

Look beyond the clouds

by J.A. Gamache

Speech presented August 18, 2007 at Rochester N-Y, U.S.A.
Toastmasters International World Championship of Public Speaking (World's finals)

Do you know someone who is just toooooo optimistic? For me, it's my Father. One rainy afternoon Papa draaaaaggged me outside...

- This weather is extraordinaire! Let's walk to the park."
- But Papa it's pouring rain!
- Extraordinaire! Best time for a walk.

For Papa, everything is extraordinary. We strolled silently. Suddenly,

- Ahhhh... Listen to the rain. Smell the earth. See the extraordinaire colors in the sunshine!
- Papa! The sun is not shining!"
- Tututtut! The sun IS shining ABOVE the clouds. My boy, learn to look beyond the clouds.

Contest chair, Ladies and Gentlemen, this was Papa's way of teaching me when things look bad, you can win by looking beyond the clouds.

When you look beyond a failure, you find a learning experience. Isn't it true? For example, once I learned the importance of not going overtime... during an area speech contest where I was the ONLY contestant... and I LOST!

I'm reminded of a different speech contest this time in the United States. Now, I am from Montreal, Canada. It was a 5-hour drive. That's what? 7 hours Canadian? A 7-hour drive, for a 7-minute speech and I won... a certificate of participation!!!

After the contest, I sat alone, feeling like a loser. Just then, a beautiful woman wearing a sunny summer dress floated into the room, beamed me a smile and lit up my life. Her name is Sylvie. Today, she's my wife. Sure I lost the contest but my heart won first prize. A gloomy defeat reveals a glittering diamond, when you look... beyond the clouds.

We were on cloud nine like the Dean Martin song, "When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie... That's amore! When you dance down the street with a cloud at your feet you're in love..."

Three years ago, MY Sylvie was diagnosed with breast cancer.

All I could see was dark clouds. I told Sylvie I could not see anything positive with her having cancer. She STOPPED me, "I don't have cancer, I have A cancer. I may have A disease but it does not have ME!" Woo... I wouldn't like to be that cancer!!!

Sylvie made it clear she decided to look beyond the sickness. Despite, the unfair surgery, the energy draining drugs and the loss of her hair, Sylvie fought back with joy and laughter. To lighten the mood for our loved ones and for ourselves, we created a photo of Sylvie and me... sent it to friends and family.(J.A. unveils a picture of him and Sylvie with hairless heads.)

I know what you're thinking,... I agree with you,... I look hot with a shaved head!

Cancer affects so many. In fact, you may know someone it has touched. It's a challenge to find sunshine in such an ordeal,... it... is...possible... when you choose to look for it. We don't know if we will win this battle. We do know it made us find our sunshine. This deadly disease made us feel an urgency to realize our dreams. Cancer drove Sylvie to pursue her Masters degree — she'll graduate next summer. Sylvie's cancer pushed me to publish my first book last December.

The heat of hardship welded us together. One evening while

massaging Sylvie's beautiful baldhead, I silently thanked my Papa for dragging me into the rain. I was FINALLY able to see beyond the darkest cloud to the brightest most healing sun. I saw it in the eyes of my wife... and yes it was... extraordinaire!

To paraphrase French author Albert Camus,... in the midst of winter we discovered our invincible summer.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you can make your worst moment your best! The difference between being crushed by adversity or growing from it lies in your eyes.

When it rains on your life, search for the sun. Beyond the clouds, a gloomy defeat reveals a glittering diamond; Beyond the clouds, the threat death can bring you life; Even when you lose you win when you choose to look beyond the clouds.

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About J.A. Gamache

A bachelor in business administration, J.A. Gamache is a bilingual (French and English) professional speaker from Montreal, Canada.

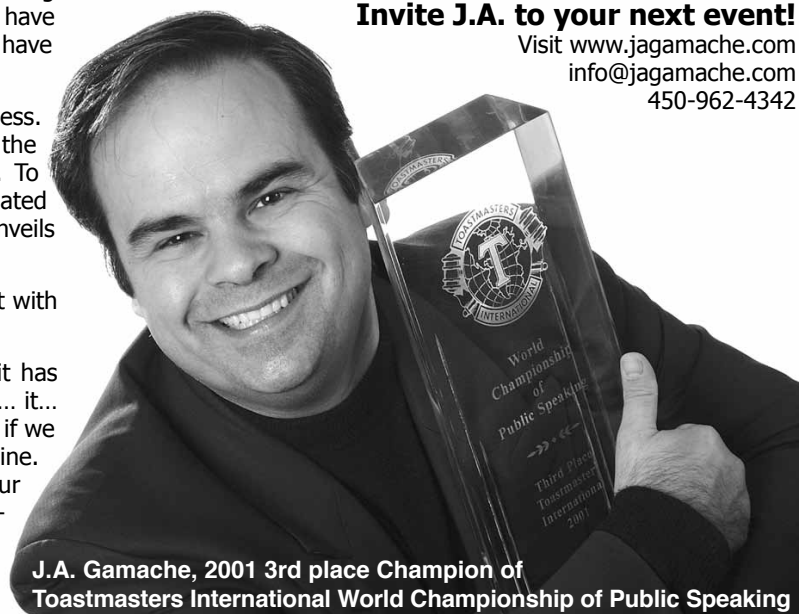
In 2003, He was the president of the Montreal's Chapter of the Canadian Association of Public Speakers (CAPS).

A proud Toastmasters' member since 1993, J.A. Gamache is the only Quebecer to ever win a podium (3rd place in the 2001) at Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking and was a finalist in that same contest in 2005 and 2007. Over 35 000 contestants participate in this prestigious event every year.

His free newsletter "Public Speaking with J.A." is read in more than 50 countries around the world by over 3000 readers.

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J.A. Gamache, 2001 3rd place Champion of Toastmasters International World Championship of Public Speaking