



### Interview with the District 51 Evaluation Contest Champion, Palaniappa Subramaniam

**Bulletin 51:** Can you share with us briefly what was the approach that you used in evaluating the speaker?

**Pala:** I always believe in the sandwich method, where you start with highlighting the strengths the speaker already has, analyze the speech structure for clarity, then provide specific recommendations for improvement, and finally summarize with what you will remember about the speech. These are the 4 basic segments of all my evaluations.

**Bulletin 51:** What inspired you to come out with this approach?

**Pala:** Based on my involvement as a speaker for the Toastmasters International "Effective Evaluation" program in the past, I have come to understand how the Toastmasters program teaches us to evaluate an individual with sincerity and respect. From this program, the 3 key points I always remember as an evaluator are:

- a) I am NOT a judge but just expressing my observations
- b) Always Fuel the speakers' Self-Esteem
- c) Be specific and measured with your suggestions for improvement.

Hence, this program has inspired me to develop my standard approach in evaluation.

**Bulletin 51:** How did you prepare yourself for the evaluation contest? Any special tips that you would like to share?

**Pala:** Well, I have no specific tips since I believe that evaluation is an individual's point of view. Every individual has his or her own views. But, I must say, the 2 simple preparatory steps are:

- a) Practice your evaluation as often as possible, and get feedback from senior members and the speakers themselves on what they thought about your evaluation.
- b) Get to know the CC manual's speech objectives, as it is a progressive guide on the basic building blocks of a speaker, and this knowledge will help us gauge at what level is a particular speaker during the evaluation.

**Bulletin 51:** What is your advice for those members who are aspiring to be a champion in the Evaluation Contest in future?

**Pala:** I have 3 things which I feel are very important for any evaluator:

- a) Never over-shadow the speaker's speech, the limelight should belong to the speaker.
- b) Only evaluate what the speaker has said, and not give your own opinion on the topic. Your job is to analyze what the speaker has said, and not to judge what the speaker should have said, even though you do not agree with the speaker's views.
- c) Be sincere with your praise. It has to come from within. If you are staging it just to win, believe me, the audience will know. There is a very thin line between motivation and "white wash".

All the best to the future contestants. Do note that evaluation is not a prepared speech.



Palaniappa Subramaniam, second from left, posing with his winner's trophy.