

# Front-Row Seats to a Remarkable Show

An International Convention first-timer is wowed by the performances

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**O**n Saturday, August 15<sup>th</sup>, ten of the best speakers in Toastmasters competed in the 2009 World Championship of Public Speaking (WCPS) at the Toastmasters International Convention held at Foxwoods MGM Grand Hotel. In addition to being able to attend, I secured a seat


*The winner was Mark Hunter of Queensland, Australia, with his speech entitled "A Sink Full of Green Tomatoes."*

*Mary Cheyne of Somerville, Massachusetts, came in second with her speech "Nelly," and in third place*

which dog we decide to feed. Erick's story of auditioning for a stunt role against younger and fitter athletes was hilarious and reminded me to go for my dreams, regardless of the obstacles.

I learned something from all the speakers who stepped on the stage. *As a speech contest junkie, watching each contestant inspired me to keep writing and delivering speeches.*

The International Speech Contest will begin again next February. Why not sign up for your club's contest and take your speaking skills to the next level? You can grow tremendously in a short period of time.

Darren LaCroix, the 2001 World Champion of Public Speaking, says, *"The fastest way to improve (your public speaking skills) is by maximizing your stage time."* The 2009 World Championship of Public Speaking was a testament to Darren's advice!  Email Nana at [nana@nanasmagic.com](mailto:nana@nanasmagic.com).

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in the third row, which gave me a magnificent view of the stage. This was my first International Convention, the highlight of which was the WCPS. If you have never attended the International Convention before, you have no idea what you are missing!

Every year, more than 200,000 Toastmasters from around the globe receive the opportunity to compete in the International Speech Contest where contestants deliver five- to seven-minute speeches judged on content, delivery and language. To be eligible to compete in the WCPS, contestants must win five International Speech Contests in a period of approximately six months leading up to the big event.

All of the speakers shared beautiful stories about their lives—stories that made the audience laugh, gasp, cheer and cry. I have watched many recordings of past contests, but there is nothing like being there in person. At the end of the contest, we all waited in anticipation to see who would be crowned the 2009 World Champion of Public Speaking.

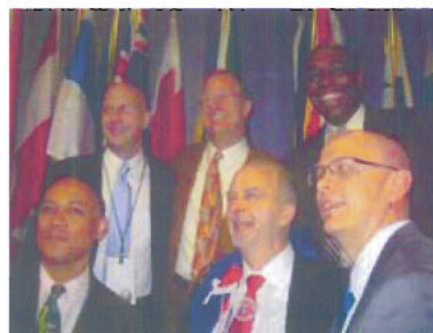
*was Erick Rainey of Portland, Oregon, with "Feed the Right Dog."*

I saw Mark Hunter deliver his speech on DVD at a previous Inter-District Contest. This time, he delivered it with even more style and grace as he shared his challenges of dealing with a disability and his desire to fit in with the rest of the world. It was a remarkable performance and a pleasure to watch him speak.

*Mary Cheyne related an account about her childhood friend Nelly.*

Nelly discouraged Mary to fulfill her dream of emigrating to the U.S. to seek prosperity and success. It turned out that Nelly was actually Mary's inner critic, whose words she counteracted with the phrase, "Stop, reset, and continue!". Mary's speaking style is terrific. She always catches audience members off guard with her Australian accent. She says she's "...an Australian trapped in the body of a Chinese person."

*Erick Rainey told us that he has two dogs and that, in fact, we are all dog owners.* One dog is always encouraging us while the other is telling us that we can't make it. Our success depends on



Former WCPS winners congregated at the International Convention. Back Row, L-R: Darren LaCroix (2001), Lance Miller (2005), Mark Brown (1995). Front Row, L-R: Ed Tate (2000), Mark Hunter (2009), Jim Key (2003). Photo Credit Nana Danso.

**We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit.**  
-Aristotle-