

## Speech: The Pain Passes

*A speech by Harold G. Patterson*

*August 22, 1987*

***Winner, Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking, 1987. A speech with an unforgettable opening that immediately captures our curiosity-one of the great French painters caring for another. This unique insight draws us into a speech seamlessly tied together as it journeys to a flawless finale...***

At the beginning of this century  
In a home in Southern France  
The great French impressionist Henri Matisse  
Watched as an easel was propped in front of a crippled, old man.  
And he watched as a nurse placed a paintbrush  
Between the fingers of the old man's twisted rheumatic hand.  
Then Matisse turned to his friend-  
The aging artist, Pierre Auguste Renoir-  
And asked him why he continued to paint  
When the pain was so intense.  
Renoir's answer was this-  
*My dear friend*  
***The pain passes-***  
***But the beauty remains.***

What a magnificent thought.

**The pain passes-**

**But the beauty remains.**

Renoir's **pain** eventually took his life

But the **beauty** of his works-  
The creation of his art-  
**Remains with us even today.**

The very nature of our human existence  
Ensures us that we too will experience **pain**.  
And whether it be physical, emotional, or both-  
Long term, short term, or lasting a lifetime-  
We must remember to be true to ourselves-  
And to **do those things which bring us the greatest joy**-  
And then, too, like Renoir-  
**Our pain will pass.**

Sometimes our **pain** may be emotional.  
Someone once said that the human mind  
Is the most remarkable of all creations.  
Think about that!  
It starts working even before we are born  
And works continuously 24 hours a day  
Collecting and storing information  
And never stops until we-  
Stand up to give a speech.

At Toastmasters  
The greatest **pain** we will experience  
Will be in those anxious moments  
Just before we give our first speech-  
Our first icebreaker - remember!?  
That knot-  
Right in the pit of your stomach  
Those trembling legs-  
The blood racing through your veins-  
Those sweaty palms---  
Yet, **no matter how great that pain is**  
**There is no greater beauty**  
Than the feeling of accomplishment  
As we take our seat when it's over.  
And that's a feeling

## **A beauty that remains**

With us always.

On June 23, 1940,

A girl was born to a couple in Clarksville, Tennessee.

The **joy** of this birth was overshadowed-

By the complications of its prematureness.

The child developed double pneumonia-

Scarlet fever-

And by the time she was 6 years old

It was determined that she had polio.

That meant braces-confinement-and excruciating pain-

Yet with each visit to the doctor

Her questions were always the same-

*When can I take the braces off?*

*When can I walk?*

*When will I be able to run with my friends?*

And each time the doctor's answer was this-

*I don't know-maybe never.*

The little girl's **pain was great-**

Yet not strong enough to overcome her spirit.

Because one day she did take the braces off-

And she did walk-

And she did run-

And did she ever run.

In Rome, in 1960, she ran for the whole world!

To the French she was known as *La Gazelle-*

To the Italian, *The Black Pearl-*

And to the rest of the world-

Her friends-

And especially her 18 brothers and sisters-

She was known as Wilma Rudolph-

*Fastest Woman in the World-*

Winner of three Olympic gold medals.

In Rome in 1960, Wilma Rudolph was living proof

That **the pain passes-**

And **the beauty remains.**

The **pain** of losing a loved one  
Is something that never quite goes away.  
Yet, in time, even the **pain** of a loss is eased  
By the remembrance of that person's life.  
In 1935-a man died tragically  
In a plane crash in Alaska.  
The entire world felt the **pain** of this loss-  
His gift was laughter  
And at this time  
He was helping a troubled world laugh its way  
Through a great depression.  
The loss of Will Rogers was a **painful** one indeed  
**Yet the beauty of his life-**  
His wit and wisdom-  
**Remains** with us to this very day.  
Will Rogers said this-  
*In Oklahoma*  
*We have an average annual rainfall of 31.2 inches-*  
*And, boy, you ought to be there the day we get it--*  
Again, **the beauty remains.**

Sometimes our **pain** may be both physical and emotional.  
In 1983-  
A man and woman were married at the age of 34  
And two years later they decided to have a child.  
Not an unusual decision  
But because of their age  
They knew that certain precautions must be taken.  
After several thorough examinations-  
The doctor said- *Go for it.*  
Their dream of having a child of their own  
Would soon become true.  
And for the first seven months  
The pregnancy progressed flawlessly  
But then the doctor noticed that something was wrong-  
A condition called preeclampsia-  
Would send the mother to bed-  
Under 24-hour hospital observation-

Threatening the lives of both mother and child.  
The only cure was to deliver the child now-  
But it was too soon-too early- to do that.  
Valuable time was needed.  
So they waited-And they prayed.  
Three agonizing weeks went by-  
And finally the doctor said  
*We must deliver this child now.*  
And at 5:21 pm on July 24, 1985,  
The doctor handed me-  
My newborn daughter.  
And he looked at me and said  
*She's six weeks premature-  
And only 4 pound, 4 ounces-  
But she's a fighter and she'll be just fine.*  
And as the tears flowed freely  
My wife and I now knew that  
**The pain had passed**  
**And the beauty was here.**

The **pain of life is inevitable** for each of us-  
And whether it be physical, emotional, or both-  
Long term, short term, or lasting a lifetime-  
We must remember to be true to ourselves-  
And to do those things which bring us the greatest joy.  
And then, finally-  
To remember-listen to-and embrace-  
The words of Renoir  
As they are brushed across the canvas of our soul-  
When he said  
*My dear friend-  
**The pain passes-  
But the beauty-  
Oh, the beauty remains--Forever!***

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*Brian Woolf's comments: "The pain passes-but the beauty remains." Harold illustrates and reinforces his memorable message, masterfully threading it through five widely diverse and fascinating stories - Renoir, Toastmasters, Wilma Rudolph, Will Rogers, and the emotion-filled birth of his first child. After many years, I still see and recall their images and stories which is a tribute to Harold's connective style, his emotive power, and his authenticity. It reminds us that a meaningful message with clear examples that connects with the audience will always leave its imprint.*

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***And there's more where this came from...***

**Visit Brian Woolf on the web for his complete collection of articles, speeches, insights and practical advice, at**

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