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NON SEQUITUR

by Max Millard

Hello folks, my name is Max and I'm an alcoholic. But I'm proud to say I've been sober for 15 years. No, don't applaud. I still drink every day – just not enough to get drunk.

I remember my first visit to Alcoholics Anonymous. It didn't go well. I mean it's anonymous, right? I wore a ski mask.

I've reached the age where strangers treat me with respect. I was standing on a crowded bus recently when a teenage boy jumped up and offered me his seat. I said “no thank you” because I was about to get off. He said, “My mother always told me to give up my seat to old people.” I looked around and said, “Well I don't see any old people.”

But it's OK to admit you're a senior. You can ride the bus for free and get discounts at stores. But most cashiers don't automatically give me a discount because they don't dare to ask if I'm over 65. People get insulted. And I hate to ASK for a senior discount. so I wear this hat, and just point to it. It works every time.

I got this hat from a friend of mine who works as a substitute teacher. None of the kids bother to learn his name, and once he overheard a student asking, “Who's the sub today?” Another kid answered, “I don't know. Some old guy.” My friend thought: “That's it. I'm some old guy.” So he made these hats, and sent them to his senior friends.

I've reached the age where I need to get a colonoscopy. I tried to schedule one online, but I misspelled the word and it came out as clonoscopy. That's when they make a clone of you. I didn't do it, but if I had, I would have sent my clone to get the procedure.

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This year I traveled to the Philippines, and I wanted to practice my Toastmaster skills, so I contacted a local school to ask if I could give a speech to the students. The principal said yes, so I worked hard on the speech, and on the day of my presentation, I arrived early and shook hands with all the teachers. Everyone greeted me with smiles and thumbs up.

I walked up to the lectern, adjusted the microphone, arranged my notes, then delivered my talk, along with a slide show. The room was completely silent while I spoke, and when I finished, the students gave me a big round of applause.

When I was leaving, I asked the principal, “How do you think it went?”

He was a highly educated man, and I valued his opinion. He first praised me for my clarity, my style, and my delivery. “An almost perfect speech” he said.

“Almost perfect?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said, putting his arm on my shoulder. “It was all good sir, except that none of the students speak or understand English.”

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I used to teach elementary school, and I once had a student from Puebla, Mexico. He was about 8 years old. I said to him, “Puebla? That was the site of a famous battle in the Mexican American War.”

He said, “You mean Mexico and the United States had a war?”

I said yes.

He asked, “Who won?”

I said, “We did.”

He went “Ohhhh....”

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To switch gears, I heard about a dog trainer who boasted that he could train a dog to do anything. He brought his dog to a convention and claimed that he had taught it Morse code. Someone shouted, “Prove it!”

So the trainer nodded to the dog. It walked over to a table, then lifted up its paws and started tapping on the table top. The audience sat with stunned silence until somebody asked, “What does it say?”

The trainer said, “Woof!”

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Final topic: Do you ever get tired of your fellow Toastmasters using the same old cliches? I think it's time to weed out the English language and exterminate some words. Let's start with AWESOME.

Awesome is supposed to be something dazzling, astonishing, earth-shaking. But it's morphed into an innocuous catchphrase that can be slapped onto almost anything.

Last week I went to Starbucks and told the barista I'd like a cappuccino. He said, “Awesome.” That's when AWESOME died for me.

You know what's awesome? A tsunami. An erupting volcano. A hydrogen bomb. You know what's not awesome? An electric fly swatter. Finding your lost glasses. Dubai style chocolate made in Turkey.

After we ban the word AWESOME, we can target these other earworms:

bro, my bad, it's all good, it is what it is.

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