

LEARN  
VENTRILOQUISM  
FROM HOMER IN 4  
WEEKS

By

Keith Fordham

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# Dedication

This book is dedicated to the love of my life Shirley Fordham. I have loved her from the time we were in the eighth grade. She became my wife after we graduated from college in 1972. She knew she was marrying a preacher. She did not know all that would entail. She has stood with me through thick and thin.

She worked as a Registered Nurse to get us through New Orleans Seminary. She worked part time to help us in the early days of our ministry. She bore our two children. She traveled on the road with me and taught our children in a travel trailer and the back of a dually pickup truck. She has served as secretary treasurer of the Keith Fordham Evangelistic Association and stayed up many nights with me working on newsletters and getting packets ready to mail to churches.

When my dad died she was all the strength and comfort our family needed to make it through. When the ministry has been difficult her faith, prayers and words of rebuke and encouragement have kept me going. She is my closest friend. She is the one person I want to be near me all the time. The joy of having someone so faithful to the Lord and me is incredible. She feels her ministry to keep me on the road and preaching.

When I collapsed in 2000 she learned ventriloquism and uses her dummy to minister in my stead. The rest that gives me strengthens my pulpit ministry. She keeps me healthy and is a delight and joy to heart. She is the wife of my youth and the love of my life. She reads to me on long trips and encourages me in the Lord.

Putting up with me has not always been easy. She has done it lovingly all these years. Shirley Fordham I love you with all my heart!

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## "HOW HOMER CAME TO BE"

### *EARLY INTEREST*

Most people think of me as an evangelist, a traveling preacher. They think of one who spends his life bringing people as close to Jesus Christ as possible. This is the aim and main purpose to my life. However, to thousands of school children, I am the man with the dummy.

Childhood memories of ventriloquism bring Edgar Bergen with Charlie McCarthy, Mortimer Snerd, and old maid Effie Klinker to mind. This memory is only of passing entertainment. Sherri Lewis, Lamb Chop, Charlie Horse, Kukla, Fran and Ollie, Buffalo Bob, and Howdy Doody were all part of a vague group of novel entertainment for children. I did not know the difference between a puppet, a marionette, a muppet. I did, however, know that a "knee pal" used by a ventriloquist was different.

As a teenager, I gave very little thought to ventriloquism. Ventriloquism was someone "throwing their voice" to fool people into thinking a voice was coming out of a box or from some crack in the floor. I had no thought of ever trying to do this myself.

Life for me revolved around my conversion to Christ, church, playing ball, girls, and getting through school. In my senior year of high school, I began to struggle with the call of God to be in full time ministry. I finally surrendered and began the joyous, difficult task of going to college and seminary. The desire to do as much for Christ and my fellow man as possible oozed through my being.

As I preached, worked with youth, served as Interim pastor, and shared duties with so many talented singers and musicians, and dynamic Christian ball players it caused a contagious excitement within my heart to communicate with excellence. I wanted to be the best communicator I could be.

At Samford University I was able to hear many of the top evangelists in the Southern Baptist Convention. Eddie Martin came in to speak to the preacher boys. He said, "If you preach on hell (Luke 16), preach it like you believe, it. He then proceeded to act out the part of the rich man begging for water in the torments of hell. I could really see that man burning in hell. Acting out a Bible story and getting into the different parts became a part of my thinking. This would later prove to be very helpful in ventriloquism.

The event that left the deepest impression of one man doing many things came in a seminary class. Dr. Swartz (Professor of preaching at that time) was asked to come to a Worship Leadership class and demonstrate dramatic reading. He read the passage concerning David and Goliath. He

did the voice of the narrator, David, Goliath and the incidental speech of the brother. Tears stained my face as I felt the very power of God through the reading of His Word. Learning to use different voices would later be a blessing in ventriloquism.

My experience as Minister of Youth and Evangelism at the First Baptist Church of Biloxi, Mississippi allowed me to expand my work. I saw the different levels of knowledge and teaching methods for every age group. For instance, the material used for first and second graders would be absolutely boring to fifth and sixth graders. The materials used for fifth and sixth graders would not be understood by first and second graders. I was able to separate the groups and use different workers and materials.

In January, 1975, I entered full-time evangelism. During the first year and most of the second year I was asked to have special emphasis nights, such as Youth Night, Family Night, Deacons Night, Bring-a-Friend Night and almost inevitably Children's Night. On Children's Night I was asked to speak to the children for about 20 or 30 minutes prior to the church service. I would do object lessons such as hanging a hammer and ruler on the edge of a table in a manner that looked impossible. A law of physics makes this possible even as Jesus' blood makes our salvation possible. I would use a telephone to talk about controlling our tongues. A statement I often made using the telephone was "There are three great methods of communication. They are telephone, telegraph, and tell a woman."

My greatest frustration was finding a way to get the message across to all ages without boring the older ones and being over the heads of the younger ones. I began to ask the Lord to show me a way to do this. Little did I know, imagine, or even dream what His answer would be. Nor could I have guessed how He would get my attention. The prayer for a way to deliver a message to span the age gap would be answered while in the "pressure cooker" of financial distress.

# CHAPTER ONE

## A SMALL MIRACLE

The first few years in evangelism were incredibly difficult for me. Ninety-eight out of every one hundred men that go into evangelism are out within two years. The principle reason is financial: not enough money comes in to cover the cost of the expenses of travel, publicity, postage, equipment, conventions, insurance, office supplies, office equipment, and salary to make ends meet. We were making it with God's provision. When God provides through His people you have no idea as to the who, when, where and how much question, but you know your needs will be met.

The average man has some general idea of how these questions of meeting needs will be met. He knows a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly check will be coming in for X amount of dollars. This is not the case for an evangelist. You might say that an evangelist has no visible means of support. But the invisible God has the wealth of this world in His hand. He has ordained that those who preach the Good News live of the Gospel. It is the Lord who touches His people to support the men of God.

This is one Georgia boy who had to get accustomed to this idea. Just as I had asked my earthly father to meet needs and desires in my upbringing, now I would have to ask the Heavenly Father to provide every need for my family, my income and the needs of the ministry. God provided every meal. God still provides. Often it is the desperate prayer that makes a difference.

The 12 months of 1975 were days of bare existence in the financial realm. With a new baby and the recession, I could feel the strain. However, my trust level was growing. I was up to about 1/1000 of a grain of mustard seed. It does not take much faith. Stepping out on faith is not stepping on the thin air, it is stepping onto the "Rock of Ages." Nor is faith stepping into the dark, it is stepping into the glorious light of Jesus Christ.

December 1975 found me in Bolivar, Missouri. My wife and I were attending a 3 day Conference for Vocational Evangelists at Southwest Baptist College. My wife spent three days with evangelist's wives, just as I did with evangelists. I made a

commitment to assist churches that were not able to afford an evangelist at least one to four weeks a year. This commitment has sent Homer and I around the world.

At the end of her study Shirley came out crying and saying that she was going to have some attitude changes that would make me a greater man of God. I did not know what she meant at the time (Homer says "and you still do not know all it meant"). One change had to do with the finances. She quit worrying about where and when the money to operate would come in. This shifted even more burden on my shoulders spiritually and emotionally. Dumping that worry on me forced me to my knees.

A man is never taller than he is when he is on His knees before the King of the Universe. God continued to provide. (Even so, I still had to use Kaopectate) It is a good thing that God does not have to depend on us. It is a wonderful truth that Jesus can always be depended on.

The summer of 1976 was a wonderful time spiritually, but very tight financially. An August revival at the Navy Boulevard Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida introduced me to the possibility of using a dummy in Church. (Homer looks at me and says God was already using one Dummy!) Rev. Roger Gilbert asked me if he thought using a dummy to communicate the Gospel was a good idea. I told him that if God would use a dummy like me that he could certainly use a dummy like that. At the church wide fellowship that night he pulled out a blonde-haired, blue-eyed dummy named Bryan. He used it to get across a Bible truth and it went over wonderfully well.

On the last night of the revival, I went to his home after the service. He said that I should consider using a dummy in my ministry. He handed me the dummy and said "Let's see what you can do with it." Instead of the normal, higher-pitched voice, the lower country bumpkin voice naturally came out. I could do some ventriloquism naturally and never realized it. In fact, I do not remember thinking about trying ventriloquism until that moment. Prayer was my next step. Dear Lord, do you want me to use a dummy in the ministry? At first I got no clear answer other than the fact that God used Roger Gilbert to show me I had a God given knack for ventriloquism.



Roger gave me a catalog in which I saw a number of dummies that were available. It was easy to choose the type of figure I would use. It would definitely have to be a Mortimer Snerd type. I was endeared to this character by a very emotional experience. I was watching television one night. The American prisoners of war had returned from Vietnam. They were treated to a meal at the White House and were entertained in the Rose Garden. They were entertained by Edgar Bergen that night. Knowing the torture and pain these men had suffered caused me to breathe a prayer for their recovery. The Bible teaches that laughter doeth good like a medicine.

Bergen started off with his quick witted Charlie McCarthy. The P.O.W.'s did not respond. They had been deeply hurt and did not need the needling of a little smart aleck. It seemed as though Bergen had bombed out. Then he brought Mortimer Snerd out. The laughter poured forth and the fun of this slow witted, honest little fellow ministered the healing medicine of laughter to our men.

That memory flooded my mind as I looked over the Maher West Catalog. The deer skin mouth and the buck teeth of the Homer character would fit the bill for me. The problem was that this little fellow equipped with moving eyes, eye winkers, and raising eyebrows cost \$255.00. The price might as well have been \$255,000.00, because I had neither. Looking at my schedule and bank account, I did not know how we were going to make it through the next four weeks.

The telephone rang. Bobby Sunderland of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention was calling. He knew of the commitment I had made in Bolivar. He asked me to go on a mission trip to New Brunswick, Canada. The word mission causes bells to go off in my head.

My first question was how much it would cost me. He said, "\$200.00. You need \$180 now for a plane ticket and \$20.00 later." I asked, "What is the \$20.00 for?" He said, "We are going to send you to a church that is so poor that they cannot take an offering for you, and the preacher does not make enough money to go out and eat. The twenty dollars is for you to take the preacher and his wife out for a meal.

I paused and then said, "I will have to pray about it." Instantly hanging up, I told my wife what Bobby said. Shirley unhesitatingly

said, "As an act of faith you ought to go." But I had to pray about it. I did and knew I needed to go. I wrestled with God about it all day long and finally yielded that afternoon. At 4:30 p.m. the call to the Home Mission Board was made.

At Cold Stream Church in New Brunswick, Canada, God began to bless. The man I was staying with made a profession of faith. I called home every night to tell my wonderful wife what was going on and that I loved her. One night she told me that she had received a threatening phone call describing her and my daughter on the answering machine. Any normal red blooded American boy or husband would want to get home as soon as possible. I was no exception. There were two problems. First, I did not have the money to change my special rate plane ticket. Even if the money was not a problem, there were no flights out.

The only thing to do was pray. I stayed up past midnight praying and reading the Psalms. I prayed until I felt certain that God had placed an angel at 245 Blalock St. in Mountain View, Georgia. As I read the Psalms I became bold in approaching God. God owns the cattle on a thousand hills and the wealth in every mine.

I placed a fleece before the Lord that night. If He wanted me to use a dummy in the ministry, then He could let me know by providing the money. The fleece was that the Lord miraculously provide, at least \$455 by the time I got off the airplane in Atlanta. I figured that God would touch someone in the United States and that they would send us a check for \$455 or more dollars. I had been told that there would be no offering in Canada. They did take up an offering which did not seem to be enough to pay the light and heating bill. It would be a money miracle for that amount of money to come in.

In my mind's eye, my wife would be carrying a check for the amount of money spent on the plane ticket (\$200) plus at least another \$255 in her pocket book when I arrived at Hartsfield International Airport, in Atlanta, I went to sleep. When the meeting ended, that little church handed me a check for \$500 Canadian. I cashed the check and exchanged it for more than \$500 American. I gave the overage to the preacher. God had answered the question of using a dummy to proclaim the Gospel.

Homer was ordered from California. He would arrive just before Christmas In December 1975. The nearly three months from September to December were not wasted. I purchased the book: You Can Be a Ventriloquist, by Robert Hill. It was printed by Moody Press. In it were letter substitutions, how to instructions with advice, and a number of practice sessions. I studied this book and followed Hill's advice very carefully.

When Homer arrived, I was ready to go to work. Because I was not satisfied with some of the substitutionary techniques in Hill's book, I needed further study. So I enrolled in the Maher School of Ventriloquism. This course teaches new tongue placements to say the sounds of the letters **b**, **f**, **m**, **p**, **v**, **v**, and **w**. This can be done without moving your lips.

Since December 1976, Homer has participated in over 300 performances on average every year. He has been on countless youth camps, in schools (public and private), on mission trips, (as far away as India). In public schools, Homer was not able to present the Gospel. However, the children who attend the local church where Homer is in revival have the opportunity to invite their friends to hear Homer share a Bible story that night.

Homer's main job is to teach a Bible lesson for a five minute period during each revival service. This breaks the ice and sets a happy tone for the rest of the service. People learn a Bible truth as well. In high schools, colleges with special groups (usually adults), and on the last night of revival we always let Homer's last act be the Homer look-a-like contest. What great fun this is even in First Baptist Churches. The audience votes by clapping the loudest for the man they think looks like, acts like and thinks the most like Homer. Generally one of the most loved people will win because Homer is such a likable character. After the contest, Homer sings a song especially worded for the winner. The song always ends with the phrase "because you look just like me."

Homer stickers, T-shirts, buttons, pictures and DVD's allow Homer and his stories to linger long after He is gone. Often people will forget Keith Fordham and only remember the man with the dummy.

Homer is a unique communication tool. Adults find it easy to pretend that he is real and listen to the message. Grade school

children can do this to a lesser extent. When I first got Homer I would take him in and out of the box in front of children with Homer not wanting to go in. After a number of reports of children having nightmares for up to six weeks, I determined to never take Homer in and out of the box in front of children again, even though I have seen other ventriloquists do this effectively. For example Cliff Taylor uses an over sized suitcase that is called Rusty's House. Rusty, Cliff's dummy, has room to sit in the box without appearing to be crammed in a painful looking way. Cliff gives the appearance of the suitcase containing a chair, a bed and even a television.

Homer goes to the nursery for the rest of the revival service. I take him out of the sanctuary. This is also true when the Gospel invitation is given in Vacation Bible School evangelistic services. The reason Homer is used for such a short time is that it is a novel idea, but people lose interest after a certain amount of time. Five to twenty five minutes with one dummy is enough. Brief glimpses of Homer always leave you wanting more, and what he says is thereby more effective.

In elementary schools, Homer generally is behind the curtains or a portable petition. While being introduced, he pops his head out so the children can see him. The master of ceremonies cannot see him. This delights the children to no end. Homer comes on stage to the applause of the school and then does a can-do skit for the boys and girls. Positive attitudes, good study habits and an anti-drug message are all a part of the skit. In high schools as many as 17 teachers and students are picked on in a fun, loving way. Drugs, dating, studies, sports, and citizenship are subjects that are talked about.

I believe the upcoming school years will see an emphasis on morals in our public schools. I long for the day when the gospel can be shared again in the schools. Until then, the few men and woman who will follow the rules of the system need to keep the doors open for the day when we can share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Often I am the only preacher allowed in local schools wherever I go.

Admittedly, to tell a preacher not to mention Jesus Christ is like cutting out his tongue. For Homer, it is just as difficult. But the youth and children can speak to each other and share what I cannot. The ones who make it to church that night get the whole Gospel

message. Many come to Christ and often whole families come to Christ because their son or daughter pitched a fit to go to church to see that dummy.

***WISDOM- Be sure you intend to study ventriloquism. Do not spend big bucks on a dummy until you have practiced with a less expensive item, such as a soft puppet or your hand. Children, particularly, are not willing to practice, and lose interest. For those who stick with it for a number of weeks or months, you can spend from \$1,000 to \$25,000 on your figure. If you go through the following lessons without a dummy and do well you will be ready to pick a pal.***

## CHAPTER TWO

### A LITTLE HISTORY AND A CONCISE DEFINITION

Ventriloquism may be as old as man. However, the first proof of anyone using a "knee pal" is a picture of Fred Neiman taken in 1892. Prior to this time, there are bits and pieces of material. The open, written and easily attainable art (with a lot of practice) of today has so little historical evidence as to leave much of the history of ventriloquism to theory and guess work.

Ventriloquism can be differentiated from puppetry (generally the performer is behind a curtain and the figures pantomime to pre-recorded voices or music), marionettes (figures operated from above by hidden operators who bring the attention of the audience totally to the figures) and Muppets (Jim Henson's combinations of puppets, costumed people, marionettes and even vent figures.)

Robert Hill in his book You Can Learn Ventriloquism states "Ventriloquism differs from all of these in that (1) the performer remains in full view of the audience at all times, and (2) the focal point of the performance is the dialogue. This is done with (3) live speaking created by the performer, while the audience watching him believes that the other characters are the ones speaking. Usually the ventriloquist uses a near life-size figure (who frequently sits on his knee) with an interchange of dialogue between them. But there may be more than one performer, more than one figure, or no figure at all (as in the case of "throwing" the voice into a closet or behind the door). Or the source of the other voice may be a pocket, a box, a suitcase or a telephone. Today vent figures are seen mainly in places of entertainment (adults only), television programs, schools and churches.

In ventriloquism today, new composite materials are used in place of the standard wooden figure. Although wood is still tops on my list. Any figure that you purchase should have a stick with a trigger or lever to operate the mouth. This is of utmost importance.

Beware of dummies sold with a string on the back of the neck. This is a rip-off that will generally cause frustration and teach improper techniques. An adult takes two hands to operate such a

figure- one to hold the head and the other to hold the string. Unless the vent figure has a stick and a trigger, operated from inside the body, it is of no use. The exception to this rule is the soft vent figure. These are preferred with a stick and a trigger, however, my son uses a ventriloqual soft figure or puppet. The vent puppet has feet and can be held just like any other "knee pal." The mouth is operated by the hand inside the head.

Advantages of soft vent figures are lighter weight and a greater range of body motion. The word of caution and wisdom is as follows: 1) Be sure the inner workings will fit the size of your hand 2) Be sure that the upper part of the mouth has a hard surface for your fingers. It is even more necessary for the lower jaw where the thumb will do 98% of the movement. This will give you control. No matter how good the figure looks, you need to be able to control the mouth movement. This is a must. Do not waste your money on a figure that looks good on a shelf, but is useless when you have it in your hands.

Remember that ventriloqual puppets move the lower jaw just as you do when you speak. The upper jaw should move only on rare occasions and then just for special effects.

Animals are also used as vent figures with great effect. Some will include a fake wrist and hand so your real hand can be operating the figure, while the audience sees you holding your parrot or monkey with the fake arm and hand.

## CHAPTER THREE

### YOU CAN TEACH AN OLD DOG NEW TRICKS

The majority of people who enter ventriloquism are adults when they start. This is revealed by those who take the Maher Course on Ventriloquism, which is the largest training course in the world. I graduated as an adult.

Anyone with normal hand and eye coordination, normal mouth, tongue, and voice can be a ventriloquist. It is a simple matter of learning new tongue placements and implementing the 3 P's: practice, practice, practice. In fact, if you will practice the following exercises for 15 minutes a day for the next 3 to 6 weeks, you can be a ventriloquist. Be sure to read and reread instructions and to look at the illustrations.

Children will need assistance from an adult. Adults are advised to practice alone in front of a mirror for the entire time before being seen by another person.



Figure 1

***IF YOU HOLD YOUR MOUTH JUST RIGHT, YOU CAN DO IT!***

The ventriloquist needs to hold his teeth slightly apart and his lips slightly apart. The teeth should be no more than 1/4 inch apart. Some have their teeth slightly touching. However you will project better with an opening between the teeth.



The very word ventriloquist has a root meaning of speaking from the stomach. Technically, you must properly use your diaphragm. To insure you know how to breathe using the diaphragm and do the following. Lie down on the floor (preferably carpeted) flat on your back. Now take a deep breath. Do not allow your shoulders to move. Allow the area just below your breast bone to move up and down. This is the proper breathing technique used in speaking and singing.

In order to strengthen your diaphragm and practice this technique, place a book directly below your rib cage. By breathing properly, you will cause the book to move up and down. Although five pounds is plenty, I have placed my children (they were younger and weighed less) on my stomach and would raise them up and down to strengthen my diaphragm. The children had fun and never realized that I was practicing.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### LET'S BEGIN WITH A,B,C...

Let's begin with A,B,C... Well not exactly. First hold your lips slightly apart and your teeth slightly apart.(Let your jaw be as relaxed as possible), Place your index finger over your lips, to insure that your lips do not move. Now in your normal speaking voice say each letter of the **ventriloquist's alphabet**.

**A C D E G H I J K L N O Q R S T U X Y Z**

Now repeat this exercise several times. Use the index finger over your lips and a mirror. (Mainly the index finger firmly on the lips) Amazing isn't it!

Do not overtire your voice in any of the exercises. Take time to rest your voice as necessary. Warm up the voice by humming scales, **MMMMMMMMM MMMMMM MMMMM MMMMMMMM MMMMMM**. Start lower and end up higher. That is enough for the first day.

### DAY TWO

Repeat the exercises from day one. In addition say the following Bible books:

<b>Genesis</b>	<b>Exodus</b>	<b>Joshua</b>	<b>Judges</b>
<b>Ruth</b>	<b>Kings</b>	<b>Chronicles</b>	<b>Ezra</b>
<b>Esther</b>	<b>Ecclesiastes</b>	<b>Isaiah</b>	<b>Ezekiel</b>
<b>Daniel</b>	<b>Hosea</b>	<b>Joel</b>	<b>Jonah</b>
<b>Zephaniah</b>	<b>Haggai</b>	<b>Zechariah</b>	<b>Luke</b>
<b>John</b>	<b>The Acts</b>	<b>Corinthians</b>	<b>Galatians</b>
<b>Colossians</b>	<b>Thessalonians</b>	<b>Titus</b>	<b>Jude</b>

### DAYS THREE THROUGH SEVEN

Before you move on to the most difficult letters, be sure to practice enough to say the ventriloqual alphabet, the above Bible books and the following sentences without moving your lips. Spend a week or so on these for 15 minutes a day.

\*\*\* Exercise sentences:

1. **Jesus Christ is God.**
2. **The Son seeks the lost.**
3. **He is the light of the earth.**
4. **Daniel was on his knees.**
5. **The righteous are like strong trees.**
6. **I can do all things through Christ.**

## CHAPTER FIVE

### HOW TO SAY LIP WORDS WITHOUT MOVING YOUR LIPS

Recently I learned to juggle three objects. For approximately six weeks, I attempted to juggle with proper technique. Some days the practice would be fifteen minutes. Other days the practice was five minutes. Some weeks of practice were missed. Finally I would pick up the bean bags every time I passed through the great room in our home. Often for less than one minute I attempted to juggle the bags. I left home for three days and came back late in the evening. The next morning I got up to prepare to go to church. The bean bags began to fly (not all over the room), and I have been juggling ever since.

The same will be true with the labials (letter pronunciations that are made with the lips). The new tongue placements and substitute sounds that you are about to learn will be awkward. Most of these tongue placements and sound substitutions will be totally new to you. Do not give up. Continue to practice and you will begin to feel comfortable, making old sounds without the use of your lips. At the point that the new and different method of speaking becomes comfortable the difficulty will leave and your *B's, F's, M's, P's, V's, and W's* will sound like the same sound you make with your lips.

#### *DAYS EIGHT, NINE AND TEN*

W and the WH sound

Substitute the "oo" in cool for the "W" sound and the breathy sounding "huh" for the "wh" sound.

Well becomes oo ell  
Will becomes oo ill  
Won't becomes oo on't  
Wither becomes oo ither

wish... oo ish  
with... oo ith  
wink... oo ink  
winter ... oo inter

\*\*\* **Exercise:** Go over the following words using the "oo" substitute while thinking the "W" sound. Go over the exercise until

you feel comfortable using it. When you can make the sounds clearly without moving your lips, move on to the **"Wh"** sound. Take the time you need. It may take several days or a few minutes depending on your natural abilities.

wage	wiggle	waggle	wacky	wagon
water	Wayne	walk	wear	waist
weight	wait	widow	wall	wax
war	wiles	wild	west	wide
window	wicked	winkle	wink	win
wasp	western	wise	winter	wire
wonder	world	wood	wound	wool
woolen	Wyoming	word	woodwind	Wanda

\*\*\**Sentences:*

1. Waggle and wiggle your tongue Wanda.
2. We waited for Wayne as he weighed and measured his waist.
3. The wise and winning side waged the wicked war.
4. The widow won Wooly's heart on the wild west walk.
5. Wilson hit the wasp, waxed the wood, and washed the window.

The **"wh"** sound is made by making a heavily breathed **"huh"** sound prior to the vowel. For instance ***whale*** is pronounced as huh wale. While becomes ***huh wile***. Whistle becomes ***huh wissle***. Whiz becomes ***huh wiz***. Say the ***huh*** sound and the ***w*** plus ***vowel*** sound together in the following words.

whale	whopper	whacky	why	what
wheat	wheel	wheeze	whelp	whence
where	whet	whetstone	which	whig
whiff	while	whimper	whine	whisk
whisper	who	whirlwind	whole	wholly
white	whitewash	whip	whin	whim

The following sentences are a combination of the **w** and the **wh** sounds. Practice the sentences slowly until you can easily say the w and wh sound substitutions. When you can comfortably say the words without confusion, then begin to work on your speed at saying the sentences.

1. Who, what, when, where and why were the questions.
2. Whistle Willie, with all the wind you can.
3. Westward ho, Woody whined as the wagon wheel rolled.
4. Wayne whitewashed the wall, waxed the wire, and used the whetstone.
5. Wisdom whelped the wacky duck, while eating his whopper.

## ***DAYS ELEVEN AND TWELVE***

**\*\*\* Exercise: Review all the exercises from the first day on.**

## ***DAYS THIRTEEN AND FOURTEEN***

### **F AND V SUBSTITUTES**

The substitute for "f" is the voiced "th" sound. Say the following words moving your lips the first time through. Notice the location of the tip of your tongue behind your upper teeth.

them  
Father  
than  
thus

they  
the  
that  
thy

bathe  
lather  
then

this  
smooth  
thine

The "th" that is substituted for the "F" should be altered. While you make the "th" sound force air over your tongue and hold the tongue behind your upper teeth. Force air to come between the small space between your eyeteeth. (If you have any space between them you will be able to feel a tiny stream of air with your finger) This sound will develop as you practice into a fine replacement for the labial "f" made with your bottom lip and upper teeth.

*Phillip* will be pronounced *Huhth-illip*. *Foul* becomes *huhth-oul*. *Fat* is enunciated *huhth-at*. *Forty* becomes *huhth-orty*. The *huh* should be heavily and forcefully breathed with very little sound. *Th* should be said as a "lispng hiss." The "th" sound is a hard sound.

Now holding your mouth in the ventriloqual position practice the following words using the ***huhth*** substitute.

**faith= huhth-aith**

**flood= huhth-lood**

**food= huhth-ood**

**feast**

**first**

**flask**

**fun**

**firm**

**favorite**

**fowl**

**fly**

**flag**

**feel**

**flower**

**flank**

**few**

**ferment**

**far**

**fur**

**farewell**

**famine**

**famish**

**fan**

**furlong**

**falcon**

**fish**

**faint**

**family**

**fabric**

**fire**

**farm**

**face**

**fast**

**fear**

**farewell**

**fellowship**

**feminine**

**friend**

**\*\*\*Sentences:**

1. Fearless Freddy fought with fat Ferdinand.
2. Philadelphia friendships found fond footing.
3. Famine and fasting are not for the fearful.
4. Faith and forbearance cause him to fare well.
5. Funny fellowship forces foot tickling laughter.

## ***DAYS FIFTEEN AND SIXTEEN***

The soft (***unvoiced***) ***"th"*** sound in think or Thelma is the replacement sound used for the ***"V"*** sound. The following words are all examples of the unvoiced ***"th"*** sound.

**thrill**

**think**

**ether**

**bath**

**Thelma**

**thought**

**stealthy**

**thief**

**threw**

**booth**

**theft**

**thin**

**theme**

**thud**

**thump**

**with**

**thick**

**Math**

**moth**

**path**

Using the ***soft "th"*** makes the ***"v"*** sound without moving your lips. The word ***"verse"*** is pronounced ***therse***. Other examples are ***tharious for various, thein for vein, therse for verse, and thulture for vulture***.

**\*\*\*** Hold your lips slightly apart and your teeth slightly apart with your index finger over your mouth. Use your mirror regularly. Substitute the soft ***"th"*** for ***"v"*** and practice the following words:

Venture	event	victor	vary
very	vague	Valencia	velvet
veer	vector	veal	vegetable
vehicle	veil	variety	vanquish
vapor	vanish	van	valve
value	valor	valley	valid
valiant	vagrant	vanilla	vanity
vest	vision	visitor	virtue
voice	ventriloquist	void	vow

\*\*\*Sentences: Hit the "th" sound and move on with the word. (Hit it and go)

1. A very vivid voice invites valued visitors.
2. Visions of Christ as victor vanquished Vic's fears.
3. The vagrant ventured into the Valencia valley.
4. Various vegetables, veal, and vanilla gave us variety.
5. He vowed to venture valiantly into the void.

## ***DAYS SEVENTEEN THROUGH NINETEEN PR and P***

The "pr" sound is best substituted by replacing the "p" with the letter "K". For instance, the word **pride** would be pronounced **Kride**. **Proud** would be pronounced as **Kroud**. **Pristine** would be **Kristine**.

Utilize "K" in place of "P" in the following words.

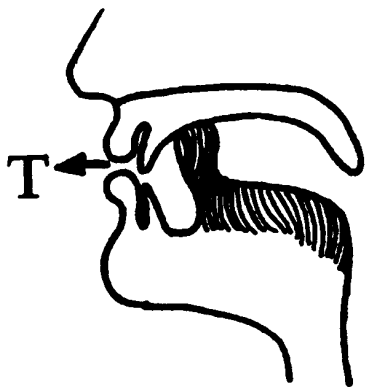
<b>pray- kray</b>	<b>prayer-krayer</b>	<b>Proverbs-</b>	<b><u>K</u>roverbs</b>
<b>predestinate</b>	<b>premium</b>	<b>prestige</b>	<b>prep</b>
<b>prescription</b>	<b>president</b>	<b>proof</b>	<b>prick</b>
<b>preview</b>	<b>protest</b>	<b>principle</b>	<b>promise</b>
<b>prism</b>	<b>prosper</b>	<b>proportion</b>	<b>prosaic</b>
<b>proof</b>	<b>privy</b>	<b>precede</b>	<b>prime</b>

Remember to hit the "K" sound quickly and move on in the following sentences:

1. Previously practiced prose is good.
2. The proverb protected the protestant.
3. The president's protocol is at a premium.

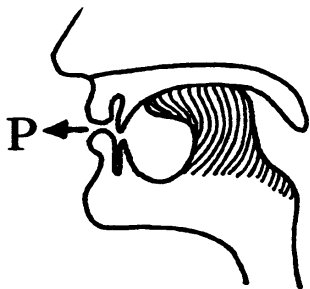


4. Private prayers keep one from reproof and excess pride.
5. The preacher prayed that the youth would prosper and take proper precautions.



The sound of the letter "p" is made by holding the lips together and quickly moving them apart as a burst of air passes explosively through. You cannot use your lips for ventriloquial speech. In the figure to the left you see that the sound of the letter "t" is made with the tongue tip on the roof of the mouth. Again the tongue tip is quickly removed to let a small burst of air make the "t" sound. Say the "t"

sound and feel the tongue placement. Especially notice the quick movement needed to make the sound. Say the sound repeatedly. t,t,t,t,t,t,. The "t" sound cannot be used adequately to replace the "p" sound.



**Figure 2-**Tongue tip on the roof of the mouth.

So a new tongue placement that seems awkward at first will allow you to make the "p" sound without moving your lips. Notice figure 3. The middle portion of your tongue should be held on the roof of your mouth. The tip of your tongue should be against the back of your upper teeth. Press the tongue against the teeth slightly and quickly move the tongue back from the teeth. This will allow the explosive burst of air to make the "p" sound off the back of the teeth. (Think the "p" sound and reread the paragraph as many times as necessary.)

**\*\*\*HELPFUL HINT\*\*\***

To have your tongue in proper position start as if you were going to make the "k" sound (without saying the "k" sound) and then say the "p" sound. For instance to say the word put you would think kaput but only voice the put. For pow you

would think kapow forming the "k" sound with your tongue but not voicing it aloud and only saying pow.

\*\*\* Practice session:

Paul	Peter	pie	pumpkin	pellet
publican	pan	part	park	puddle
pull	pat	pain	pure	panda
pygmy	Poland	Patrick	police	policy
please	plow	plant	pitch	pipe
pitiful	pitch	pin	pilgrim	pillage
pick	peck	pickle	partial	pine
parch	pancake	plank	plat	paint

\*\*\*Sentences:

1. Peter paddled part of the way.
2. Paul painted a portrait of Christ.
3. Paulette pinned the pad to her pack.
4. The packets were passed to Perry.
5. Posies were planted on the plateau.

## ***DAYS TWENTY THROUGH TWENTY- THREE BR AND B***

The **BR** sound is best substituted by replacing the "b" with a "g" sound. For instance **brave** would be pronounced **grave**. **Bride** would be **gride**. **Brush** would be **grush**.

Utilize the "g" sound in place of the "b" on the following br words.

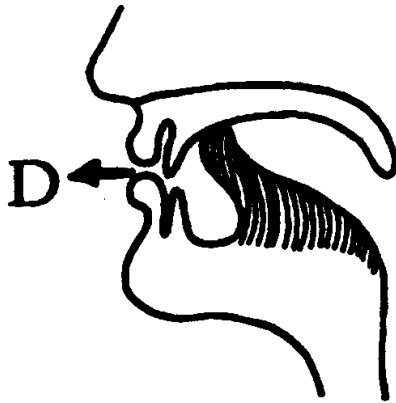
brace	brain	brat	braid	braille
braggart	bracket	branch	brass	brash
brash	brawl	breakfast	breach	bread
breath	breathe	bream	breast	brevity
briar	brick	brig	bright	brought
brood	bronze	brook	brother	brown
browse	bruise	bring	brush	brute

Sentences:

1. Bring the brutal brat to justice.
2. Brother Brown's brilliant brain brimmed with ideas.

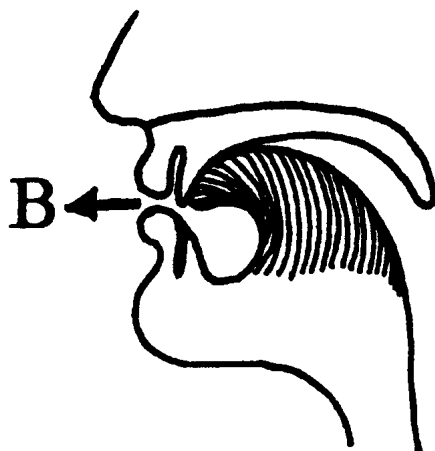
3. The **brash** brawl started at breakfast.
4. The **bricks** he brought briefly patched the breached wall.
5. He brooded over the broiling brew.

The letter **"b's"** sound is made by the lips. It is not as explosive as the sound of the letter **"p"**. A ventriloquist should never use his lips while his partner is speaking. Thus the need arises for a new tongue placement. In the **figure 4** you see how the sound of the letter **"d"** is made with the tongue on the roof of the mouth



**Figure 4**

The tongue is moved rapidly from the roof of the mouth to make the **"d"** sound. Try it **d,d,d,d,d,d,d,d**. The **"d"** sound is an extremely poor substitute for the **"b"** sound.



**Figure 5**

However, you can place your tongue just as the **figure 5** shows. The middle of your tongue should be against the roof of your mouth. Your tongue should be flattened so it will be touching your teeth all the way around. The tongue should be quickly removed from the teeth. This is done by relaxing the tongue on the sides and moving it off the roof of the mouth and the back of the front teeth.

**\*\*\*HELPFUL HINT\*\*\***

To have the back of your tongue in proper position start as if you were going to make the "g" sound (without saying the "g" sound) and then say the "b" sound. In order to say boy you would think gboy and only pronounce boy. Big would think gbige and say only big. Baptist would be gbaptist only saying baptist aloud.

**\*\*\* Practice session:**

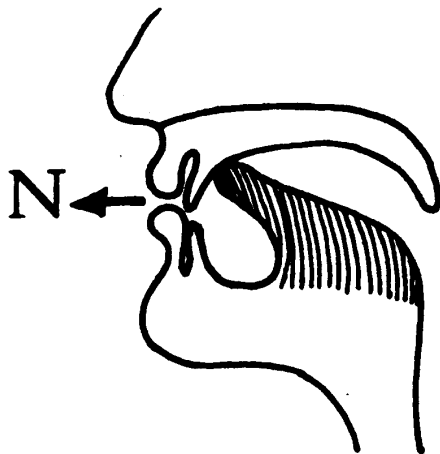
Babel	baby	back	black	badger
began	bag	Baal	bald	ballistic
balloon	ballot	balm	ball	band
banish	bank	banquet	baptize	bird
barn	bar	base	basket	blunder
borrow	bat	bean	beach	bear
bell	behave	believe	bellow	belt
belt	bicker	blame	butter	big
buzzard	bag			

## Sentences:

1. The church is a body of born again, baptized believers banded together to broadcast the gospel.
2. Bill buttered his bread.
3. That buzzard was blasted out of the whale's belly.
4. Ben broke his back when both of his boots slid from under him.
5. Bunyan banged the bumblebee with his bullwhip.

## *DAYS TWENTY FIVE THROUGH TWENTY SIX THE BIG M*

The "m" sound is made by both the lips. This is a "no, no" for a vent. The secret to making the "m" sound is twofold. First we will look at the sometimes used substitute letter "n".



**Figure 6**

Say the word **nack** with your lips slightly apart and your teeth slightly apart. Notice that the tip of your tongue is at the top of your upper teeth when you make the "n" sound. In order to say Mack drop the tip of your tongue to the bottom of your upper teeth (almost between the teeth). The sound is between an "m" and an "n".

To make an **"m"** sound out of it you must flatten the tongue so that it touches the lower edges of your upper teeth all the way around.

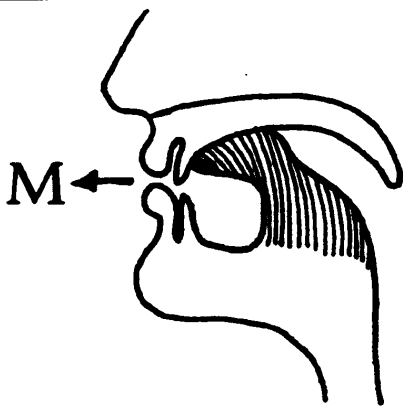


Figure 7

**\*\*\*HELPFUL HINT\*\*\***

Use the **"ng"** sound before making the **"m"** sound. For instance instead of saying Max say **ngMax**. Mark would be **ngMark**. Matthew would be **ngMatthew**.

Utilize the **"ng"** sound in the following words.

Macedonia	machine	mama	microphone	mad
may	magpie	magnet	magnify	maid
Malachi	Michael	mail	majestic	make
mayor	master	music	male	Mary
Martha	mammon	mandate	mansion	men
measure	meat	mend	mercy	mess
monkey	muscle	must	myrrh	mystery

Remember proper tongue placement and the ng sound. Hit them and go in the following sentences:

1. Michael is the Master's archangel.
2. Jeremiah, Nehemiah, Amos, Micah, Matthew, Mark, and Timothy were all men of God.
3. James makes machines that carve monkeys.

**4. Myrrh, meat, men, and the Master play great parts in the Bible.**

**5. Mickey Mouse makes more money than Mighty Mouse.**

Continue to practice until your new pal arrives and then follow the exercises in the following chapters.

## CHAPTER SIX

### NOW THE FUN BEGINS

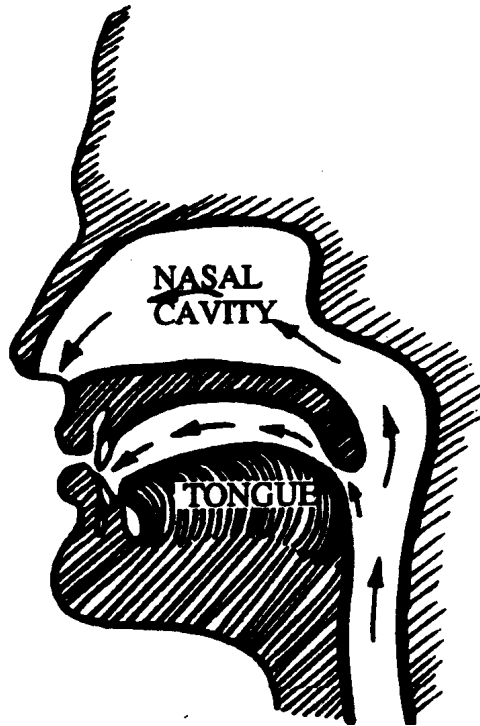


Figure 8

**Say “Shay.”** Vary the tone and pitch of your voice as you repeat saying the word. Play with the word, by going from a lower pitch to a higher pitch than your normal speaking voice.

### **PICKING YOUR PAL AND PLACING THE VOICE**

Picking a dummy (or is it a dummy picking a friend) must be preceded by choosing a vent voice. The drawing in figure 8 shows how the voice is made.

Maher School of Ventriloquism calls the made up word "Shay" the magic word. The reason is that when you say this word



with your mouth held in the ventriloqual position (lips slightly apart and teeth slightly apart) you will feel the air coming out of your mouth and nose at the same time.

In speech class you learn that the three resonance sounds are **"m"**, **"n"**, and **"ng"**. With your mouth in the vent position and using your training your new voice will utilize these resonance sounds even more and will be slightly different from your normal voice.

As a general rule of thumb your vent voice will be a higher tone than your normal speaking voice. Even a note or two difference in tone is plenty. This will differentiate your normal (lips fully moving) voice from your "pal's" voice.

Over your lifetime you have probably imitated other peoples voices. Often a teacher, coach or preacher will have some voice qualities that have caused you to imitate them. One of these voices may be just right for your dummy. Often cartoon characters can be imitated. The sound production that you naturally have will often cause the quality of the voice to be a unique voice that is both pleasant and interesting.

Quality of voice is the difference in voices caused by resonance, anatomy of the mouth, teeth, and voice box in conjunction with the dialects and colloquialisms of your childhood years. Training can also be one of the greatest influences on the quality of voice. Pavarotti, one of the great tenor opera stars, is one example of training's influence. Johnny Mathis, Andy Williams and Michael Jackson are also great tenors. You can tell their voices apart almost instantly. It is the quality that makes the voices distinct. My father and brother are very close in their voices. Yet I can instantly tell the difference even on the telephone.

Your knee pal will have several things going for him. First, all eyes will be on him. People will find it difficult to look at you because of his movements. Secondly, your lips will not be moving. Third, the voice you use for him will range from slightly different to extremely different. (Be sure not to damage your voice making it different. Pick a voice that you are comfortable in using.)

You may want to have the classic smart aleck sound of the Bronx. The voice may be the cracking hoarse voice of an older man. Often the sweet voice of a child is very effective. The squawking, awking voice of a parrot is good for a bird. The goofy voice similar to Disney's Goofy on a St. Bernard is excellent. The grumpy grouching (usually lower than your voice) voice of a complaining man is another possibility.

Any accent such as the Texas drawl, the old South, or even the TV newscaster is very effective. Irish, Spanish, German, Russian, French, Swedish, Yiddish, Asian Indian, and a host of other accents work well. In fact a number of ventriloquists use several figures in their acts, which necessitates the need for several voices.

For the present, pick one voice that is different from your own in tone, pitch, and/or quality. Be sure it is a comfortable voice that does not cause you to become hoarse or strain your vocal cords. Go back through the practice sessions.\*\*\* **From this point on practice your vent tongue placements, and substitutions, only in your pals voice.**\*\*\* Anytime you have your mouth in the ventriloqual position use only the new voice.

This process will get you accustomed to using your lips while you are speaking. At the same time you will learn to hold the teeth slightly apart and the lips slightly apart with as little movement as possible while your pal speaks.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### HOW LONG CAN A DUMMY LAST

What is the lifespan of a ventriloqual figure? This varies with usage and care. Homer I lasted for ten years without repairs, he lasted fourteen years with repairs. This is amazing considering how luggage is handled by the airlines. Homer I was made of a composite material. He had a doeskin mouth. He was made by Craig Lovik.

Homer II was made by Chuck Jackson. He bought out Craig's business. The second Homer is made of wood and has a lifetime guarantee. This is yet to be seen. In general, wooden figures are reported to be more durable. The price of the second Homer was a dramatic increase over the first. The figure was almost two years in the making and \$1600 in price. By the time the new suitcase, stand, clothes and wig were made the cost was \$1900.

The Lord again graciously provided through His people. One of the ways was through the children of the Vacation Bible School at The Rock Baptist Church in Rex. Homer shared with them one day and they took up an offering all week long for the new Homer. They collected \$500. Other gifts came in that made Homer II possible. Jay Rigsby (wigmaker in Huntsville, Alabama) provided a quality wig at no charge.

The better the quality of your figure, the sharper your performance will be. Practical considerations must take priority over looks. You may see a character in a catalog that is an eye catcher. However, it may not fit you physically. It may be too small or large. The levers on the inside may be in the wrong place or too close together for your fingers.

Be sure the dummy fits you. Be sure the figure is usable. Some time ago, I purchased a rabbit figure (vent puppet). What a beautiful and cute looking creature it was. The problem was that it had no stick with controls in the body. That could have been overcome with good puppetry skills. However, after taking a class on puppetry, my wife discovered that the rabbit was no good for that purpose either. The rabbit's mouth did not have hard surfaces below and above the cloth of the mouth to give enough control for the more precise mouth movements of ventriloquism. If you go with the less expensive vent puppet, be sure there are hard surfaces that are easy to control in the mouth. Your vent Muppet or puppet must have a full body including feet.

The exception to a full body with feet is when you have a character in your hand or arms wrapped as a baby or are coming out of some movable base. For example, the first figure my son Sam used was a daisy coming out of a flower pot. Sam's arm went through a hole cut in the back of the flower pot, and into the puppet. This in effect made the puppet into a vent figure. Ventriloquism is performed with the ventriloquist in full view of the audience.

Next Sam used a full figured puppet named Chuck. Chuck cost \$35.00. Even the vent puppet figures can cost up into the hundreds of dollars. Some time ago, I went to the puppetry arts center in Atlanta and saw several soft, full bodied, Muppet-like vent figures that cost between \$1,000 and \$5,000. Generally you can purchase a good vent puppet for under \$500.

Sam presently uses a red headed dummy named Newton. Newton was purchased from Maher Studios. This dummy has a buzz haircut. Newton costs in the neighborhood of \$850. Newton's eyes close and move side to side. His eye brows move up and down. His television presence is terrific. Sam is paid for some of his performances. It took Sam nearly three months to master the manipulation of Newton's special facial features.

The variety or choice of vent figures ranges from talking ties and baseball bats, to talking birds, dragons, monkeys and even camels. But the first choice must be a dummy. The dummy needs to include a head stick, preferably of wood or bronze. The body of the figure needs to be hollow, so the moving mouth can be operated from the inside of the body. The head stick must allow you to turn the head in a 360 degree circle.

Extra features are expensive, but effective. Each has a high price. The use of the extra features takes a lot of time and should not be used until you have mastered the basic manipulation of the mouth in conjunction with the word syllables you will be learning. Even Charlie McCarthy had fixed eyes and no additional features than the basic head stick and mouth movement.

Homer has eyes that move from side to side. His eyebrows go up and down. Homer's ears wiggle. His eyelids close for prayer or sleep. The eyelids work separately to give a winking effect. These features are used regularly in our work. However they are not necessary to be an effective ventriloquist. They are just the spice of life in figure manipulation.

Another available option is the hand-shaker, for shaking hands with people. I do not recommend it, because people will allow children to

swing on the arm. The nudger effect is good to let your dummy get your attention with out saying a word. Both the wall eyed and cross-eyed effects are good for showing bewilderment or making faces. The tongue can be made to stick out. The dummy can also spit water. These are not good habits for children to pick up on. However, if used properly, these can be very funny. Cheeks, upper lips, and even hair can be made to move. Remember, the most important and effective movement is the mouth and the head on the stick. All other movements are just so much icing on the cake. It may be a good buy, but you may not need it.

### WHERE IN THE WORLD CAN I FIND A DUMMY

Look in the mirror (just kidding). There are not many dealers in the United States. However, listed below are some of the best ones that I know of. They will be listed in order of recommendation instead of in alphabetical order. After the first four, the makers are listed in alphabetical order. A catalog can be ordered from each of these places for generally about \$2.00. Many will include color picture catalogs with descriptions.

## ***FIGURE MAKERS***

**Maher Studios**

**Box 420**

**Littleton, Co. 80160**

*(Note\*\*\*Can get you in touch with other makers such as Craig Lovik and William Anderson. Additionally, Clinton Deitweiler is the most helpful and encouraging man in ventriloquism.)*

*(Figure makers continued on next page)*

Tim Selberg

110 N Lake Angelus Road

Auburn Hills, MI 48055

Axtell Expressions

272 Dalton Street

Vevntura, California 93003

John Arvites

Box 203

Kenilworth, IL. 60043

Verna Finley  
341 Sarrento Court  
Punta Gorda, FL 33950

Conrad Hartz  
Box 662  
Elberton, GA 30653

Patrick Justian  
3181 Bayne Road  
Twin Lakes, MI 49457

Alan Semack  
Box 6119  
N. Brunswick, NJ 08902

Venterprize  
707a Main St.  
Burbank, CA 91209

Ventriloquin  
77 Burnside Ave.  
Portland, OR 97209

## ***CAN I SEE YOUR DUMMY?***

Can I see Homer? This is undoubtedly a question I have heard thousands of times over the years. After performances, children and even adults want to get their hands on him. The answer is always, "No." Once you make the investment in a tool of this much value that is so difficult to replace, only another trained ventriloquist should be permitted to touch your little friend. Children will tear it apart thinking it is a cheap toy, and their parents will not even take any thought of replacing it. Even an adult who is not trained in how the figure works will inadvertently drop the head and do devastating damage.

Never allow *even your own children* to touch your figure. Many a good dummy has been destroyed when this rule is broken. I allowed a grandmother to come up and let her precious granddaughter poke a hole through Homer's deerskin mouth and 8 churches along with many other children did not see Homer at all. I threaten my children with their lives when they get near Homer, because I do not have the time or means of keeping the Homer repaired.

## ***CAN I EXAMINE A DUMMY BEFORE I BUY IT?***

Yes you can. Although the face can be carved or made to look just like you, each dummy maker has a standard way of making dummies,(special orders are the exception). You can go to at least two shows that are held each year. They are the fellowship of Christian Magicians or to the Ventriloquist Convention.

The other options are to go to a studio or find a ventriloquist, and let him know you are seriously studying ventriloquism. Demonstrate in your ventriloquial voice a **M** word or a **P** word. Generally he will allow you to take a peek at his dummy under his careful supervision.

The catalogs are good to show you the dummies and how they are made. Small undersized figures are usually from 28 to 32 inches in size. These are good only for a child. Even teenagers should use the full sized figures that are from 36 to 42 inches in size. These are sometimes referred to as the professional figures. The full sized figure is recommended for serious ventriloquists. These can last a lifetime if properly cared for. You will still

need to practice before a mirror and in private for another week or so after you get your new friend. From this point on you will not refer to your figure as a dummy. You will always call him or her by name.

## ***WHAT IS HE LIKE?***

Clinton Deitweiler once suggested in a Newsy Vents article that you write a biographical sheet on your character. I think this will aide in picking a voice. For instance, Homer is different from Bergen's Mortimer Snerd in that Homer is dumb, but not nearly so dumb as Mortimer. Homer's teeth are consequently on the front depicting a buck-toothed, somewhat naive country bumpkin who can "catch on" when given the opportunity.

Write a character sketch for your friend. There will be things he will never say or do. Always keep him in character. For instance, you have not seen the term doll used for any vent figure in this book. Homer will not stand for anyone to call him a doll, because he is a boy. He will wear badges and pins but will never wear a necklace or a bracelet because country boys do not put on girl's clothes. Recently, a pastor called Homer a doll and Homer quickly let him know that he was not a doll. He likes all kinds of sports. Homer is sweet on girls and loves hotdogs, toothpicks and popsicle sticks.

Homer gets Bible stories mixed up in his mind. However, with a little guidance, he is easily corrected. Homer wants to do the right thing, but can be a little mischievous. He has fond memories of his school days and remembers all the little poems and rhymes about people, teachers, and even certain courses. For instance, Homer's verse on Latin is :

**Latin is a language as dead as dead can be,  
It killed all the Romans,  
and now it's killing me.**

When the need arises, Homer can be a college, high-school middle school or elementary school student. His age and stature in life vary but he is forever the young man and all boy. Homer almost always wants the best for people. He has a helpful lesson in every skit.

Your dummy will develop his personality and will gain in his character as you prepare skits and apply purchased skits to your particular plan and purpose.



# CHAPTER EIGHT

## LET'S OPERATE

Let's operate with our partners,(not perform surgery). Figure manipulation is when the fun really begins. Now you are practicing with your pads on (football analogy). You are not ready for a game. But you will start going through the motions.

Continue to practice alone in front of the mirror. Place your new buddy on your knee, and either place your foot on a stool or chair. Be sure you can see your dummy from the waist up. Hold the figure either at eye level or slightly below eye level.

Personally, I use a microphone stand with a small flat area screwed on where the microphone holder usually goes. This tabletop is covered with a non-skid material and has gold fringe around the edge. Thus Homer's chair can be adjusted from 34 inches to 54 inches. Your knee and a chair are less expensive.

On the stick inside your figure's hollow body, you will find either a lever, a trigger or a looped string that will open and close his mouth. If the mouth moving mechanism is on the right side of the stick you will use your thumb to operate the mouth. If the mechanism is on the left side, you will generally use your index finger to operate the mouth. This is assuming you are right handed or using one figure at the time.

## MOUTH MANIPULATION

The single most important operation of your dummy is the opening and closing of his mouth. This must be synchronized with the syllables of each word. Generally, the mouth should be opened once for each syllable.

**\*\*\*Practice session: Allow your friend to do the exercise. You will look at your figure and use the ventriloqual mouth position and voice of your dummy. Watch especially the mouth to be sure his mouth opens once for every syllable. Open the mouth mechanism completely and close it completely as you say each syllable of the books of the Bible.**

## BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

GEN-E-SIS

EX-O-DUS

LE-VIT-I-CUS

NUM-BERS

DEU-TER-ON-O-MY

JOSH-U-A

JUDG-ES

RUTH

I&II SAM-U-EL

KINGS

CHRON-I-CLES

EZ-RA

NE-HE-MI-AH

ES-THER

JOB

<b>PSALMS</b>	<b>PRO-VERBS</b>	<b>EC-CLE-SI-AS-TES</b>
<b>SONG OF SOL-O-MON</b>	<b>I-SA-IAH</b>	<b>JER-E-MI-AH</b>
<b>LAM-EN-TA-TIONS</b>	<b>E-ZE-KI-EL</b>	<b>DAN-I-EL</b>
<b>HO-SE-A</b>	<b>JO-EL</b>	<b>A-MOS</b>
<b>O-BA-DIAH</b>	<b>JO-NAH</b>	<b>MI-CAH</b>
<b>NA-HUM</b>	<b>HA-BAK-KUK</b>	<b>ZEPH-A-NI-AH</b>
<b>HAG-GA-I</b>	<b>ZECH-A-RI-AH</b>	<b>MAL-A-CHI</b>
<b>MAT-THEW</b>	<b>MARK</b>	<b>LUKE</b>
<b>JOHN</b>	<b>ACTS</b>	<b>RO-MANS</b>
<b>CO-RIN-THI-ANS</b>	<b>GA-LA-TIANS</b>	<b>E-PHE-SIANS</b>
<b>PHI-LIP-PI-ANS</b>	<b>CO-LOS-SIANS</b>	<b>THES-SA-LO-NI-ANS</b>
<b>TIM-O-THY</b>	<b>TI-TUS</b>	<b>PHI-LE-MON</b>
<b>HE-BREWS</b>	<b>JAMES</b>	<b>PE-TER</b>
<b>JUDE</b>	<b>REV-E-LA-TION</b>	

You may have noticed that sometimes the mouth was opened too wide. This makes it necessary for the mouth to open fully on some syllables and partially on others.

Go through the above Bible books again. This time, have your partner look at you while you watch your lips and jaw move to say each Bible book. Carefully watch yourself in the mirror. Say the book once in normal lip movement. Say it again in exaggerated movement. Now turn and watch your dummy's mouth as you practice ventriloquism. Let his mouth open partially and widely according to your example in the mirror.

I discovered another exercise by accident. On the opening Sunday mornings of revival services, Homer comes out and sits on the platform for about 5 minutes before the service. Often, the Minister of Music will stand and lead the congregation in a hymn. More often than not, Homer and I are seated to the left and slightly to the side of the music leader. Homer loves to sing the hymns. Naturally, he is singing toward the congregation. I am looking at Homer. I can pay close attention to his mouth movement. Then I noticed the Minister of Music's mouth. Homer began to lip-synch the song using the example of the minister's lips.

For the first time, you will want a family member or close friend to do the same for you in the privacy of your home. Have the member of your family who is the most capable singer (not that it matters) sing with your dummy. Move the figure's mouth as closely as possible in synch with the volunteer's mouth (sometimes it takes a little bribery to get a volunteer). This

will help you develop the ability to vary the opening of the mouth in order to make it look real.

Singing in ventriloquism is easier than speaking, depending on the song. The reason for this is that the breathing techniques are proper and the words flow more smoothly. The audience does not know this and will be amazed. If you mess up, all the better. Dummies are supposed to sound terrible, mess up words, and have poor timing.

Willie Tyler and his sidekick Lester sometimes end their show with a song. Recently, I saw them on TV. Willie sang, and Lester sang alternately. There was no difference at all in Lester's voice and Willie's voice. Willie's lip control and manipulation of Lester were so good that the audience was mesmerized. Your voice contrast and lip control, coupled with good manipulation, can be just as effective.

Practice along with your volunteer singing "Amazing Grace", "Victory in Jesus", or other favorite hymns. In addition, allow your friend to sing while you lip-synch with your dummy.

**\*\*\*Practice the following words to the children's song Jesus loves the Little Children:**

**1. Jesus loves the little children,**

**All the children of the world,  
    Red and yellow black and green,  
    Meanest kids, I've ever seen.**

**2. Jesus loves the little children,**

**All the children of the world.  
    Red and yellow black and pink,  
    He loves even those who stink.**

**3. Jesus loves the little children,**

**All the children of the world.  
    Red and yellow green and blue,  
    Jesus loves even you! (Dummy turns and looks at you)**

## CHAPTER NINE

### SOME REAL STUFF

Skit books are written with the letters V and F used alternately used to tell you if the straight man (the part the ventriloquist plays) or the figure (the dummy) is supposed to be talking. Practice the following lines with your Knee Pal.

**Ventriloquist-** ***(You figures name)** What have you been doing today?*

**Figure-** *I've been studying the most interesting book in world.*

**V-** *What book is that?*

**F-** *The Bible. It tells about baseball and how short people are.*

**V-** *Wait a minute. The Bible does not talk about baseball.*

**F-** *Oh yes it does.*

**V-** *Oh no it doesn't.*

**F-** *Genesis 1:1 says in the Big Inning. (In the beginning...)*

**V-** *Well the Bible talks about how tall Goliath was and not how short.*

**F-** *What about Zacheus?*

**V-** *I suppose he was the shortest man in the Bible.*

**F-** *No. There were at least two shorter.*

**V-** *And who were they.*

**F-** *One was KNEE-HIGH-miah (Nehemiah) and the other was Bildad the SHOE-HEIGHT (Shuhite).*

### Homer Skit- Boat Paddle Diplomacy

**Homer-** *I know how to bridge the age gap between you and adults.*

*The Generation Gap disappears with Boat-Paddle Diplomacy.*

**Keith-** *You mean Gun-Boat Diplomacy?*

**Homer-** *No, I mean Boat-Paddle Diplomacy! Just say you had some youth talking and cutting up during church. Just get one of the men to get a boat paddle and apply it as needed.*

**Keith-Like Who?**

**Homer-Like** *Jeff Betsill (Any big strong man will do) - He had it used on him. He stood up during his paddling...that is why he is so tall. He got hit a lot. Heavy people like you and Mike Knowles, leaned*

over the bed, and instead of tall, you spread out. Most Ladies got hit a lot that is why their hair is so long, but not very hard.

**Keith -What happens to men that get hit a lot?**

**Homer -They grow beards and mustaches.**

**Keith -How can you tell who go hit the hardest?**

**Homer-Well, then they have no hair at all. The paddle hit them so hard, it knocked the devil out of them and the the hair came off the top of them.**

**Proverbs 23:13-14- Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.**

## CHAPTER TEN

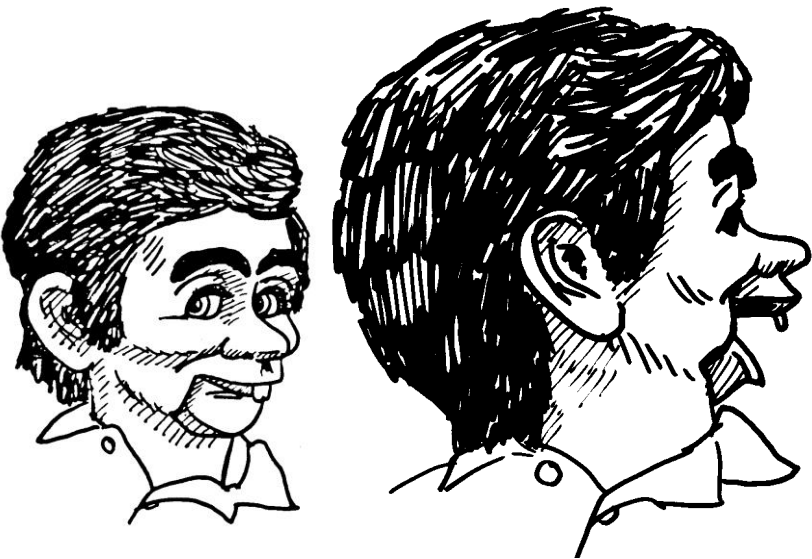
### SPEAKING WITHOUT SAYING A WORD

#### (FIGURE MANIPULATION)

Once you have mastered the mouth manipulation, you will need to develop the non-verbal communications of your dummy. Turning the head all the way around can show mischievousness, confusion, or that the dummy is following someone walking by depending on the dialogue. The figure can hide his face into your shoulder to show fear, embarrassment, or to act as though he is crying.

The neck stretched high can demonstrate interest. When the mouth is opened wide and the head is held high it shows surprise. The chin and face can be lowered to show disappointment or drowsiness.

Nearly every emotion and response can be shown by figure manipulation. HOW TO VENT YOUR EXPRESSIONS by Cliff Taylor is the manipulation bible for ventriloquists. Notice the expressions Homer makes in the following pictures.





## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### GOSPEL VENTRILOQUISM

In Gospel ventriloquism, Jesus is the message, and theological correctness is of supreme importance. A lost man can do Gospel ventriloquism; Nonetheless, a Christian is preferred. A gospel ventriloquist is a tool in God's hand, just as a microphone is in a vent's hand. If you are yielded to Christ, you can be used of God to present His message through your personality. In the same manner, you will use your dummy's personality to present the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel ventriloquism varies from general entertainment in at least two ways. One is in the message delivered. The other is in the careful, reverent way the dummy is used in church.

Generally, I bring Homer into the church service and have him in for only the opening song and a Bible story. At that point, I take him out of the service. He has been used to focus the congregation's attention on the Lord, and he is then removed so he will not to distract the congregation from worship.

I suppose the most holy and delicate time in any church service is the public invitation. This is the time when the congregation is given an opportunity to come forward and receive Christ as Lord and Savior. Billy Graham has been seen giving that invitation around the world. In a local church, people come forward to rededicate their lives, to pray at the altar, to join the church, to answer the call to full time Christian service or to pray with the pastor or talk with a counselor about some spiritual need.

It has been my policy to have Homer out of the service during this time. I do not want children to respond to Homer. I want them to respond to the living Lord Jesus Christ. Each ventriloquist will have to determine how he or she can be most honoring to God and most effective with his abilities.

#### **\*\*\*FOR FUDDY DUDDIES, STICKS IN THE MUD, & PHARISEES\*\*\***

For many years, I had a "hang up" with gimmicks in the ministry. I had little or no understanding of Paul's statement, "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (I Corinthians 10:33). I was either a "stick in the mud" or a Pharisee when it came to reaching men. Paul does not mean that we are to be immoral, but he does mean that we are to reach people where they are.

Christ has commanded us to be "fishers of men." When you go fishing, you generally take sandwiches such as peanut butter and jelly or ham. You generally take some bait. Often that bait is a can of worms. You eat the



sandwich and use the worms for the fish. In reaching men we often use music that we do not like. The lost man loves it. We use ventriloquism as bait even when we had rather preach.

This is the "me" generation. When you visit in the home of a lost man, he wants to know what you can do for his children. He wants to know what you can do for him. He wants to be entertained, encouraged, and helped. He wants to know what is in it for him. Thus Paul wrote of becoming all things to all men. Our job is to use some bait for the ME-IST. The bait will get him under the sound of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus will change the "ME-IST" to a "THE-IST."

This generation is very ignorant of the Good News of Christ and His power to save. This generation will be reached in groups as they were on the day of Pentecost, and as individuals as Phillip won the Ethiopian eunuch. Generally, the group or individual needs to be "climatized" with the scripture or preaching. The Pentecost festival gathered a crowd for Peter, and the book of Isaiah prepared the eunuch for Phillip. Since most of the world does not celebrate Pentecost, we gather lost people at points of interest and need.

Ventriloquists are bait for the need to be entertained and the medicine of laughter to heal the spirit. This will draw many to hear the Gospel. Furthermore, a dummy is very disarming. If a man is smiling and laughing he is much more receptive to the truth. Trying to "micro-wave" a man into being a Christian often causes resistance. "Nuking" a man with the gospel may be necessary for some, but generally the Lord will use a loving witness going forth with tears to spread the precious gospel seeds into a man's heart to win him to Christ.

Ventriloquism is like artillery. It softens a lost man's heart and plows the ground of the mind, so a man is receptive to the Gospel. The Lord used the jawbone of an ass in hand of Samson, an ox goad in the hand of Shamgar, and he will use a wooden headed dummy in the hands of a ventriloquist to bring men, women, boys, and girls to Jesus Christ.

Homer can also go into public schools. He cannot mention Jesus or the church. He can only talk about patriotism, safety, "can-do" attitudes, anti-drug campaigns, good citizenship, choice of occupation, and good study habits. He can be entertaining. The limitations that Homer has are overcome by Christian students passing out tickets for evangelistic meals, wearing "Homer "Sez" T-shirts & stickers, and inviting their friends to enjoy Homer at a Crusade service at their church or some other location.

I once thought that selling T-shirts, or Video and audio cassettes was wrong. I now have the freedom to become all things to all men and provide effective tools for God's people to cultivate the lost to be receptive to a precious youth's invitation to come to their church. It actually makes a young

person feel accepted and proud to invite their friends to enjoy their church. Much of the ridicule by lost friends is replaced by keen interest in Christ.

Once high school, middle school or elementary school students have seen a Homer program, they want to know where they can see him again. The lack of interest in the invitation to come to church has been replaced with an "I want to go to church to see Homer attitude."

The motive of ME-ISM is wrong. Men without Christ are generally very selfish. However, ME-ISM has some positives. One is that when a man sees Jesus Christ in all His glory, that man sees his purpose for being on this planet. Man longs for fellowship with God. A man can find fulfillment in life only in Jesus Christ.

Ventriloquism is only a small tool but can be and is used mightily of God in a willing servant's hand. Once a little boy went to the fair with his grandparents on a Saturday. He rode the rides and enjoyed the shows. He went to church with them on Sunday. He blurted out, in everyone's hearing, that he did not like this place and that he didn't want to come to a dull place like this when he could go to a happy place like he had been to the day before.

Church should be a happy, joyous place, not a dead lifeless morgue. Ventriloquism on occasion can cause people of all ages to hear the message and long to come back for more.

## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

### **EDUCATIONAL VENTRILOQUISM**

At the present time there is a need and call for programs in the public schools for educational ventriloquism. Programs can be on morals, saying no to drugs, the can-do attitude, patriotic assemblies, how to study, teacher appreciation and safety. Safety themes include bicycle safety, how to act around strangers, how to call 911, remembering where you live and your home phone number, fire and storm preparedness etc...

School sports, club and academic reward assemblies and banquets are an especially effective opportunity for a ventriloquist.

Often police and fire departments will have a ventriloquist. He is usually an officer who spends much of his time doing school assemblies and public relations work for his department. Mc Gruff the crime dog is used by one such police officer in Iowa. He has permission to do the voice and is a very effective ventriloquist. He uses more than one "pal" in presenting his program in the schools.

There was even a listing for a ventriloquist to be used in schools in the Midwest in the "Newsy Vents" newsletter this summer. There was evidently a salary with benefits and transportation for someone to travel to the public schools and provide educational and safety programs. Talk about an opportunity?

In the public schools you must keep your program clean, entertaining, and educational. Each school has different limits on the material that can be used. Brevity is also an important factor. The students are required to be in class for so many minutes a day in some school systems and often the program must be held to twenty minutes. Other programs can last up to one hour.

A one hour show needs variety and more than one figure should be used. Some people will use magic or science shows mixed with ventriloquism. This can be very entertaining as well as educational. I will often close with a how to be a ventriloquist lesson teaching the ventriloquial mouth position, the ventriloquist's alphabet and how to say a least one labial sound without moving your mouth.

In elementary shows I will have Homer pick on some of the student's favorite teachers. Generally the children will correct Homer if he is wrong and talk to him if he asks a question. Usually I will have the principal introduce the pastor. The pastor will then introduce me. Homer and I are out of sight of the students and behind the introducer. Homer will stick his head out so the children can see him but the pastor cannot. The children begin to laugh and

the preacher asks, "What is wrong? Did I spill some coffee on my tie?" The children begin to point behind the preacher and tell him that there is a dummy behind him. The preacher begins to play with the children by saying, "You are pulling my leg. There is no one behind me!" The children squeal with delight and tell the preacher that someone is back there. The preacher then says, "I am going to see if you are telling the truth. I will count to three and look. One, two, three." (Whereupon the preacher wheels around and looks. His counting to three is the signal for me to be sure Homer's head is out of the view of the children. As the pastor looks there is no one in view) Then the pastor tells the children, "You are teasing me." The children literally scream for joy and laugh uncontrollably. The process is repeated about three times and then the pastor says "Let us welcome Keith and Homer with a big round of applause."

The skit begins usually with a children's song or poetry that picks on some of the teachers. Tactics such as having Homer turn his head all the way around or falling asleep are a great entertainment for the children. When Homer does fall asleep, the children will say you are supposed to stay awake while you are thinking. I then count to three and ask the children to shout at Homer to wake up as loudly as they can.

In the upper grades of high school, there is a greater emphasis on the dangers of drugs and a lot more sophistication in the skit. Audience participation is also greatly increased. I use at least five teachers and twelve students in the high school program.

In these skits several students are supposed to have written letters to Homer about teachers, students and life in general. The letters are pre-written by me. The names of the most popular teachers and students are filled in the name slots to the enjoyment of all present. Using a student in place of Homer is always a crowd pleaser.

Funny poems and fractured nursery rhymes are all a part of the letters. Col. Bill Boley has a book of fractured nursery rhymes. One that I use from his book is as follows:

**Ole King Cole was a merry old soul,  
And a merry old soul was he,  
He called for his pipe,  
And he called for his bowl,  
And he was picked up by the Narcotics Squad.**

At the end of the entertainment time, I usually talk about the importance of studying. You can say a lot without saying it plainly in a high school because the students are smart enough to read between the lines. In this setting, they might learn something and even think seriously while having a good time.

In high schools and colleges I always end the program with a Homer look-a-like contest. Usually two students represent the student body and two professors represent the faculty. The students and teachers vote on the winner by applause and Homer sings a song to the winner for his reward.

Entertainment should be clean and wholesome. There is more than enough gutter talk. A little thinking and creativity can cause wholesome laughter. A new generation with creative flair can keep ventriloquism clean, interesting and very exciting. And "Say, Hey" you might help somebody learn something along the way.

## CONCLUSION

Ventriloquism as we know it began in the 1890's. Vaudeville allowed it to have widespread audiences. When vaudeville died out, ventriloquism began to die. Through the efforts of Edgar Bergen and a few lesser known ventriloquists, ventriloquism stayed on the public scene. Many unknowns stayed at work behind the scenes.

In the 1990's, there are more ventriloquists than ever before. Some are nationally known, but the vast majority are ministers, teachers, and people who do it as a hobby. The majority learned ventriloquism after they became adults.

You can be a ventriloquist if you have a normal speaking voice. The ventriloqual mouth position requires having the teeth slightly apart and the lips slightly apart while not moving them. Practicing the new tongue placements every day will increase your skill.

Work at it. The reward will be great joy for others and for your own personal satisfaction. You are never too old or too young to start. You will be surprised at how quickly you learn, practicing only fifteen minutes a day. Be the very best you can be. God bless you in this joyous endeavor.

**PRACTICE**

**PRACTICE**

**PRACTICE**



# ***You have always wondered how to “throw your voice!”***

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Keith Fordham is a very talented man with varied interests is an exciting, powerful preacher, and entertaining ventriloquist, and an author. Furthermore, he has the ability to encourage people to study, respect teachers, and I have a can-do attitude. He has taught thousands of students the basics of ventriloquism. He will, very clear illustrations and concise instruction, train you in the covers of this book. He has performed in hundreds of public elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as in colleges and churches. You can find out about his ministry at [www.KeithFordham.com](http://www.KeithFordham.com).



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***IN FOUR WEEKS***





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