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PART 1 of 2

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APR 2 2010

2/18/10 MEADVILLE TRIBUNE

JOHN + MARTHA BROWN

11305 HUNTERS RIDGE RD.

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MEADVILLE PA

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# The anatomy of an audience

I've been a preacher, teacher, musician, entertainer, sound man, organizer and grunt for a large variety of venues. I've learned that the audience is by far the most important part of any event. Here are some types I've been able to identify.

JOHN BROWN



and say to themselves, "At least I'm out!" They have no concept of the other people desperately trying to get through the same doorway, but whose progress is impeded because the door jammer has stopped, just outside the door, to reflect on their own personal victory. Be kind to

door jammers. Nudge them gently and smile at them. Send them kind and loving thoughts. Remember, they could be someone's father or mother or even your parents — or you!

**HALL HOGGERS** come in sets of two or more and stand in the middle of busy hallways during intermissions, chatting amiably, being jostled this way and that by the multitudes pressing by. You will encounter numerous hall hoppers at every public gathering, either slowing or blocking the entire flow of humanity like cholesterol in an artery. There are at least two ways to deal with hall hoppers. One is to respect their presence and wait patiently until someone behind you shoves you into their midst, then offer apologies and struggle on. The second way is to engage in that popular therapy known as imaging. It's all the rage now, along with meditation and relaxation techniques. Image, for example, that you are a running back on your favorite football team. The ball has just been handed off to you by the quarterback and ahead is a formidable defensive line, determined not to let you gain so much as one yard. Here are a few tips to help you image yourself as a Heisman Trophy winner: (1) Lower your head and act like you mean business; (2) keep those legs churning; (3) turn, twist, fake, leap; (4) remain on your

feet even though it seems your progress has been halted — it's that second effort which separates the "greats" from the rest of us. Spare no cost to body or bone — nor pain, agony, injury or disability. Be willing to give your all.

**BACK SIDERS** are particularly troublesome to orators and performers, preachers and lecturers. The term has nothing to do with human anatomy or to the practice of "mooning." Back siders are people who occupy the rear of the room, church or auditorium. It is their resolve to not, under any circumstances, move forward. It is distressing for speakers to address empty chairs up front while there are throngs of people in the rear. This remains a problem with no apparent solution. However, I have contemplated a daring plan to halt this insidious practice. Simply move your lecture, sermon or entertainment to the rear of the room. Consider the terror of people who once thought they were immune from the piercing, accusative eyes of the hell-fire-and-damnation preacher who now is in their faces at point blank range!

**TRASH TALKERS**, in this context, does not refer to basketball players who taunt members of the opposing teams with insults and threats. The trash talkers I refer to are those individuals who snore or who visit and hold protracted conversations in direct competition with the speaker or performer. In so doing, they trash the event for everyone near them. There are several things you can do about trash talkers. Either move to another seat or use a tactic I learned in an assertiveness class: Say to the talkers, "I'm embarrassed for you for ruining this lecture for me and all the others." Say it if you dare!

*Brown is a Meadville resident.*

our sidewalk and you could get a ticket