

**Danny Cox's Keynote at the
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The Light from the Past Through the Present and Into the Future

The speaking business as we know it today is now in to its third century. Mark Twain gave his first speech in 1856. A few other professional speakers of that era:

Artemus Ward
Josh Billings
Petroleum V. Nasby
Henry Ward Beecher

Robert Ingersoll
Dwight L. Moody
Charles Spurgeon

Suggested reading: *Kings of the Platform and the Pulpit* (1890) and
Mark Twain on the Lecture Circuit. (1960).

The first best seller in the self-help field was a book called *Self Help* (1859) by Dr. Samuel Smiles. Harvard University picked it as one of the two most influential books of the 19th Century. The other one was Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Smiles also wrote *Thrift, Duty and Life and Labor*.

Smiles was a major influence on Dr. Orison Swett Marden who wrote forty-seven books on personal achievement. He started the first *Success Magazine* in October of 1897. Some of the contributing authors included James Whitcomb Riley, Oliver Wendel Holmes and Clarence Darrow. Suggested reading: *The Life Story of Dr. Orison Swett Marden* (1925).

His contemporaries writing in the self help vein were George H. Knox, F.D. Van Amburgh, William George Jordan, Dr. Frank Crane and philosopher, speaker, publisher and best selling author Elbert Hubbard.

Hubbard wrote countless books one of which was *A Message to Garcia*. This little book is given to all graduates of our military academy and used in management classes around the world. With over 100,000,000 copies in print it's listed as the 5th best seller of all time, according to the *Book of Lists*. Suggested reading: *Elbert Hubbard, Genius of Roycroft* by Balch (1940) and *Elbert Hubbard of East Aurora* by Shay. Foreword by Henry Ford (1926).

Note: To locate copies of the books mentioned above visit ABEBOOKS.com, ALIBRIS.com or BIBLIOFIND.com.

But did any of these speakers and authors have any influence past the peak of their careers? If you read a certain USA Today front page article, watched a certain "60 Minutes" expose or had the misfortune to view an ill fated sitcom featuring the star as a speaker then you know the cynical media doesn't think our influence extends past the end of the speech.

Let's connect some dots to see how far the influence of our predecessors really does reach:

President Theodore Roosevelt was a reader of Elbert Hubbard books and was used as an endorsee of some of them.

- Elbert Hubbard in the early 1900's published a magazine that was read by 1,000,000 people per month. One of the contributing writers was Napoleon Hill who later wrote the mega best seller, *Think and Grow Rich*.
- Morris Pickus, former NSA member in the 1970's, gave a struggling young insurance salesman a copy of Hill's best seller. He read it. His name was W. Clement Stone and later he wrote *Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude* with Napoleon Hill.
- Earl Nightingale was greatly influenced by *Think and Grow Rich*. His goal became to meet Napoleon Hill which Clement Stone arranged.
- Stone resurrected Orison Swett Marden's Success magazine. The man who became editor of that magazine was Og Mandino author of the biggest best seller ever in the selling field, *The Greatest Salesman in the World*. Og was an NSA member and former board member.
- Dale Carnegie used Elbert Hubbard's *A Message to Garcia* in his popular book, *Public Speaking*.
- *Forbes Magazine* for many years has used countless Elbert Hubbard epigrams on their famous last page of quotes.
- Jim Newton was the most interesting person I've ever known. Perhaps you remember the interview I did with him that was used on the September and October VOE tapes. Jim wrote *Uncommon Friends* (1987) which covered his close friendship with Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Harvey Firestone, Dr. Alexis Carrel and Charles Lindbergh. Jim's mother was an avid reader of Elbert Hubbard books as was Thomas Edison and Henry Ford.

As you think back over these unbroken links to the past it becomes apparent that the light that Dr. Samuel Smiles turned on in the 1850's is still shining. It's never gone out.

So how do you clean your lens and bump your wattage so you can still be an influence in people's lives 100 to 150 years on down the road? Here are some ideas:

1. Spend quality time with *triggers*—people who make you think but not necessarily like they think.
2. Look for unique adventures to participate in.
3. Seek out people you read about in the business section of newspapers and magazines. Call them or take them to lunch. In Appendix I you'll find a list of suggested questions to ask.
4. Make a list of high achievers who have had impact, who have had an influence on others in the world. Really study the biographies and autobiographies of these heroes. Take copious notes. In Appendix II there's a list of points you should be able to discuss about any one of the people you've chosen to study. Use more and more creativity to develop, polish and present new material.
5. Make a long-term commitment to your speaking career. Appendix III contains something I wrote entitled *My Speaking Creed*. Why not write your own speaking creed?

The best is yet to be!

Appendix I

Questions to ask in a one-on-one interview over lunch:

- How did you get started in your business?
- What separates you (or your company) from your competitors?
- Do you think people can be trained to be successful?
- What influences from the past have been continuing motivators in your life?
- Do you have a guiding philosophy in your life?
- What were your original goals when you were getting started?
- Was there a turning point—a time in your life when you could have “gone either way”?
- Why did you pick the route you took?
- Have you ever had what you considered a significant failure in business? What did you learn from that experience?
- How do you use your leisure time?
- When and how do you plan your day?
- Do you follow a system in making decisions, and if so, what is it?
- What do you look for in a person who wants to join your company?
- Which of your accomplishments do you consider most satisfying?
- What would you regret not having accomplished before you die?

Finally—make darn sure *you* pay for lunch!

Appendix II

What to look for as you study your heroes:

1. **Heredity:** What traits were passed down through the family.
2. **Early environment:** The nation and times. Home and local community. School. Church. Influencing personalities.
3. **Later environment:** Home and family. Friends. Any other significant elements.
4. **Purpose:** What were the various purposes that steered this person’s life? Which one became dominant? Why?
5. **Opposition:** Who or what opposed him or her and why?
6. **Handicaps:** Physical, social and economic.
7. **Achievements:** Which were most notable and why?
8. **Characteristic statements:** Either from others or those learned through personal experience.
9. **Dramatic occurrences:** What were the vivid experiences (positive or negative) that this person carried in his or her memory.
10. **Religious beliefs or convictions:** Early or late in life. Results?
11. **Failures:** In business or personal.
12. **Personality:** Dominant attitudes and moods.
13. **Source of power:** Analyze the effect that each of the above items had on this person. Which one or ones were predominant and why?
14. **Bibliography:** What did he or she leave for posterity in the form of books, articles, recordings, etc?

MY SPEAKING CREED

by

Danny Cox

As I stand in front of each audience, I am judged. But more importantly I see myself as I truly am. If there is a difference between these two perceptions then it becomes a demand for growth on my part with self-respect as the reward. I will be the person my audience believes me to be.

As I challenge and inspire others to grow and develop I will commit to even greater personal effort to do the same. I can never ask others to take risks I would not take. I will live my life fully and courageously as I cross from solid ground into the unknown. I will report, truthfully, the failures and successes of these adventures. I will be seen as both vulnerable and tenacious in these growth producing experiences.

Each time I speak, I offer to my audience a small portion of the life that has made me what I am today. For that same reason, I, therefore, hold any other speaker's material as sacred for it not only comes from the fabric of his or her life but is delivered from the heart. I refuse to divert any one of these special and precious creations to my audience as though it were my own lest I be withdrawing from an account to which I have made no deposits.

By virtue of the fact that I have the privilege of standing in front of a gathering of eager human minds, I will never forget that I wield the awesome God given power to influence the way people think. It's a responsibility that I refuse to take lightly. With truth as the foundation, I commit to continued improvement of these communication skills.

Here and now, I pledge a renewed intensity to each speech that I make. I will deliver each message as though this was my last opportunity to share what I have learned thus far in life. I will then know as I step down from each succeeding platform that that was my best effort ever.

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