



Speech stories

(This example is modified from Example 10.5 of *Journalism: Who, What, When, Where, Why and How*, p. 185)

Speech stories are not necessarily difficult to write -- if the reporting has been good. A reporter covering a speech must learn how concentrate on what the speaker is saying and to take excellent notes. Many reporters develop their own shorthand system to make sure they get the quotes accurately. (Some use a tape recorder, although that can slow a reporter down in the writing process.) This example shows what some of the elements are in constructing a good speech story.

Ex-NASA official advocates end to manned space flights

The story should be written in a straightforward inverted pyramid style with the most important information in the lead paragraph. The lead should say something specific that the speaker said; it should not be just a general statement that the speech was made.

The second paragraph should expand on the information in the lead.

Somewhere within the first three or four paragraphs you should have a direct quotation from the speaker.

Note how the fourth paragraph explains the circumstances of the speech and gives additional information not about the speech itself. Include all such information that is relevant.

This story may appear on the publication's web site, so the writer has embedded a link to a place where the reader can get more information. Try to include a link to a web site in your story if it is appropriate. You should use the HTML coding for the link by following the example here.

A former official of the National Aeronautic and Space Administration told a campus audience Wednesday that it was time for America to "turn its head back toward the earth" and abandon manned space flight.

Max Riley, who recently retired after more than 30 years at the space agency, said the manned space program was too costly and Americans are not getting any benefits from it.

"I would like to think otherwise," he said to an audience of more than 150 students, faculty and members of the community. "After all, I spent most of my career helping us get into space,"

Riley was the third speaker in this semester's "Science in Daily Life" series. Joseph Edison, professor of biology at Spring Hill University in Dayton, Tenn., will conclude the series on Monday at 7:30 p.m. in the Board of Visitors room of the Van Dyke Center.

Riley pointed to the Challenger accident of 1986 and the Columbia accident of 2003 as evidence that the manned space program has become too costly. "Space is a very dangerous place," he said. "The folks at NASA don't really want to talk about that because they do not want people questioning what they do."

Riley, an assistant program director on the NASA team that put the first man on the moon in 1969, said America got into the space program largely because the Russians were already there.

"It was a race, pure and simple," he said. "We had to beat the Russians."

He described how President John F. Kennedy pledged to America that it would land the first man on the moon in 1961. "Kennedy said that would happen before the decade was out," Riley said. "Then it became our job to make it happen."

Riley joined www.nasa.gov NASA in 1966 after a tour of duty in Vietnam. He had earned a degree in mechanical engineering from the University of Fargo before going to Vietnam.

"Those were exciting times," he said. "Just about everybody supported us, and we could get just about anything we wanted from Congress. Remember, we had to beat the Russians, and it was during the Cold War."

Riley called what developed inside the agency a "cowboy atmosphere" where the tendency was to take undue chances with people's lives. That is when he began to have his doubts about the wisdom what the agency was doing.

"I stayed with the agency because I believed that if we did it right, it would be worth doing," he said. "I believed that a lot of people would benefit from it."

Riley said the Challenger and Columbia accidents convinced him that it was simply too dangerous.

"We got to the moon," he said, "but we are never going to get to Mars. It's just too far away."