nor any mention of Chicago or Pittsburgh or Phoenix, for these cities had not yet been founded as municipalities.

Writing a speech for Lucy Hayes, the wife of President Rutherford B. Hayes, probably would be set during the administration of her husband, 1877-1881. What was happening in the country and world at that time in which she would be either directly or indirectly involved? How might she feel about her husband being the "loser" in the national election against Samuel Tilden, yet being named the "winner" by the House of Representatives? What is her reaction to the new-fangled gadget just installed in the White House: the telephone? She is often referred to as "Lemonade Lucy," since she would not allow alcoholic drinks in the White House, a fact that might indicate the beginnings of a national controversy, later to be put into the law under the name of Prohibition. Lucy Hayes would know nothing about the automobile, and certainly nothing about the airplane or computers. She would not know that Prohibition did indeed occur, and later judged by many as a failure. She would know how the Civil War turned out, and what problems resulted from it. Names she would recognize might be the artist, Winslow Homer; the flashy war-hero and Indian fighter, James Armstrong Custer; Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce Nation who nearly escaped to Canada; Carl Schurz, the Secretary of the Interior, who recently accused the timber barons of not just cutting down trees, but actually destroying whole forests.

Placing a character in historical perspective, with occasional references to well-known names of that day and to well-known events of that time, greatly increases a speaker's credibility. Audiences listen to speakers who are eyewitnesses to history; they find it easier to identify with people whom they have studied in school sometime in their congregate pasts. Most audiences are eager to hear about little known facts that have influenced history and about unusual perspectives on events. Even the "bad guys of history" have something to say; they have a point of view that seldom is heard and which often fills in some gaps in the audience's knowledge. In my college classroom I heard from Adolf Eichmann and Admiral Hashimoto, both people who are generally ignored in our history courses as model human beings, but who greatly impacted the conduct of World War II and the events leading up to it.

Ernest Bormann, retired professor of Speech Communication at the University of Minnesota, many years ago developed his "Fantasy Theme Analysis," based on the work of Robert Bales, a researcher/scholar in Small Group Communication. Dr. Bormann theorized that, like discussants in a small group, every public speaker "sees" a particular world in which s/he lives, and dramatizes that view, putting her/himself in the picture with a particular role to play. He says that every speaker "fantasizes" about the world in which we live, constructing a scenario into which both the speaker and the audience can put themselves. And it is out of this scenario that the person speaks.

Let's take, for instance, Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, the first female battlefield surgeon, who served in the Union Army during the Civil War. If Dr. Walker were to speak to an audience sometime during her life after that bloody conflict, sometime between 1865 and her death in 1919, her scenario in which she played (or "fantasy" as Bales and Bormann would call it) might have been that of a young

female physician/surgeon cracking wide open a male-dominated bastion, much like Joan of Arc leading her troops into battle in 1430. Her "fantasy" might well include her playing the role of standard-bearer for women in the battle for the "right" to wear men's trousers and other male garments, a "right" that was denied women by the custom and culture of the day. As Joan of Arc received honors from her king by being made commander of his armies, so Dr. Walker received the Congressional Medal of Honor from her country for her battlefield and life-saving behavior. She might even develop her scenario further by "seeing" Joan being burned at the stake as somewhat similar to the U.S. Congress' decision to take away her medal because she was a woman. (She refused to give it back!)

Another example of a "fantasy theme" that might be held by a public speaker would be one conceivably held by James Garfield, the only member of the Christian clergy ever to be elected President of the United States (he was also a college professor). Having been trained in seminary to sermonize, his speeches probably would have frequent references to Biblical events and personages. He could be seeing himself as standing in a "bully pulpit," well before Theodore Roosevelt coined the phrase. Conceivably, Garfield might see every American as part of his congregation, his listeners as people who would follow his moral direction; and those who did not could be viewed as recalcitrant sinners.

According to Bormann, a speaker gives the audience an invitation to participate in this drama, in a fantasy. When the audience identifies with the speaker's world, the speech will be viewed as a success; when the audience does not identify, the speech would be viewed as a failure, because the roles listeners are being asked to play are not being filled. When roles in this speech/drama are not being accepted, tension builds between speaker and audience. They are not "seeing the same world." They are "out of sync" with each other.

What are the fantasies of the character you have chosen to portray? What "world" does s/he "see?" What events and/or people have influenced your character, and how do they fit into her/his world? In what kind of scenario or drama does your character want your audience to participate? In the speech you are writing, what references can you make to those influences and to that scenario?

To paraphrase John Donne, "no speaker is an island, isolated from the world." Success occurs when speaker and audience, even momentarily, share the same view of that world. When they both participate in the same drama, a relationship will develop not dissimilar to the relationship that evolves among seasoned actors on the theatrical stage. Such is the goal of the Impersonation Speaker, to bring the audience into the same world as the chosen character resides.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Step #7: "Identifying a Style"

Steven Ullmann, in Language and Style, defines a person's speaking style as "primarily a personal and idiosyncratic mode of vision," a definition that nicely follows the last chapter on "The World As I See It." Style, then, according to Ullmann, is seen as a person's particular manner of expressing her/his worldview. In this chapter, to be more precise, I will be looking at style as how an Impersonation Speaker characteristically communicates to an audience her/his own particular vision of the world and her/his own place in that vision.

I am not suggesting what is commonly believed: that style is simply how a speech is delivered. Few statements could be further from the truth. Style includes the *choice* of word and phrase, the *choice* of illustration, the *choice* of organizational framework, as well as the use of vocal emphasis, the use of the pregnant pause, or the nonverbal characteristics of image and delivery. Content is as much a part of style as delivery is, a point sometimes forgotten by contemporary charismatic politicians and clerics. "Style is not just a peripheral ornament added to a speech already thought through," as Jane Blankenship states in Sense and Style. Blankenship summarizes her view of style as "an individual's characteristic way of using the resources of the English language."

Martin Luther King, Jr. had a different style than does Billy Graham. They talked differently, formed their vowels and words differently, postured their bodies before their audiences in different ways, all aspects of delivery. However, though they were and are both ministers in mainline Protestant Christian denominations, they also chose different illustrations and words to describe their visions, both of which are aspects of content choice. Their basic theology might have been quite similar, but they expressed their visions in different ways. This expression includes both content and delivery. In other words, they each used the resources of the English language with which they were most comfortable to have a distinctive style of their own, born out of their own experience, created with all the resources of the language each had assimilated from culture and education, and organized and delivered in a very individualistic manner.

Likewise, we all speak out of our own experience. We cannot do otherwise. It is equally true of the characters we choose to impersonate. Our characters speak out of *their* own experience, and it behooves us as we assume *their* personages for twenty or thirty minutes to submerge ourselves as much as humanly possible in *their* experience. As we do, we will more easily "take on" *their* style of communicating. We will select and use language that will categorize and organize *their* experience. We

will not only see *their* vision, but also be able to describe that vision to our audiences by the choice of example and illustration and the specific words we choose in which to clothe them.

Richard Weaver, in his enlightening book titled Language is Sermonic, contends that all language is basically intended to persuade or influence. He argues that whenever people speak, particularly in public, they choose words for their persuasive power and express them in such a way as to most effectively convince others of their point of view, or, at the very least, that their thoughts are worth listening to. This choice of words, syntax, and oral emphasis will reflect the speaker's motivation, the underlying and driving force behind that attempt to persuade. When a listener hears those choices, and discerns the motivation behind them, whether accurately or inaccurately, s/he is reacting to the speaker's style.

When we speak of "motivation," we are referring to that driving force that pushes the speaker into saying what s/he does, as well as the amount of intensity s/he chooses to propel it. "Motivation" is different from "purpose," although they are sometimes confused with each other. "Purpose" has more to do with the *goal* of one's speech, whereas "motivation" refers to the *driving force behind* one's speech. When it comes to creating the speech, the impersonation speaker needs to identify each of these concepts, *both* purpose and motivation.

Whether or not the speaker openly shares it with the audience, *justification* for one's motivation must be identified by the creator of an effective speech. That is to say, in the development of the presentation, be it the traditional speech or an impersonation speech, the effective speaker will have discerned at some point the reason (and/or emotion) for choosing the purpose that s/he did, for having her/his motivation, and for taking the position that s/he has taken. Since "language is sermonic," and since any speech is an attempt to influence one's audience, a speaker must justify the attempt (at least to her/himself, if not to the audience). "Style" is the application of how one goes about doing this. Marie Hochmuth Nichols calls this "the individual's appeal to the group through language."

There exist many vehicles for expressing one's vision, many kinds of language choices. Does the speaker use *qualifiers* to any great extent, such as "at least so I have heard," and "according to most sources I've read?" Does the speaker use *humor* frequently, such as puns (substituting a word or phrase for another one that has a suggestively different meaning or sound)? How about "*witticisms*?" Or *jokes* (appropriate or inappropriate), and where are they placed in the speech? Does the speaker *poke fun* at others or at her/himself? These are all choices of language under the umbrella of "style."

Does the speaker (your chosen character) frequently tell stories to the audience? That is, extended illustrations usually with human interaction? Examples of speakers who choose this style are Garrison Keillor and his stories about Lake Wobegon, and, of course, Jesus of Nazareth with his many parables. Does the speaker express her/his vision with more abstract or more concrete words and

phrases, such as "assets" (abstract) to "Bossie" (concrete) with "livestock" and "cows" in between? Or, "education" (abstract) to "Mr. DeStefano's tenth grade classroom"(concrete) with "St. Paul public school system" and "high school" in between? Or, "dog" (abstract) to Fala" (concrete) with "Yorkshire Terrier" in between? Some speaker/characters pepper their audiences with "facts," "just the facts" (or what they consider to be facts!). Their use of verifiable statements is also a choice of style.

Of what use does your character make of figures of speech? *Simile?* A direct comparison between things that are essentially dissimilar except in the particular qualities alluded to in the simile (usually contains the word "like" or "as"). *Metaphor?* An implied comparison between two essentially dissimilar things. *Rhetorical question?* A question designed to produce an effect but not to evoke an overt answer unless, perhaps, an answer verbalized by the speaker. *Antithesis?* A parallel construction of words, phrases, or sentences that contains opposed or sharply contrasting ideas. *Onomatopoeia?* A word whose sound suggests the meaning of the word. *Irony?* Implying something different from, usually the opposite of, what is stated (*sarcasm* is a form of irony). *Climax?* Arrangement of words, phrases, or sentences according to their increasing value or strength of impact. *Repetition?* Somewhat rhythmic repeating of certain words or phrases (Martin Luther King's "I have a dream"). *Personification?* Attributing human or personal qualities to a thing, concept, event or animal. *Hyperbole?* Extravagant exaggeration (overused frequently by candidates for public office). *Alliteration?* Repetition of initial consonant sounds in two or more neighboring words or syllables. *Cliché?* A trite, stereotyped expression that has lost originality and impact by long overuse ("There's a time and place for everything.").

And there are other lesser-known figures of speech, too, ones that might be used by the character you are portraying. They are not difficult to identify. Does your character make frequent or occasional use of any of the following stylistic forms? *Synecdoche?* Substituting a part for the whole or the whole for a part (e.g., "fifty sails" for "fifty ships"). *Epanorthosis?* A mid-sentence correction (e.g., "A most brave act. Brave, did I say? Most heroic act!"). *Aposiopasis?* Leaving a thought incomplete by silence and expecting the audience to silently complete it. And, lastly, *Apophasis?* The act of mentioning something by saying it will not be mentioned (e.g., "We will not mention his many crimes."). For our purposes, the labels that scholars give to these stylistic choices do not matter. What matters is that we learn to recognize (and apply, if they are appropriate to our characters) these stylistic choices.

Additional questions of style that might be asked when writing a speech for your chosen character include: As my character, which of the above figures of speech do I most frequently use? How accurate am I? How precise is my vocabulary? How grammatically correct is my speaking? How clearly do I express my ideas? Are my words more concrete or more abstract? Are my transitions from one thought to the next easily followed? Are my expressed ideas appropriate for my audience, my self-image, and this occasion? How economizing am I with words and phrases (length of sentences and

descriptive detail)? How forceful is the language that I use? Do I use more active terms or passive terms? Do I use pictorial words and phrases to describe an event? What unique expressions do I have that would seize my listeners' attention? How much life do I put into my speech? Do I take my audience with me as I relive certain moments, or do I just "talk about it?"

Below is an exercise that I used in connection with teaching the course on Impersonation Speaking to my college classes. I had them read the following paragraph, identify elements of style in it, and then rewrite the short speech as their chosen character might have said it. The results were most enjoyable to hear as they shared what they had written.

> It is indeed a pleasure—yea, it is an opportunity providing unfathomable delight—to be with you on this occasion. When I received your most gracious invitation a fortnight ago, delivered not by the regular and ponderous post, but rather hand-delivered by the excited postmaster himself, I must, in all honesty, admit how deeply flattered I was—and am. Rarely have I been so touched. To single me out for such an honor—to politely overlook my many flaws in character—to magnify my few accomplishments so even I am amazed at their seeming worth—you have been too kind. This moment, truly an experience of the mountaintop, will remain with me 'til my dying days—and "God willing" even beyond.

The rewritten results varied considerably, from "Thanks a lot for inviting me," to attempts to be even more flowery than the original. I suggest the reader try rewriting this as well, as an exercise in identifying the style of your chosen character.

Another example of differing styles involves what probably is the most beloved of all American speeches: Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. I wonder how long the following stylistic rendition would have been remembered.

> Eighty-seven years ago those who came before us established in this country a system of government based on the concept of individual freedom and the idea of the equality of all people. Now we're fighting a battle to decide whether such a government can last very long. We are here at one of the scenes of that conflict. We have gathered together to pay tribute to those loved ones who made the supreme sacrifice on this spot to support this government. It is absolutely right for us to do this. But, if you look at the overall picture, we can't pay any tribute, we can't sanctify, we can't hallow this particular area. It was those courageous men, both those who lived through this battle and those who died here, who have lent the holy and religious character to this field. The rest of the world will not remember any statements we issue here, but it will never forget their brave deeds here. Our job, and the job of every living American, is to continue to bear the burden that they carried so well for us. We should decide right here and now to carry out the remainder of the job, and from these deceased, fine soldiers to take extra inspiration from those beliefs to which they were so dedicated, that we make up our minds right here and now that they didn't die for nothing, that this government, with the help of God, shall experience a renewed spirit of freedom and that government composed of the citizenry, by the citizenry, and for the citizenry, shall not vanish from this planet.

Although the above rewriting has about the same number of words (271 for the original; 270 for the revision), and although they say approximately the same thing, the historically revered speech carries much more power than the other (which seems rather watered down, in my opinion). The original text matches Lincoln's style of speaking; whereas the revision, although saying the same thing, seems "out of character" for history's image of Abraham Lincoln. So the reader doesn't need to go and find an

encyclopedia to compare the above version of Lincoln's address with the one that has come down to us in our history books, I reprint his speech here.

> Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives, that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

I should like to close this chapter with a few quotations. All are expressing thoughts on the subject of "style." The great Roman orator, Seneca, said "Speak that I may know thee." Gustave Flaubert wrote of public expression as "a way of looking at things." Cardinal John Henry Newman defined the art of public speaking as "a thinking out into language." Jane Blankenship wrote, "Because the speaker's style reflects his unique way of responding to the world, it is, like that of the painter, a question not of technique, but of vision." And we return to Steven Ullmann's definition of style: "primarily a personal and idiosyncratic mode of vision." The impersonation speaker, if s/he hopes to give an effective and halfway decent speech, must "get inside" the character and discover that person's vision and how s/he used language to describe that vision and persuade the audience that listening to this speech is worth their while.

CHAPTER NINE

Step #8: "Building a Character"

Paul sat there in front of the class, a very self-conscious and nervous young man, staring unfocused at the twenty-three sets of eyes staring back at him. He was supposed to be Lou Gehrig, the great baseball player of yesteryear. As an assignment in the Impersonation Speaking class, he was expected to assume his chosen character for ten minutes, to *be* Lou Gehrig as the class interviewed him with any question that came to mind. Paul was to answer every question thrown at him, as a result of all his research thus far in the term. He had completed each assignment which prepared him for this task: he had carefully chosen his character, someone who interested him, and someone with whom he could identify; he had spent many hours in the library and on the internet, finding every historical tidbit he could find on Lou Gehrig; he had written a self-concept paper, an attempt to "get inside" the man; he had gathered many historical perspectives on the years in which Gehrig lived, to be able to understand what was happening in the world during the man's life and what effect it might have had on him; he had identified the unique "vision" of Lou Gehrig and how he might have expressed it in a public speaking situation. Now he was to *be* Lou Gehrig for ten or more minutes in front of his classmates! And because of all the preparation he had done leading up to this task, he was presenting a believable character.

Later, Paul, as well as many of the other students, upon completing this "Quiz the Character" assignment, commented to me that this interviewing experience helped him to feel "for the first time" a personal identification with his chosen character. This was an opportunity to "put it all together." Whatever doubts he and his classmates might have had earlier in the course were now overcome. They now believed they could do this, and that they could really "act the part."

Of course, I had given these college students some preparation for this daunting task, other than the papers and assignments that built toward this ten-minute interview. Besides sharing with them, lecture-style, some pointers from my own training and research, I invited a very popular and competent theatre professor on campus to present salient points from his lectures on acting. Our combined experience covered, although because of time-limitations not in a very in-depth way, many of the same points, happily confirming in the students' minds that what they had been receiving from me was "the right stuff." In this all-too-brief chapter, I will discuss some of those common "hints" we gave for building a character, and which I recommend for any impersonation speaker.

Besides making use of those assignments ("steps" for the reader of this manual) that I have already discussed in previous chapters, we suggested that the impersonation speaker *practice*

pretending. Take some time to talk to yourself as your character in front of a full-length mirror. It might be a bit embarrassing at first, especially if a roommate or family member might see you doing it. However, since most of us are our own worst critics, the mirror can help you to see what you are doing nonverbally, and what might be distracting to an audience. If you have access to a tape recorder, listening to yourself talking as your character can help you spot places in your speech that you might improve. Nowadays, many people have access to a video camera and monitor, which can helpfully point out potential trouble spots, besides allowing you to identify places in your speech that are very believable. If you can be honest with yourself, videotaping can show both what is worth keeping and what should be changed.

You might take a stroll around the neighborhood as your character, or on noon hour in your workplace, or even around a place with which you are unfamiliar—just to see how it would feel. (And, no, you wouldn't need to dress in costume for this.) What would s/he notice? Or be amazed at? What would shock her/him? What would your character find confusing or amusing? You might converse with a friend as your character, or eat a meal as your character. Yes, it may be difficult to "stay in character," but such exercises will help you get the feel of it.

You might even assume your character for a certain time span, two or four or more hours, no matter where you might be. React to your environment as the character, and to any people you might meet. Imagine yourself *as* that person for a few hours. I guarantee that you will discover something about your chosen character that you didn't know before, and maybe you will even be able to incorporate that feeling and/or experience into your speech.

Characterization involves both verbal and nonverbal behavior. Sometimes an impersonation speaker concentrates so intensely on the ideas and wording of the speech that one's nonverbal expression is pushed aside and forgotten. Yet, almost every communication study of which I am aware concludes that the nonverbal messages of a speaker are at least as important to an audience's lasting memory as are the verbal messages. Occasionally, paying attention to one's nonverbal behavior can even save an otherwise mediocre speech from being just another "ho hum" experience. Therefore, we need to look more closely at this subject of nonverbals in our impersonation speaking.

A speaker needs to be aware of her/his person's physical characteristics that could and often do spill over into personality behaviors—characteristics such as age or size or physical deformity. An aged person usually walks and moves more slowly than a young person, from the moment s/he gets up to speak to when s/he sits back down. I have even seen speech presentations when an "older" person will ask the audience if it's all right for her/him to sit down to talk. For an older character, a cane is sometimes a helpful visual prop, but only if appropriate.

The size of a person might affect behavior. Large (noticeably overweight) people often seem to have more propensity to sweat; therefore, a handkerchief to frequently mop one's brow might be very much in character. (President Taft might be a good example of one such character.) A small, wiry person might fidget a lot, size sometimes being a consequence of an overly active metabolism. (The bantamweight boxer, Willie Pep?) An historical character who wears glasses might take them off and put them back on a few times during the speech, squinting at the manuscript or the audience when the glasses are off. If a speaker includes in her/his speaking time a few moments for questions and answers, a character who might have been somewhat hard of hearing could comment on that fact and ask that a question be repeated. A deformity or handicap, such as a limp, might or might not affect a person's behavior, if a speaker would choose to include that characteristic in the presentation; however, one should be very careful not to seem to be making fun of that characteristic. If a man were to choose Franklin Delano Roosevelt as his character, the fact of the president's polio-ridden body would definitely need to be addressed nonverbally, for that characteristic is in the collective memory of most American audiences.

Some historical people likely have had one or two "master gestures," movements of the body that habitually became part of their presentations. If I were giving a speech as my Old Testament professor in seminary, a wonderful elderly Scotsman, now long-deceased, I would include a fascinating movement he did with his stance. He would stand on one leg with the other leg crossing over in front of it, then change legs back and forth, maybe a dozen or more times during a short speech. This "dance" was so riveting that some of us students would occasionally miss a point or two of his sermon by counting how many times he switched legs, having wagered on it previously. A former colleague of mine, almost every time he gave a speech, would "hitch up his pants" a number of times by putting his thumb inside his belt and pulling them up. I once heard him referred to as "old hitchy-pants." At my retirement party my son impersonated me teaching a class, including for everyone's amusement my hand and arm gestures whenever I made a point that I believed should be remembered. Many of us have these so-called "master gestures" that accompany our speechmaking, be they frequent mannerisms or favorite movements. The effective impersonation speaker will capture these gestures and include them in the impersonation speech.

Building a believable character also includes verbal behavior, not only what one speaks, but also *how one speaks*. This latter is called "vocality," some aspects of which I covered in the chapter on "Style." I'm speaking about diction, rate or tempo, and inflection range. How precise or imprecise does your character speak? Are the words somewhat slurred, as the unfortunate stereotype of an American southerner; or clipped, as an Oxford educated English gentleman; or somewhere in between? How rapidly does one speak? As rapid fire as a Hubert Humphrey, or as slow and

deliberate as a Jimmy Stewart; or, again, somewhere in between? What is your character's inflection range? As varied as a Mel Blanc, or as monotone as a Jesse Ventura? What about any recognizable dialect; that is, selecting out certain sounds for emphasis? Is your character a New Englander, or a Minnesotan, or someone from the American Deep South? How about from an Hispanic culture? Each of these geographical or cultural areas, plus numerous other localities, has a recognizable dialect. Carl Schurz was a German immigrant in the 1840's, so when he became a spokesman for the German-Americans of the time, it meant the likelihood, for the impersonator, to speak with a German accent or dialect (like Arnold Schwarznegger?). However, it is an historical fact that Schurz worked very hard to successfully erase any semblance of a German accent from his voice, greatly relieving me, as an impersonator who dislikes poor and contrived dialects and who does everything in his power not to attempt them or even to listen to people struggling with them.

Another aspect of vocality is the level of seriousness at which a character operates generally. Knowing that most American audiences today seem to prefer and expect some amount of humor in speeches they hear (to many Americans, "enjoyment" is translated as "humor," the reason many speakers begin their speeches with a joke), the impersonation speaker needs to handle this subject very carefully. Is your character witty? Is s/he droll? How about the use of irony, or sarcasm? How typically heavy-handed is s/he? Does your audience expect bombast? If so, how will you handle that expectation in the use of your voice?

Ron Perrier, the popular theatre professor referred to earlier in this chapter, reminded the class that there's a difference between *im*personating and *per*sonating. The actor/speaker is working within the conventions of theatre where the audience is participating by their voluntary suspension of disbelief; they know this is pretend, but are willing to suspend their disbelief in the show's reality in order to hear and see what is being presented to them. The audience is substituting belief—within the conventions of theatre for their rationally knowing this as only a presentation, a pretending, an *im*personation. Perrier emphasized that "theatre is suggesting" rather than presenting a reenactment of reality, and that the actor/speaker must work to create and keep an "aesthetic distance" between actor/speaker and audience. This aesthetic distance is created by both physical and psychical means. The speaker must be both bigger than life and identifiably human at the same time. The impersonation speaker needs to create a character with whom an audience can identify in some way, while at the same time remembering that this is all pretend; it is something similar to what could have happened in history or what could happen if the speaker were truly alive today. To do this is to create an effective "aesthetic distance."

When an actor/speaker stands alone before an audience, whether that person is impersonating another character or as a "real" person, there are certain opportunities available that a dramatic multi-

person play seldom has. The first is rather obvious: you're there on your own. No one else is there on whom to depend; you're in control to make on-the-spot decisions and changes that you deem desirable or necessary. In the multi-person play, an actor is usually given a script to memorize, and deviations are not encouraged as they confuse the other actors who also depend on each other. Secondly, as a monolog speaker, you can directly relate to the audience; they become your interactive entity, whether or not they ever speak a word. As an historical character, you can create the atmosphere in which you and the audience interact. And thirdly, in a one-to-many relationship, both roles are equally important to the success of the speech. Such a relationship should be encouraged, enjoyed, and even cherished.

Building a believable character is not a simple task. It takes hours of research and hours of practice. However, when it is done well, an audience will long remember the time when they met and listened to the historical character you presented, and they will be influenced by that person's message to a degree that no other manner of presentation can achieve.

CHAPTER TEN

Step #9: "Writing the Speech"

For some people, writing the speech is the most difficult task in Impersonation Speaking. More than a few times I heard from my students: "Why do I need to *write* the speech? Why can't I just jot down a few notes and speak extemporaneously?" These are good questions and need to be addressed before proceeding with the chapter.

My first response to those questions is "the discipline." To put the right words onto the paper requires a "thinking through" of the statement or idea. It requires exactness of expression, whereas extemporaneous speaking relies more on the idea and mood of the moment (in both speaker and audience), and should be reserved for practiced and polished speakers/actors or for the "umpteenth" time an Impersonation Speech has been given. Writing down the speech allows a more effective review to see where the speech could be strengthened for the next time. It also encourages the speaker to stay within any time limit that is imposed; only having a few notes in your hand without having it written out beforehand allows rambling and over-explanation of points, a temptation of the speaker who perceives a good relationship with the audience and who enjoys "being on stage."

So, how does one write a speech for an historical character? Is the process similar to writing a speech for oneself? The answer to that is a "qualified yes." It *is* similar, but more similar to the special category called "ghostwriting" than to creating a speech for oneself.

The first of the questions to be reviewed and addressed when sitting down to write the speech, after having completed steps one through eight, of course, is "What is the *occasion* for the speech, and is it one that needs to be described right away?" Catherine the Great might need to clearly identify the occasion for her audience if she were speaking to her Parliament so they could assume the persona of parliamentarians, or if she were welcoming a group of foreign dignitaries so her audience could identify themselves, or if she were speaking to a group of French citizens on one of her trips to Paris. She would probably not spend much time and energy on placing the audience if she located her speech in front of a general crowd of people in the village square. Joshua Chamberlain would need to carefully describe the occasion for his audience if he chose as his speaking place a reunion of his classmates at Bowdoin College so they could become Bowdoin alumni, or at a fundraising rally in Boston a few weeks after the battle of Gettysburg, or at a meeting of the Harvard faculty. Even if he decided to address a group of common citizens at a town meeting, he'd need to establish audience and location near the beginning of the speech.

When the occasion and audience are designated, the speechwriter then moves on to the next question: "What would be my character's *purpose* in this situation?" Is it *to inform* the audience (of life in the time of the speaker, of a different point of view, or of some other information they may not know)? Is the purpose *to persuade* the audience (to accept another point of view, or to behave in some preferred manner, or to invest in a particular product, or to change their behavior in some other way)? Is the purpose more "*epideictic*;" that is, a reinforcing of values (such as at a commencement ceremony, or at a national holiday celebration, or even at a funeral or memorial service)? Is the purpose *to be entertaining*, in some way showing off one's talents or being a jokester? (Personally, this latter purpose should be chosen with extreme caution, not only because it is so difficult to pull off, but also because it tends to be shallow and misses the opportunity to expose an audience to the importance of learning history, which I contend is the primary reason for doing historic impersonation speaking in the first place ("living history"). Of course, the main exception to this cautionary statement is impersonating some entertainer from the past, one who would appear to a modern audience as someone who would have been hired back then simply to entertain; for example, Aristophanes, or Will Rogers, or Mae West. However, each of these people, though entertainers, probably would have something of substance to say to an audience that can be couched in or sprinkled with bits of humor, thus falling into one of the first three categories.)

There are a number of ways to organize a character speech, not unlike the task of organizing a speech for one's real self. The simplest model is the one most of us learned as children: introduction, body, and conclusion. Rather than spending time and space describing and applying the many other organizational models, all of them effective in varying situations, I'll stick to this one very simple model.

First, a few words about an Introduction. If, and it's true with most characters we *effectively* impersonate, the person will not be well known to the entire audience, some biographical information will be necessary. Listeners need to know who is speaking to them and from which time-period s/he comes. This information can be given in any number of ways, such as identifying in a sentence or two some well-known historic figure with whom s/he is associated, or by early and frequent referring to a date or year or event, or quoting some statement that character made or that was made about her/him, or making a statement on a concern of the past that is also a concern of the present. This latter possibility leads into another suggestion of what to put into an introduction: this is where the speaker establishes a relationship with the audience, finding some way in which the audience can identify with the speaker, whether it is some common emotion or some common concern or some common point of view. The introduction may or may not be the largest part of the impersonation speech; it would depend on the purpose chosen as well as the audience's level of knowledge of the

person speaking and of the time in which s/he lived. The less well known the speaker or the era being represented, the more time needed to inform the audience in or near the beginning of the speech; thus the need for more time during the introduction. It is not advisable to keep an audience guessing who is speaking to them, or out of which era and location.

As to the Body of the speech, much of it will depend on the general purpose chosen (informative, persuasive, or reinforcement of values) and what the theme or focus is (the specific concern or point of view, or the availability of attention-maintaining illustrative material), and how much time the introduction took. Of course, the main goal the speaker must strive for is to sustain the all-important relationship with the audience.

The use of illustrative material in a speech deserves special attention. An extended illustration or story oftimes is a helpful way to get a point across to an audience; however, it must be noted that to do so can take time away from something else a character might want to include. It is a choice every speaker must make: Is it worth the time taken, or is there a better way to achieve my purpose or to make my point?

For the impersonating speaker, a wise and effective approach to using illustrative material is to draw verbal pictures which the audience can "see in their mind's eye" and into which they can place themselves. I remember clearly when an audience member once came up to me after I had spoken as one of Jesus' disciples. She praised my presentation with words like this: "I've never been to the Holy Land, but when you described the location of Capernaum, I could just see where it was and the Sea of Galilee in relation to the city!"

The use of intensity and other emotional emphasis will get the audience vicariously involved, thereby making them part of history's drama, a point I've tried to make in earlier chapters. Try putting into your character's mouth words and phrases that grab the emotions of the audience, words describing anger or indignation or affection, phrases that will reinforce the mood you are trying to set and which will help you to feel your character's intensity level. Sometimes repetition of a word or phrase will help, not unlike Martin Luther King's "I have a dream. . ." Sometimes an occasional (or even frequent) reference to what you have already stated helps to sustain whatever mood or emotion you have been attempting to establish (for example, Karl Schurz' "My country, right or wrong").

When bringing the written speech to a closing, I would suggest a few things be kept in mind. Looking at the speech as a package that you are giving to your audience, you might tie the closing into something said in the introduction. I like to compare this to wrapping a gift for some birthday or holiday: the ribbon starts at the top, goes around the item and comes back to the top to be tied to the beginning end. The speech, like the gift, becomes a complete, wrapped, and ribboned package.

Another goal of the closing statements is to leave the audience both satisfied and wanting more. They should feel satisfied that the speaker has given them as much as s/he has, whether it be new information or a new insight into the person or era, that the twenty or thirty minutes has been well spent. Yet, at the same time, the speaker can infuse a curiosity in the audience that cries out for more information about the impersonated character. The way closing statements are worded can go a long way toward this goal, whether it is with an unresolved question or a hint of more information that is available somewhere about the person and times of the character.

When finishing the writing aspect of impersonation speechmaking, always remember that the conclusion is the last chance you, as your character, have to direct the audience's attention. What do you want them to remember? about you? about your message? However, avoid just repeating what you have said earlier; and, please! avoid dragging on and on and on . . . *Stop at the end!* (There is great truth in the well-known admonition: "The mind can absorb only as much as the seat can endure!")

It might be wise at this point, when you have finished writing *the first draft* of the speech, to reread Chapter Eight on "Style." That chapter is closely related to this one, for it is out of an identification of style that words, phrases and organization are chosen. Both as reiteration and expansion of points already made, I suggest that you identify the level of language usage your character employs. Is it "educated" or "jargonistic?" Is it "gutter" language, or "aristocratic"—to use overly judgmental images? Reread what you have written to see if you have been consistent in applying the appropriate level, and make any necessary changes.

Look at the reasoning pattern and thought structure evident in your written speech. Is it consistent? Is your character known for speaking and writing with "irrefutable logic," as Pericles, Elliott Ness, Mary Edwards Walker, or Ignatius Loyola might do? Does your character speak more "off the wall" with a rather disjointed flow of consciousness, as VanGogh, Moliere, Calamity Jane, or George Finney might do? Does your character speak in an "association-train-of-thought" mode, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Anne Frank, or Hubert Humphrey might do? Does your chosen character rely heavily on emotions and emotional words, as Adolph Eichmann, Billy Sunday, or Angela Grimke might do? Does your character "think in pictures," as Sacajewea or Alvin York might do? Is your character one who would obviously spend great amounts of time working on a speech, someone who would "sweat" over the writing of a speech and measure every word, as Carl Schurz has been known to do, or Isoroku Yamamoto, or Ignatius Donnelly?

Another factor that must be addressed in the writing of an impersonation speech is the rapidity or slowness with which your character speaks. You will need to write a longer speech for a rapid-fire speaker than you would for someone who speaks much more slowly or measured. To speak

for the same length of time requires more words in the script for a Hubert Humphrey type speaker than it does for a Jimmy Stewart type speaker. For a more deliberate speaker, a writer needs to make each word important, whereas the rapid-fire speaker can "get away with" some extra phrases that probably will get lost in the plethora of words and might not be remembered anyway.

Speechwriting is no simple task, as the foregoing indicates. Besides requiring considerable time and effort researching the available material, there needs to be a grounding in speechmaking as an art; plus, of course, the ability to apply the many general principles to an idiosyncratic event. When the speechwriting is done well, delivering the speech can become almost second nature.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Steps #10 & #11: "Rehearsing and Delivering the Speech"

I hope you have not missed the significance of this chapter's title! Delivering an interesting and memorable speech is directly related to the effectiveness of your rehearsals. This does not mean every speech should be preceded by a specific number of rehearsals; there is no formula for delivery-preparedness. It is an idiosyncratic matter. What it does mean is that every speechmaker, especially an impersonation speechmaker, must have enough "dry-runs" to become so familiar with the speech that the written word will not become a barrier between speaker and audience. To accomplish this goal, a number of suggestions follow.

I suggest that your first rehearsal ("run-through") be done alone with manuscript in hand while sitting at your desk. *Try to become your character practicing the speech.* Go through the speech as many times as you need in order to become fully comfortable with every word and where they come on the page, especially the first few words on the top of each page so moving to the next page will be accomplished smoothly without any artificial break in the flow of the message. When you are thoroughly familiar with the speech, you can go on to the next step.

It is wise to start timing the speech early in your rehearsal schedule. Speakers are usually given some time-parameters when asked to speak (if not, you should always ask if and what they are!). During this step you can determine if you have enough material, or even too much for a twenty or thirty minute speech (and this might become a "revision point"). Timing the speech can also aid in your being consistent as a speaker, giving you the opportunity to apply your analysis of your character as a rapid speaker or as a slower and deliberate one. It can also give you some clues as to where and how many times you need to alter your pace in order to stay in character.

Next, I suggest that you rehearse the speech a few times in front of a full-length mirror. This is to catch any glaring nonverbal behavior that could distract your audience from what you are trying to accomplish as a speaker, such as excessive gesturing that would be out of character and out of place, or foot movement of which you were previously unaware. This exercise also allows you to incorporate and practice any little nonverbal nuances that might reinforce the image your audience has of your character, such as pointing a finger at the audience to reinforce an important point or raising an eyebrow when asking a rhetorical question. The level of animation needed can easily be tested in front of a full-length mirror, as well. If you can be somewhat objective during this rehearsal step, it can be invaluable to the success of the actual delivery before a full audience.

I am an advocate of giving the speech in front of a willing individual listener, someone who will be honest in her/his reaction and offer constructive suggestions. (My wife has been such a person for many years, listening to one of my initial run-throughs of a speech and offering invaluable suggestions, especially regarding confusing statements and ineffective transitions, or distracting nonverbals that sometimes worked their way into my delivery style.) This is also an opportunity to check how well you know the speech by how much you look at the manuscript rather than at the listener. (A measure I gave my public speaking students in college was to spend at least as much time eyeballing the audience as they do looking at their script, with the goal of looking at the audience more often than they glance at the words.) Of course, doing this means you will be actively working on establishing that special relationship with the listener, in anticipation of doing the same with the larger audience when the scheduled speech event occurs. Again, as you have noted throughout this manual, the personal relationship between your character and your audience is the goal to be desired and achieved.

I have discovered for myself, and my students have communicated the same experience, that being in appropriate costume helps immeasurably in rehearsing an impersonation speech. If you are willing and able to dress in costume (if one is needed for your chosen character) during some of your later rehearsals, you will begin to "really feel" yourself as that person. Actors have known this for years and look forward to "getting into" their characters more fully during dress rehearsals. It is very true that the visual image enhances both the message and the character, and it is especially true with impersonation speaking.

Now that you have rehearsed the speech a number of times, and feel fairly confident that you can present a somewhat believable character, the time is at hand for you to deliver the scheduled impersonation speech before the larger audience. So---what happens? You are introduced as your chosen character, during which time you are already assuming that personage, not waiting to "become" that person when you start speaking. You stand as you think your character would stand; you walk to the speaker's podium (or wherever you have negotiated the place of speaking with the occasion's "powers-that-be") as your character would walk. You smile (or frown, or whatever is appropriate) as you have interpreted your chosen character would do. You look closely at your audience, these people with whom you will have a special relationship for the next twenty or thirty minutes. You quickly assess if most of your previous "audience-analysis" was accurate, and make any mental adjustments that are necessary. (There might be more children present than you had anticipated, or there may be many more older folks, or it might be an audience overbalanced with males or females. There might be far fewer, or more, people than had been expected. You might see

in your audience someone whom you know as an expert on the character you are presenting, and in your estimation knows much more about this person than you do—something I once experienced.)

Each of these observations, and others as well, call for some kind of adjustment on the part of any speaker who holds the ongoing relationship between speaker and audience as the primary goal in public speaking, an adjustment that may include changing the emphasis of the speech, or altering some wording, or referring to something that is happening in the room, or even shortening the speech itself and quickly rearranging points to make a coherent speech. This means that a speech that is "written in stone" and cannot survive if altered in any way is a speech that seldom if ever works. Therefore, and I firmly believe this to be true, alternative ways of presenting your character and message should be rehearsed, too—before you get up to speak in front of that larger audience. But, of course, if you have followed all the steps I have outlined in this manual thus far, you will have no trouble making these necessary on-the-spot adjustments because you will know your character intimately, and her/his situation so well, that you'll be able to substitute words and ideas quickly, pulling them from the deep well of information you have gathered.

This raises a very legitimate question: "How many speeches do we need to write in order to ensure success?" The answer is simple: One. However, that one speech should not be written in such a way that it couldn't be altered if and when circumstances make it advisable to do so. The speaker who does not eyeball the audience and work on developing that desired relationship is a speaker who will most likely want to deliver such a "written in stone" speech, because it really makes no difference to her/him whether an audience is present or not. Yes, making these on-the-spot adjustments does take some fast thinking, but it can be done with practice (and it might even be helpful to include some imaginative adjustment work during one or more of your rehearsals).

In addition to the foregoing, there are some other suggestions that are applicable to any form of public speaking, and should be noted here. Speakers need to adapt to the physical setting. The size of the room and the configuration of the seating, as well as the presence or absence of a public address system, are factors that should determine the volume of one's voice. (It may be necessary to watch the backseaters, especially, to see if they are hearing you.) Will you use the podium or not (it subtlety suggests formality) and do you want to establish that image? Use distractions in the audience to your advantage: comment on some sudden or unexpected noise outside the room, or something that is happening inside the room (as long as your comment does not adversely embarrass an audience member; remember that relationship-mode!). And since you are speaking as some other person than yourself, this necessitates responding to occurrences not as you would respond, but as your chosen character would respond.

All of this means you should always find more material than you will ever use, and have it ready and available. You may never use it; then again you might. You just never know how an audience will respond and what might be necessary to include. And it is better to be over-prepared than to be under-prepared!

Then there is the oft-asked question: "Must I use a full manuscript? Can I use note cards instead? Or, better yet, how about just delivering the speech from memory?" All of these methods of delivery are OK; however, you should try to match your character with whatever method s/he would probably use on the speech's date and on the occasion imagined. As Carl Schurz, I have the full manuscript in front of me, because it would be in his character to do so. As Samuel Worcester, I keep a few note cards in my hand, as that is probably all that he would have available at the time I locate the speech. As any one of Jesus' disciples, I now know each of them well enough to "wing it" without any notes or script in front of me; besides, in my interpretation, their speeches would have been delivered without notes. *Whichever method we choose must be comfortable for the character and appropriate for the occasion.* (As I emphasized in the last chapter, for the many reasons I gave, every impersonation speech should be written out in full. What a speaker does with the script during the delivery phase of the speech is always the choice of the speaker and should be according to the interpretation of the character.)

Each of these three possibilities (manuscript, note cards, from memory) has its strengths and its weaknesses. With a manuscript, the speech will probably be more "tight;" that is, worded more economically, providing less temptation to ramble. Whatever the speaker has "sweated over" at the desk in preparation is what the audience will get. However, the temptation to "read the speech" must be overcome. Being tied too closely to the exact wording of the document can keep the speaker from eyeballing the audience and spending enough time in direct relationship with them. With note cards, a speaker can have more eye contact with the audience, and there's less of a possibility for the words on paper to get between speaker and audience, thus straining the relationship between them. With note cards, the speaker is not tied to the podium, but can more easily move about. However, in the tension of the speechmaking moment, sometimes just having a few notes doesn't help the memory as much as one would hope. Three note cards should be sufficient; more than three begin to get in the way and can easily be mixed up; but if too many words are written on these few note cards, a speaker might end up squinting to read them, definitely a distraction for the audience. Delivering the speech from memory may seem the best way to speak before an audience, for it communicates that the speech is being given "from the heart" and without any artificial prompting from notes or script. However, we should never discount the pressures of the speechmaking moment and the real possibility of forgetting what one wants to say. Plus, in impersonation speaking, forgetting a fact

about oneself is psychologically out of character and the tension of trying to remember might cause the speaker to revert to her/his "real" self and react to this forgetfulness in an inappropriate way.

Finally, it might be a very good idea, before you finalize your speech and label it "Ready to Deliver," that you reread Chapter Nine on "Building the Character." There might be something in that chapter you have overlooked or forgotten that could make the difference between success and less-than-success. Your character deserves the very best you can give.

CHAPTER TWELVE

"Pot Pourri of Additional Pertinent Points"

In this final chapter I want to share a few thoughts on five additional topics, all of which need to be addressed briefly if any speech is to succeed and be memorable. Each is vitally important to any kind of speaking event, but especially so to Impersonation Speaking.

"Visual Image"

Since there are a number of books in any good public or school library with descriptions and illustrations of costumes and makeup, there is no need for me to spend much time on those topics in this manual. Resources are also available on the Internet or in any large bookstore. It should be sufficient to say only a few words on costume and makeup, words that come from my personal experience in Impersonation Speaking.

As I have stated in previous chapters, audiences resist spending a lot of energy on their suspension of disbelief. They need all the help they can get. What they see in front of them can either reinforce the words they hear, or become a distraction.

I believe an impersonation speaker should, at the very minimum, appear with at least some hint of the time and culture the character comes from. One of my pastors occasionally speaks from the pulpit as a Biblical character. She uses only a headscarf for her presentation. In this situation, it is enough. She does not remove her clergy-robe; we know who she is, and what she is trying to do. In this context, only the headscarf is additionally needed for her special costume. The congregation is willing to suspend its disbelief in this situation.

I am not one who believes in bathrobes and beards for Biblical costuming. If a beard is real, that's another matter; but an artificial one that hangs from the ears is more distracting than it is reinforcing. Bathrobes, on the other hand, should remain in the bedroom or the lounge.

Once you decide on a character to portray, you should start looking for *appropriate costuming* for the era and position of your chosen character. I've discovered that the Salvation Army or Goodwill Store is an excellent place to find costuming, as are estate sales or second-time-around shops. For a few dollars and a little bit of time to alter, those second-hand outlets can save you both time and money. I have made some great finds in such places.

Costuming may also be found in college and high school theatre departments, or community theatre costume shops. Some churches have costume closets that house wonderful treasures. Another source I have found is the local History or Heritage Center/Museum. Most of the people in these institutions are very helpful, if you promise to promptly return the costumes in at least as good a shape as you received them. As you search for appropriate clothing, don't forget footwear; "out-of-character" footwear can easily grab an audience's attention and keep them from hearing your every word. And please remember, as comfortable as they might be, running shoes are modern footwear.

Personally, I do not use much makeup for any of my characters. If appropriate and necessary, I will color my beard or talcum powder my hair. Sometimes I use a bit of eyebrow pencil for both my eyes and face-lines, but very sparingly. To do more than this, as amateurs, becomes distracting.

Since I wear glasses to see close-up (for reading) and at arm's length (for seeing note cards on a stand in front of me), I need to make provision for that "disability." I had some corrective lenses put into a pair of small "nineteenth century" frames that surprisingly are currently in vogue. Some years ago, when I wore contact lenses, I didn't have to worry about eyeglasses (unless I perceived that my character used them, then I'd use a pair of non-prescription glasses). I share this only to show that most "problems" in visual image can be solved with a little imagination.

Little things, too, need to be remembered when presenting a reinforcing visual image. For instance, if the character you've chosen is unmarried, it's wise to take off your wedding band (if you wear one), as it will be distracting to an audience should they notice. Likewise, if your character is economically middle or lower class and/or from the nineteenth century or earlier, you'd better remove your wristwatch. (I found an old pocket-watch at an estate sale, and refer to it when presenting a character from those centuries.)

Having said all this about "visual image," I should emphasize that the most brilliantly made costume or authentic personal prop will not compensate for the "inner-characterization" that, if absent, will quickly destroy an impersonation speech. *What your audience sees should only reinforce your characterization, not substitute for it!*

"Audience Analysis"

Analyzing one's audience is a tricky task, in that it's mostly a matter of guesswork. Of course, that guesswork can be based on valid research and workable generalizations. Every audience is different, and a speaker needs to have the listeners in mind at every step, all the way from choosing a character to delivering the speech.

There are many questions every speechmaker needs to ponder about one's audience. Among them is "Who are they?"—their general age; their degree of homogeneity; their interests; their expectations. Is this a voluntary or required attendance? Are they friendly or hostile? Or, worse yet, don't they care? Are they pressed for time, and will they begin to squirm and fidget part way through the speech?

There are many more questions to consider, all of which will help in both writing and delivering the speech. "What is their knowledge of the subject, and level of receptivity?" "What do they know about me, and how much detail will they need to understand what I'm trying to say?" "Is there conflicting evidence on my subject and character, and, if so, is my audience aware of it and how will I handle it if they are?" "What does this audience expect me to say, as a member of a particular ethnic group, or as a speaker on this subject?" "What do they expect me to say as a character they may have studied at one time or another?" "What do they expect me to say and do as a performer?" "How will I meet their expectations or contradict them?"

"How do I think this particular audience will react to what I say? Will they laugh? And only at appropriate places? Might there be spontaneous applause, and how will my character react in return?" "What if the audience shows some kind of anger? Or noticeably tears up? What if there is no noticeable reaction at all, and the audience just sits there as if to say, 'Entertain me; I dare you!'?"

As an impersonation speaker, once you address these questions, you will need to incorporate this broad analysis into your speech indirectly, by allusion and suggestion, subtlety making identifications between the year in which you have located this speech and the present ("real") year, noting similar issues and relationships without elaborating on the obvious. E.g., how people struggle for fairness and equality, or hatred for people who are different in some way, or yearning for peace and brotherhood, or attitudes toward the elderly, or the impossibility to control the future, or . . . . A speaker needn't dwell on or even mention *obvious* similarities between past and present; most modern audiences are quite well aware of them. By describing and discussing issues of the past, a character can make history come alive and most modern audiences will identify with the person and concerns of the past. At least that is our goal as impersonation speakers.

"The Speaking Event and What Happens If . . .?"

The actual speaking event itself is what seems to send shivers up and down the back of every potential speaker, impersonation or not. It's the fear of being alone in front of an audience and making oneself vulnerable to all sorts of criticism. Once the speaker is "at the podium," it's a matter of "me and them"—speaker and listeners, a scenario that can be very threatening, especially if the speaker tries to speak interactively with the audience (as I have suggested throughout this manual). That is, if the speaker establishes a working relationship with the audience, constantly aware of the feedback being given (usually frighteningly silent with non-black audiences), the speaker will be exerting extreme energy in an effort to stay in control of the situation, knowing that recognizing feedback and responding to it can give power over to the audience. And once that control is challenged or wrested from a speaker, anything can happen—and that is scary. (This is the primary reason many speakers read their scripts word for word and do not look at their audiences, or memorize their words so well and rigidly that no listener can give any kind of direct feedback. In fact, I repeat, for these speakers, it doesn't really make any difference whether there is an audience or not: the speech will never vary. Such speakers fear losing control or experiencing vulnerability.)

Let me reiterate from previous chapters that audiences really want the speaker to succeed; they want to help make the speech worth their time and attention. Yes, there are the occasional audiences who are hostile to the speaker, but those who come to hear an impersonation speaker seldom are numbered among hostile audiences. These people are present because they want to be here, because they are interested.

Before the impersonation speech is to begin, the speaker should have some idea as to the size and placement of the audience, what will be the pre-speech program, and whether there will be an introduction and who will do it and what generally will that person say (this latter is not always available or prepared). Knowing these things, even ten or fifteen minutes ahead, will give the speaker an opportunity to adjust to the situation and allow her/him to make the most of it.

One of my granddaughters, in making her first flight to Europe, listed on a sheet of paper *fifteen things that could go wrong, from missing her flight, to missing connections, to the plane's* engine losing power, to getting airsick, to being hijacked, to getting on the wrong plane, to . . .. (She did make it over and back without incident.) Many public speakers unconsciously or subconsciously struggle with the same questions when anticipating making a speech: what if they forget their lines? ("crash"); what if they have problems with their costume? ("missing connections"); what if they get so nervous they become ill? ("airsick"); what if they lose their place in the script? ("wrong plane"); what if the audience makes it obvious they aren't in the least interested, or does something that would

embarrass the speaker? ("hijacking"). All legitimate fears, and equally applicable to the genre of impersonation speaking.

"What happens if any of these fears come true?" What will you do? What can you do? First of all, in all probability, none of these fears will come true. If something does, and it's within your power, you will handle it appropriately. If you do forget a word or a point, improvise. You know your character well enough, and have much more material in your head than you have included in your prepared speech, and because you have clearly established the time and place for your audience, you will just stay in character and "wing it." Your audience doesn't know what you were going to say in the first place, so they won't know if or how you've changed anything. For a few brief seconds (it may seem like an eternity to you), put yourself in the audience's place. Looking at yourself objectively, what would they like to hear about your character and/or the times in which your character lived? Revise your speech right there; make use of your extensive research and knowledge.

If a very small audience shows up, talk to them more on an interpersonal level. If there are microphone problems, comment on "these new-fangled gadgets," rediscover your diaphragm and project your voice, and/or somehow bring the audience closer, whether you need to move or they do. If the audience laughs inappropriately, stay in character and make some kind of response, if only "Please don't laugh; I'm serious about this." Remember: the character you are impersonating was a real person who faced real audiences--a human being like yourself facing other human beings. Their speaker-audience relationship was no different from a modern speaker-audience relationship. So, work with your audience, and whatever happens, happens. *Don't worry about it. Let your character handle it.* Certainly, it will take energy. Certainly, something could "go wrong." But, in all probability, it won't. During the speech event itself, you will work very hard and exert great amounts of both psychic and physical energy, but it will be worth it! And your audience will gain new insight into your character and the times in which s/he lived.

"Revising the Speech"

Many writing instructors have said that the secret of good writing is rewriting, rewriting, and more rewriting. I concur. And the secret of creating a memorable speech is revision, revision, and more revision. One of the greatest obstacles for beginning speakers, not unlike beginning writers, is erasing what one has already written and substituting some other words for it. Once our words are set down on paper, we seem to want to protect them, somewhat as we would protect our children. However, we need to realize that our words are not sacrosanct, that there is often a better way to say something, a better way to communicate a message. We just need to *work* at finding it.

There are primarily three specific places in the speechmaking process where revision can occur. The first is during the writing itself. And herein is one of the advantages of scripting the speech before delivering it, rather than speaking the words spontaneously. Scripting allows the speaker to weigh each word and each statement for both clarity and impact. Once the word/statement is visible, the impersonation speaker can try it out in the privacy of the study or office (or at the dining room table) to see how well it works. Sometimes you may decide that a paragraph needs rewriting; sometimes a whole point; then, again, it might be only the introduction that needs reworking, or the conclusion. Only rarely will you decide to junk the whole speech and start over. If anything needs to be revised, during and right after the initial writing is the opportune time to do it.

The second place for revising a speech is, strangely enough, during the delivery before an audience. It is never too late to revise; that is, if you know the character and era well enough. Of course, revising a speech at this time in its life demands that your research into the character will have been sufficient.

Why would any speaker want to revise a speech during the delivery itself? The reason should be self-evident: *this* specific audience requires it. And how would a speaker know what the immediate audience requires? By eye contact; or, as I have stated previously, by "eyeballing" them. A speaker can acquire a considerable amount of helpful information about an audience and how they're receiving the speech by taking the opportunity to look into their eyes while the words are flowing from her/his mouth. It *can* be done simultaneously with practice.

If some restlessness is occurring, a lively story or illustration may be just the thing to insert at that point. If a speaker sees a frown and interprets it as a quizzical expression, s/he can further elaborate on that statement or thought until an "Oh, I understand now" look is given. If a speaker sees an affirmative nod, s/he will know that that particular point is coming across in fine fashion. How a real audience responds to some intended humor is also important information: if, for example, they don't smile or laugh in response. This would give the speaker an opportunity to revise the

speech on the spot, if it's in any way possible to do so. Then, s/he could make a mental note and revise that section for the next time this character speaks.

The third place in the process of revising is *after* the speech has been delivered. You simply ask for feedback. However, *immediately* after the speech might *not* be the best time to ask for honest feedback, as audiences usually know instinctively that any negative feedback at that point sometimes hurts, so they tell you that they liked the speech or thought it was very good. (Listening to comments made to clergy right after the morning service or to amateur actors right after the play underscores this tendency we all have.) At some later time, we are often more willing to be helpfully critical, and as speakers are more willing to receive critical comments without becoming defensive.

Listen to your audiences: the one in your head, while you are writing; the present one, while you are delivering the speech; the past audience, who can tell you what worked and what didn't work. Take and apply what you can, and make the appropriate revision. Your impersonation speech will be the better for it.

"Publicity and Possibilities for Presentation"

Where does one find opportunities to present an impersonated character to the public? Now that you have an impersonation speech in hand, what can you do with it? (Or maybe the invitation to speak came first, and you've fulfilled that obligation by following the steps outlined in this manual. What now? Can you do anything more with this character? It seems a waste to deliver this speech and present this character only once!)

The first place I suggest to check with is the local Historical Society or Heritage Center/Museum. If your chosen character is a local historical figure, or at one time had or could have had some tie with your local community, these organizations surely would like to know that "s/he" is still available to speak to them. Another place/organization that is usually looking for programs of interest is the Senior Center in your community. Senior Citizens are usually very interested in programs dealing with history and the "good old days," whether on a local, regional, or national level.

Don't overlook community service clubs such as Rotary, Lions, or Kiwanis. They are constantly in need of speakers and program material—on almost any subject of interest. Since a number of my characters are Biblical or other religious figures, I have found churches to be greatly interested in what and whom I can bring to them. Schools are sometimes looking for speakers in history or other classes, and occasionally for assemblies. I have presented a character or two in elementary schools as well; children at this age are often more responsive audiences than adults because they are more open to temporarily setting aside their disbelief.

If there is a college or university in or near your community, you have innumerable possibilities for sharing your chosen characters. For example: science classes might be interested in Madame Curie; history classes might be interested in having Sally Hemming speak to them; art classes might be interested in Vincent van Gogh's message; mass communication classes would have an interest in Guglielmo Marconi; Henry Ford could bring a particular perspective to marketing classes; Lou Gehrig would be appealing to athletic departments; Lucy Hayes would have something to say to political science classes, as George Washington Carver would to a human relations class.

Many communities today have annual celebrations of their past, and search for programs and speakers to highlight something or someone from their history. These community celebrations sometimes become part of the local Chamber of Commerce's marketing of their city. Chambers, themselves, oftimes are looking for speakers at their regular meetings, and an impersonation speaker would be a delightful change of pace.

If and when you have polished and fine-tuned your character presentation, approaching a community theatre would not seem out of order. They might even put together an evening of

historical speakers that would further enhance their presence in and service to the community. Some bookstores (such as Barnes & Noble) have occasional readings or programs that highlight either an author or character or era and might be open to including the unique perspective an impersonated character could bring.

There are many possibilities for impersonation speaking; the word just needs to get out. Once community and organization planners know that impersonation speakers are available and can fill their peculiar needs, your telephone will ring with requests. However, the word needs to reach these people. Program planners need to hear what's available. And that means publicity. Of course, as with a lot of things, word of mouth and personal recommendation still work best, especially after the initial presentation. But for long-range purposes, effective publicity requires more than that. Besides internal publicity (done by the organization contracting the speaker) with upcoming events being announced in meetings and newsletters, there's newspapers, which are always on the lookout for news, especially features with a "different" slant. Hopes for radio and television announcements and blurbs are usually not very realistic until a speaker becomes well known, unless you are acquainted with someone at the station who could and would welcome this kind of promotion.

At the first presentation of a character you do, and at each presentation thereafter, it is helpful to have available a listing of all the historical characters you impersonate with a brief biographical sketch of the person, plus a listing of any character you are willing to research and present. Once members of an audience have experienced the presence of an historical character, they often are so appreciative that they wonder what other characters we impersonate and where else in their lives we can connect. They often become our best ambassadors.

Our technologically advanced world has provided us with another effective way to publicize the availability of our presentations: a Website and Home Page on the World Wide Web. This is a method of publicizing that will be utilized more and more in the future, and we need to be aware of its possibilities.

Publicity seems to be the name of the game. Others will not know what is available to them unless we tell them. This is not always easy to do, especially for many of us who "don't like to blow our own horns." Yet, maybe we can get around this counterproductive feeling by remembering that *it is not "I, as the actor," who is looking for opportunities to speak; rather, it is the character I present who is attempting to find a receptive audience.*

ADDENDA

"The Spirit of Reform"

by Carl Schurz (1884)

Sixty-eight years ago, on April 30, 1816, to be exact, that great American naval hero, Stephen Decatur, proposed a toast at Norfolk, Virginia, with these words: "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong."

Then, forty years ago, in 1844, again in April, John Crittenden, the esteemed Senator from Kentucky, spoke these words in support of war with Mexico, "I hope to find my country in the right; however, I will stand by her, right or wrong."

Only ten years ago, in 1874, in February this time, Senator Matthew Carpenter of Wisconsin, in his argument supporting these United States in selling firearms to France, accused me in the Senate chamber, on the very floor of the U.S. Senate, as I had spoken against this international travesty, accused me of being false to the sentiment, "My country, right or wrong, but my country."

I want to tell you this afternoon: Senator Carpenter was correct! I have laid my life on the line for two nations, the nation of my birth and the nation of my choice, and I have never, I repeat, *never* believed in "my country, right or wrong!" As I replied to Senator Carpenter ten years ago, so I affirm before you today: "My country, right or wrong; if right, to be kept right; if wrong, to be set right!"

When I came to this country in 1852, at the tender age of 23, I saw in this people a spirit not known in any other nation on earth. Though at that time I did not fully understand the complexity of that spirit, I did recognize kinship with it. That spirit is one and the same with the spirit that drove Professor Kinkel and me, in 1848, to rise up in arms against the King of Prussia and to demand a constitutional republic! That same spirit was in every battle we fought, encouraging us against overwhelming odds, and though our cause was lost in Germany, that spirit was alive in the United States! And when I landed in New York as a newly married young German immigrant, I knew that same spirit was here, and that I would have the opportunity to continue what I began in Germany, encouraging the development of that spirit.

What is that spirit, you ask? It is the spirit that drives us to affirm the worth and the dignity of every human being. It is the spirit that drives us to demand fair and honest government—a government responsive to the people it governs. It is the spirit that not only puts right above wrong, but also puts right above party loyalty and even above patriotism—indeed, it is the only true spirit of patriotism. That spirit I discovered as a student of Gottfried Kinkel at the University of Bonn—that

spirit which saw me through our ill-fated revolution in Germany back in '48—that spirit which accompanied me into exile in Zurich, in Paris, in London—that spirit which led me back to Germany as a fugitive to help Professor Kinkel escape from prison and to safety in England—that same spirit greeted me as I landed in New York. What is that spirit, you ask? It is the spirit of continual reform. Let me say that again: It is the spirit of continual reform!—as we human beings struggle to make this nation and this world a better place in which to live. May that spirit never be lost!

During this last month, I have been speaking throughout the Middle West on behalf of Grover Cleveland for president. This is a new experience for me, as it marks the first time I am supporting a Democrat for the highest office in the land. However, I have little choice, because the spirit of reform demands the defeat of James G. Blaine, the Republican candidate. Never, in the history of this nation, has the office of president been more vulnerable to the threat of moral decay. I will continue to travel the rails from the Atlantic Ocean to the far flung Indian Territories, to as many of these 38 states as my resources will take me, giving speeches both in English and in German, campaigning for honesty in government, which Blaine cannot provide with his blemished public record that those infamous Mulligan Letters so vividly describe. Grover Cleveland, the governor of New York, on the other hand, though a Democrat, is a proven leader whose ideas of honest, intelligent, and efficient administration are remarkably clear and correct—Grover Cleveland is likely to become the representative of courageous conscience in the administration of public affairs. He is the man we need as president of these United States!

I know, some of you have heard that vicious rumor, which probably finds its origin in the mind of James G. Blaine, that Governor Cleveland as a very young man became indiscreetly involved with a dipsomaniac widow by whom he is said to have had an illegitimate child. When we "Mugwumps" first heard this, a mood of despondency quickly overcame us, as this scandalous revelation would obviously destroy Cleveland's candidacy, put Blaine in the White House, and damage the cause of American reform—if it were true. A gentleman from Chicago, in our company that evening, whose name I have temporarily forgotten, brought us out of our depression with these words, which I convey to you and recommend for your serious consideration. He said, "From what I hear, I gather that Mr. Cleveland has shown high character and great capacity in public office, but that in private life his conduct has been open to question; while, on the other hand, Mr. Blaine in public life has been weak and dishonest while he seems to have been an admirable husband and father. The conclusion I draw from these facts is that we should elect Mr. Cleveland to the public office which he is so admirably qualified to fill, and remand Mr. Blaine to the private life which he is so eminently qualified to adorn." Now that makes good sense to me—and I believe it will to the American electorate as well.

I believe that Governor Cleveland, when he becomes president, will continue the spirit of reform begun in this country with the Republican Party of Abraham Lincoln, brought to maturity during the administration of the esteemed Rutherford B. Hayes, guided wisely by President Chester A. Arthur, and which is temporarily absent from that same Republican Party today with James G. Blaine as its standard bearer. Governor Cleveland, soon to be President Cleveland, will carry as his banner our banner—the colors of the spirit of reform.

I am proud to have been part of this American Reform Movement, and to have had my German-American brethren right beside me. From my first associations with Abraham Lincoln, as a young delegate from Wisconsin to the Republican National Convention in 1860, and our common goal of ridding this country of that despicable evil, human slavery; from my responsibilities to this nation as a reluctant Ambassador to Spain; from my participation as a general in those crucial battles of the civil war; from my attempts at reconciliation after that war ended; from my term of service in the United States Senate elected by the people of Missouri, and my battles with Ulysses S. Grant and his corrupt and expansionist policies; from my years as Secretary of the Interior in President Hayes' cabinet, and the problems with more left-over corruption from the Grant administration, particularly in the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the trials and tribulations over the establishment of Civil Service standards; from my time as editor of the New York Evening Post; and even to this day as an independent writer---throughout all these experiences, I have expounded the virtues of reform with every bit of energy I could muster.

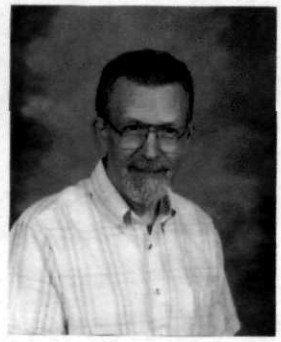
Oh, it has not been without its pain. It has not been without struggle. Reformers create enemies. And many of those enemies are in high places. Senator Conkling of New York was a formidable opponent. For years he opposed what I believed to be one of the most important issues on the American political scene: reform of the spoils system—political contributions begetting political office regardless of merit. What I started promoting as a young advisor to Abraham Lincoln as early as 1864, a civil service merit system, finally came into being just last year with the Pendleton Act on January 16th, 1883—nineteen long years after I first introduced the idea! Many debates and bloodied careers later!

In 1877, only a few months after General Custer's defeat at Little Big Horn, I, as Secretary of the Interior, was thrust headlong into a conflict that put every debating power I had to the test, and even tested the very spirit of reform. A joint congressional committee was named to examine in detail the probable consequences of transferring the Indians to the sole authority of the *War* Department, the theory being that, since they could never be civilized, they ought to be confined under military supervision until, through the beneficent operation of Nature, they would become extinct! We in the Interior Department won that battle, but it took months of radical action, removing

prestigious men from places of power and appointing honest ones to take their places—by no means a popular decision, but a necessary one. I gained lifelong enemies through that action.

Even before that, in 1869, as a young Senator from Missouri and an unrepentant liberal reformer, I quickly learned the consequences of standing firm for the right against great odds. President Grant, a Republican at that, had endorsed the annexation of Santo Domingo—to make it a United States territory. I opposed it on a number of grounds, but primarily because it was an expression of expansionism, of militant imperialism to which I shall forever and unfalteringly be opposed. General Grant ordered an American rear admiral to take belligerent measures against Hayti, a foreign and friendly power, in order to sustain Baez, the Dominican revolutionist! And for what purpose?—to create more United States territory! Because of my opposition to this crassest of imperialist maneuvers, President Grant proceeded to read me out of *his* Republican Party, the party of Abraham Lincoln, the party *I* helped found. And even now, in 1884, I am hearing faint rumblings of more expansionism: Cuba, yes, Cuba is in the sights of the militant imperialists, and even such far flung governments as the Hawaiian Islands and the Philippines! Where will it end? It must end with the oceans! Interference in the tropics and the governments of neighboring nations is an act we cannot afford if we are to maintain moral influence and moral leadership as an enlightened civilization.

The Spirit of Reform must live on in this country! My country, right or wrong; if right to be *kept* right; if wrong, to be *set* right!



Dr. Robert Kendall is a retired Professor of Speech Communication, having taught at St. Cloud State University (Minnesota) from 1971 to his retirement in 1992. He received his PhD in Speech Communication from the University of Minnesota in 1973, having previously earned a graduate degree in Theatre from the U of MN in 1968. Prior to his teaching career, he was a pastor in the United Methodist Church, serving congregations in Upstate New York, Iowa, and Minnesota, after he received his MDiv from Drew Theological Seminary. He is also a graduate of the University of Denver, from which both he and his wife received their undergraduate degrees in 1954.

While at St. Cloud State University, Bob taught a total of 23 different courses, having designed 13 of them, one of which was "Impersonation Speaking," the course that served as the basis for this manual.

During his combined two careers, Bob has personally developed and presented a total of nineteen characters, writing a speech for each one of them, and delivering them to a myriad of audiences: school assemblies, church congregations, service clubs, genealogical societies, heritage centers, history museums, reading clubs, teachers' conventions, college classes, conference workshops, stage performances.

Bob lives in St. Cloud with his wife, LuBell. They have three grown sons and a daughter, three delightful daughters-in-law, and six grandchildren.