



# Airborne !

Scott Huckaby's Toastmaster CTM #5  
Was voted best speech on August 7, 2003

## CTM #5 – Vocal Variety – Objectives:

- To explore the use of voice volume, pitch, rate, and quality as assets to your speaking.
- To achieve a pleasing natural voice quality when speaking.
- Time: five to seven minutes

Mr. Toastmaster, ladies and gentlemen...  
I wasn't always the mild-mannered Marketing Guy you know me to be. There was a time when I was a Super-duper Paratrooper. Since I have somewhat of a captive audience when I give a toastmaster's speech, I couldn't resist telling you one of my Army stories. My wife has heard them so many times, she won't let me tell her any more.

Army Airborne units are elite combat forces. You've probably heard of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. This unit is usually the one that is sent first to an area of conflict because they are ultra-light Infantry making them able to move on very short notice and even parachute into combat if necessary.

I wasn't ever assigned to an Airborne unit myself but I did have the privilege to go to the Army paratrooper school where I earned my jump wings. So I did get to experience some of the special camaraderie that comes from being trained in an elite Army discipline. For example, when regular soldiers exchange salutes, it is something like this: "mornin' sir..." "mornin' sarge." When fellow paratroopers greet each other, it is more like: "Airborne Sir!" "All the Way, Sarge!"

I went to Airborne school as a brand new Second Lieutenant, in between Field Artillery Officer's Basic and reporting to my unit in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division at Fort Hood, Texas.

Airborne School is three weeks long and takes place at the Army Infantry School in Fort Benning, Georgia. The first week is called ground week where they teach you how to land without breaking anything. The technical term is PLF for parachute landing fall. To keep from breaking a leg, you are supposed to make three points of contact: the ball of your feet, your calf, and what is known as your third-point-of-contact (your gluteus maximus). They had equipment to simulate any conceivable orientation when you hit the ground. The most difficult PLF is running with the wind where you are moving the fastest relative to the ground and have to immediately twist 90 degrees as soon as you hit.

Most of the Airborne school instructors were sergeants and they loved to discipline paratrooper candidates, especially the Second Lieutenants. At Airborne school, the penalty for not doing something just right was push-ups which began in a position called, "the leanin' rest." Needless to say, I did a lot of push-ups that first week of jump school.

We also did a lot of running. Every day before we began our training we did calisthenics followed by running several miles. Back in those days we did everything in leather combat boots which, combined with the winter conditions gave me tendentious in my Achilles tendons. The amazing thing about this condition was that I could run just fine, it only hurt when I walked. Fortunately, we had to run just about everywhere we went.

The second week of Jump School was tower week. This is where we learned how to exit aircraft and maneuver a parachute. There are two

basic types of aircraft we trained to jump from, the C130 four-engine turboprop and a C141 four-engine jet. In both cases, paratroopers exited near the rear of the aircraft via doors on both sides. Exiting a C130 was different than a C141. With the C130 you had to forcibly jump up and out against the prop-wash. With the C141, you basically just walked to the door where you'd be sucked out.

Later in the week we were dropped from 250 foot towers with a parachute that was already open to practice controlling it. I was the first in my class to jump from the 250 foot tower on a day that was pretty windy. They had delayed as long as they could because of the wind but decided to go ahead or we'd not have time for everyone to make their required two tower jumps. They put chalk marks on your helmet to designate whether you've done one or two jumps.

When they dropped me, the sergeant in charge of my tower told me to make a right turn but I never heard him say let up so he turned me into a position where I'd impact the ground running with the wind, the most difficult landing. I figured this was another case of a sergeant messing with a lieutenant so I determined to execute an outstanding PLF which I did. I hit the ground so hard that I rolled and bounced, my feet flying over my head. The sergeant ran up to me to see if I was all right apologizing for his megaphone cutting out on him. He put three marks on my helmet.

Jump week was almost anticlimactic to the first two. I made my required five jumps, and witnesses some accidents resulting from equipment failure combined with errors in judgment but no one in my jump group got hurt.

Before I close, I can't resist leading us in my favorite Airborne cadence. Imagine that you are three miles into a four or five mile run in formation, keeping in-step with the other soldiers in your group. And the drill sergeant breaks into your favorite chant. Since you don't know this, I

have it on a slide. Just repeat after me reading the bold print...

C-130 rollin' down the strip...

**C-130 rollin' down the strip...**

Airborne trooper goin' ta take a little trip.

**Airborne trooper goin' ta take a little trip.**

Jump-up, hook-up, shuffle to the door...

**Jump-up, hook-up, shuffle to the door...**

Jump right out and count to four.

**Jump right out and count to four.**

If my 'chute don' open wide...

**If my 'chute don' open wide...**

I've got another one by my side.

**I've got another one by my side.**

If that one don' open round...

**If that one don' open round...**

I'll be the first one on the ground.

**I'll be the first one on the ground.**

Bury me in the leanin' rest...

**Bury me in the leanin' rest...**

Tell my girl I did my best.

**Tell my girl I did my best.**

Am I right or wrong?

**Your right!**

Are we goin' strong?

**We're strong!**

Sound off!

**One, Two.**

SOUND OFF!

**THREE, FOUR!**

Bring it on down now!

**One, Two, Three, Four, One, Two...**

**Three, Four!**

Outstanding! You did pretty good for a bunch of civilians! Thanks for indulging me. Maybe sometime I'll tell you another Army story, but we're out of time today...

Mr. Toastmaster, front and center!

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