

Fellow Toastmasters, Honoured Guests

Today, I would like to talk to you about 2 encounters with strangers and how it has changed my life. If you're like me, you're fairly anti-social; however, I hope that with these 2 stories, it might inspire you to make some contact of your own, whether it's to help a fellow passenger out with some change or a friendly hello.

My first story takes place on the bus as I was commuting back to UBC from a long day of work. It would have been a normal bus ride, but at one stop, we were delayed for a long time. An Asian student had put in their ticket into the ticket validator and the validator wanted more money. What happened was that the student had bought a Zone 1 ticket and was traveling into Zone 2 so he needed to upgrade his fare. The student then went into his backpack and was digging around for his wallet and after a minute or so, he found it. He then proceeded to dig around his wallet for the right amount of change – all while passengers were waiting behind him. I guess the bus driver was starting to get frustrated because suddenly you could hear his voice over the speaker system.

“You knew you were going to go 2 Zones”

“Why didn't you just buy a 2 Zone pass while you were buying a 1 Zone pass?”

“Look at all the people you're making wait on the bus”

Finally, I took pity and gave him the necessary change to upgrade his ticket. But, again, as we went along our way, the bus driver said over the speakers “Just buy a 2 Zone pass next time”

I understood that it is frustrating to make passengers wait because in the end, the passengers that get on the bus afterwards, are not mad at the one passenger delaying the bus, but rather, the bus driver. Of course, it was probably the student's first time traveling on the bus. We didn't talk afterwards, but he gave a look to me as if saying “Thank you” and I nodded back “You're welcome”. This incident not only made me feel warm and fuzzy inside, but it helped me understand why sometimes the bus is so late.

My second story again takes place on a bus. I was waiting in line for the bus to get back home. I was casually looking around, minding my own business when I look to the front of the line and see a woman waving in my direction. I looked behind me and I didn't see anyone so I started thinking to myself, “Does she know me?” Again, a few moments pass and I look to the front again. Again, the woman waves in my direction. This time, I smile back which is an acceptable middle ground whether I knew her or not. My mind was racing, trying to think back to where I knew her. Was she a friend of my parents or a parent of my friends? Obviously if I knew her, it would be incredibly rude to ignore her. On the other hand, it would be awkward if I talked to her as if I knew her but didn't. The bus finally came and in a moment it would be time to board the bus. I knew that once on the bus, I would have another dilemma. Am I supposed to sit beside her? If I knew her, then yes. If I didn't then no. I watched as she boarded the bus and took a seat inside. The feeling I had as I went on the bus and walked slowly to where the woman sat was like walking on death row. Fate had frowned on me as the seat next to the woman was empty. As I inched closer and closer to the empty seat, I looked at the woman, trying to see if she

recognized me at all. Her face was stoic and statue-like. Finally, I reached the empty seat, and at that moment, as I decided to sit next to her on the bus, she suddenly got up and waved to the front of the bus. Quickly, I switched my body weight so that I could sit down in the seat opposite to her. I had dodged quite an awkward bullet.

It turned out that the woman knew another woman behind me in the line that I had not seen. Of course, just because I didn't know her doesn't mean that I can't say hello to her or smile at her as if saying hello. This incident taught me how important timing is in life. If I had gotten on the bus a little earlier, I would have sat beside her even though it was 'saved' for her friend.

I hope that these two stories have inspired you to interact with strangers, whether you're waiting in line, or on the bus or even at a Toastmaster meeting. And if not, hopefully you have an interesting enough story to tell your friends. Thank you, Mr. Chair.