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International Speech for Feb 25, 2011, Ojai Valley Toastmasters Speech Contest

"We've got the whole world in our hands, we've got the whole wide world in our hands, we've got the whole world in our hands.."

Mister (or Madame) Toastmaster, fellow toastmasters--Yes, we have the whole world in our hands.

We have reached the point in our evolution that we are clearly now in charge of our own destiny.

We are the problem, and we are the solution.

Are we headed for extinction?

One theory of the last great extinction is that planet earth was hit by a huge asteroid which caused such an explosion of dust and debris that our precious atmosphere was choked off for a long enough time to smother all the dinosaurs and most other life.

There is no guarantee this could not happen again--only this time we **can** be ready.

We can take all those ballistic missiles we have aimed at each other and aim them instead at the incoming asteroid and blow it to smithereens before it hits us.

Barring such an incident we should be good to go for another billion years, unless we ourselves destroy the planet.

Obviously to survive another billion years we have to achieve some kind of Steady State, some kind of perfect balance of nature in our daily living across the planet.

This is not going to be easy since we are already at 6.5 billion people--up from 3.5 billion just forty years ago--and pumping CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere at an unsustainable rate.

The polar ice caps are melting away more and more with each passing year.

Our atmosphere is so thin that we could walk to the limit of breathable air--about two miles up--in less than an hour.

The day before Christmas Eve 1968 we saw the first entire view of our beautiful Spaceship Earth from the Apollo 8 spacecraft as it headed for orbit around the moon.

This view of the whole earth for the first time had a profound effect on everyone who saw it, including me.

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1 and 1/2 years later the first Earth Day was celebrated, and a path to sustainable living for the future was mapped out by many of us, and now we have to lay out a path again.

Let's start with the sun--sunlight is free and shines on us 10, 12, or 14 hours a day depending on the season of the year and how far north or south of the Equator we are.

From the space program the technology already exists to generate electricity from sunlight using what are called photovoltaic panels.

We can also generate electricity from wind, tidal surges, and fast moving rivers which are indirectly set in motion by the sun's power.

Design of giant wind turbines has improved so dramatically that countries like Denmark who use a bunch of them are now net exporters of energy.

We need to say goodbye to coal, gasoline, and nuclear power, all of which will only destroy our future.

We can drive our cars on cellulosic ethanol from switchgrass or oil from algae.

We need to say hello to doing More with Less--or becoming super energy efficient.

Instead of chanting "drill baby drill," we should be chanting "do more with less, do more with less!"

Here the list includes everything we use and touch in our daily routine:

Like bringing back Victory Gardens and buying locally produced food.

Like renewing public transportation like high speed railways, subways, light rail trolleys and Amtrak's Metrolink, so we can kiss freeway gridlock goodbye forever.

Like carpooling.

Like constructing mixed use buildings with stores and offices on the first floors and housing on the upper stories so we can actually walk to work and walk to shop.

Like planting low water use landscaping and harvesting rainwater at our own property.

Like reducing, reusing, and recycling.

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Like using lithium ion batteries for our flashlights, cameras, timing devices! (point to lights)and above all our new Plug-In Hybrid Car or Pick-up Truck.

Like switching to light bulbs that generate more light than heat such as the compact fluorescent bulb.

We can only live a few seconds without air, a few days without water and a few weeks without food, but I would like to end with the question "how long can be live without love?"

Like the mysterious force of gravity that holds our atmosphere to our planet, love can also hold us all together during the coming transition to a sustainable way of living.

If we can live by the Golden Rule, then we will also be able to save our planet from ourselves, from our dark side.

Spaceship Earth is a living being, just like our fellow humans.

We need to treat it just as respectfully as we treat our fellow inhabitants of this fragile outpost in space.

After all, it sustains us and we must sustain it, for the rest of our lives.

Once again "DO MORE WITH LESS."

Mister (or madame) Toastmaster