



I've heard them talking. I've caught the whispers.
My skin is thick, but the barbs penetrate
"That Professor Lindsey. Humph! A shameless word monger!"
"Verbose."
"A literary dilettante!"
"He traffics in unusual phrases, you know. And those obscure words he uses. Well! He certainly has his airs!"

"Are you sure he's American? Sounds foreign to me. Suspicious. British. A word pervert!"
How can I defend myself? I'm guilty. I love words, the way they roll around in one's mouth, their histories, their stories. I cache them away in my lexicon like a squirrel hoarding nuts, a miser amassing coins. I hopelessly love the little dears. Ah, the stolen moments spent cuddling them in my mind.

This month you can taste a few exotic, stolen fruits. Join me inside the closet for a glimpse at some saucy little foreign numbers. The Professor, a well-known Australiophile, smuggled these back from the Antipodes in a plain brown Manila envelope. Down Under, in that great gray-green land, the English language spews from Australian mouths in the most wonderful fashion. Witness this street corner exchange:

"Hey, Mugsy, saw you chinking with the Torquay Mob Friday week."

"Yeah, bloody drongoes. Got me pissed at the Ashes. Nearly chundered me lunch on some bloke. Bit of a punch-up with two whinging Pommie bestards in Bay 13. Old dog called the coppers."

"Fair dinkum? Well, she'll be right, mate. No worries."

What the deuce is going on here?, you may well inquire. Perhaps the Professor's glossary of Australian English ('Strine as it is called there) can be of some help. My translation follows:

"Heh, Mugsy, saw you goofing-off (skylarking) with the guys from Torquay a week ago Friday."

"Yeah, bloody (a favorite epithet) low-lifers. Got me drunk at the cricket match. Nearly vomited my lunch. Bit of a fight with two Englishmen in the drinking section (Bay 13) at the Melbourne Cricket Grounds. An old guy called the police."

"Truly (or 'really')? Everything will be okay, friend."

This translation loses essential flavor in the telling. One ought to know that for many "True Blue" Aussies all English are "whinging bahstads." Animosity toward the pompous English harks back to those days when the continent of Australia became the world's largest prison. Many Australians trace their genealogical history to those same prisoners transported from Britain in the 1780's. Aussies tend to view the English as soft and spoilt, "whingers" in short. The word is an amalgam of whining and cringing, two loathsome traits to Australians. An Australian takes his lumps, and brushes adversity aside, "No worries mate! You'll be right!" The notorious "Bay 13" at the Melbourne Cricket Grounds houses the "hoons and goons" or "yobbo ockers" (beer guzzlers and roughnecks). Cricket matches are extremely civilized affairs, but the rabble in Bay 13 lace themselves with gallons of beer and roar like lions in a feeding frenzy. An "old dog" is a senior gentleman who loiters, dawdles, and socializes, a gent one might typically find hanging around a new construction site bothering people. "Dog" also refers to the dung that dangles from the fleece on a sheep's bum.

Professor Lindsey's Australian Glossary

1. crook - out of sorts, sick. Ex.: He felt a bit crook Tuesday.
2. drongo - an ignorant, low-life character.
3. fair go - you made a decent job of it. Not bad.
4. lark - a scheme, plan, short cut.
5. shonkie - broken, falling apart.
6. grog - beer.
7. Red Ned - wine.
8. plonk - cheap wine.
9. Wanker's Doom - An awful fate befalling constant masturbators.
10. yobbo ocker - a red neck, worker type, loudmouth--chauvinistic, with a beer gut. Wears blue "Stubbie" shorts, a baseball-style cap and a sleeveless white "T" shirt constantly.
11. Going Bush - going "walkabout". Going off into the wilderness, or outback.
12. Beyond the Black Stump - way off in the primitive country, the middle of nowhere.
13. Barbie - a barbecue party. Mainstay of country social life. Lots of steaks, lamb chops, and beer.
14. Mad as a Galah - Galahs are raucous, screechy parrots. Very unsettled birds. Describes a person who is a bit off center.
15. Lorrikin - a good-natured bloke, but something of a hooligan.
16. swag man - hobo, carries his pack of belongings in a bundle, his "swag", or "Matilda."
17. dumper - a type of bread. An enormous dough ball is tossed directly into an open fire. The charred exterior must be pared away after baking to reveal the cooked bread.

18. bombora - an enormous reef wave building outside the beach surfline.
19. tucker - food, provisions providing sustenance.
20. take a snake's hiss - urinate.
21. old boiler - an elderly woman.
22. Seppos or seppies - a derogatory term for Americans. Australians will pair two words that rhyme, in Cockney fashion, with another word or term. For example: Dad and Dave = shave, Septic Tank = Yank, Captain Cook = a look.

23. Housies, blowies, blueies, Marchies - fly species. A wave across one's face with an extended arm to swat away flies has been termed the "Australian wave" or the "Australian National Salute." Clouds of flies scourge the countryside during warm seasons. I have ranked them here ordinarily relative to ferocity. "Marchies" can bubble blood on the skin's surface and have a biting proboscis like the nose on a Concorde jet.

24. White Anting - The term refers to a termite who chews on a building's wood foundation, eventually causing the building to collapse. When a relationship between two people becomes strained, an outsider who interferes for his own selfish ends is "white anting."

Australian place names sound like notes cascading down a xylophone: Wagga Wagga (place of many crows), Ballarat, Bendigo, Koober Peedy, Kuringgai, Nullarbor, Jan Juc, Murrumbidgee, Nockatonga, Thargomindah, Ubirr, Jabiru, Millingimbi, Kalgoorlie, and Maroubra. The words infuse the places with a special force--Aboriginal mystery from the ancient Dreamtime.

"Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong, under the shade of a coolibah tree, And he sang as he watched and he waited while his billy boiled: "Who'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?"

A. B. "Banjo" Paterson

Ah, words, beautiful words.

EARTH DAY

April 22 is Earth Day. Everyone has at least fifty things you can do to save the earth on a list somewhere. We suggest only two: 1) Don't make more human beings. There are so many, so many hungry, suffering children; let us take care of those already here before we create new ones. 2) Don't buy any more fossil fuels. The burning of fossil fuels is quite frankly killing this planet.

And you thought recycling was tough!!! Okay, want it a little easier? Do not conceive a child or buy gas on April 22, and you will receive absolution from the Rastified Church of the Cowboy Buddha. Which will last 'til next year when it will get tougher!

Tax Day

Here is an interesting little memo sent to us by a friend,

Internal Revenue Service
Department of the Treasury

TO ALL DISTRICT DIRECTORS APRIL 4, 1985

On March 5, 1985, a charge of tax evasion was filed in the U.S. District Court in Indianapolis, Indiana, by U.S. Attorney George Duncan. The charges were dismissed! The defense attorney, Lowell Becraft of Huntsville, Alabama, presented irrefutable evidence that the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was never properly ratified. The amendment which established the "income tax", was signed into law despite serious defects. In reality only two States ratified the amendment; ratification requires 36 states to be valid. The effect of this is such that every tax paid into the Treasury since 1913 is due and refundable to every citizen and business.

The official position of the service is, as it has always been, to aid and assist the citizens of the United States. We will not publish or advertise this finding as a total and immediate refund would cause a serious drain on the resources of the Treasury. For those citizens who become aware of this finding and apply for a total refund, expedite their refund documents as quickly and as quietly as possible. A simple 1040X form will suffice until a new form is designed and printed. Advise each of your managers that they are to discuss this situation with anyone. There will be no written communications and you are to destroy this memorandum.

The Secretary of the Treasury assures me that there will be no reduction in the workforce as this refunding activity will take a minimum of 5 years to complete. Further directions will be forwarded as the need arises.

(signed)
Roscoe L. Egger, Jr.
Commissioner of Internal Revenue

We called the IRS and a very patient soft-spoken Public Affairs Officer, Mr. Dale Potts, assured us that the above memo is "bogus" and "absurd". Which ruined our day. We are beginning to have doubts about Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny too. So we advise our readers to pay their taxes by April 15th and tell the IRS that we were the ones who told you to

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To commemorate the second brave new birthday of the Upper Left Edge (Our Motto: All the news we want to print), our founder, the nearly Reverend Billy Hults (His motto: Nobody hits, everybody eats, we get to love who we want), suggested (sweetly, but in no uncertain terms) how lovely it would be were this writer to set down his jumbled and unreliable memories of the Edge's brave new beginning.

Because of our love and respect for Reverend Billy, and because he pays us (bits of bright coloured yarn, carrots from the garden, sometimes a fresh fish), we decided to humor him. For a man of the cloth (wool and canvas mostly), he can get cranky when his word serfs don't hop to. But that's another story.

Before we get into the nobility of our mission (the truth will set us free, and all that), decency demands a reminder of why people start newspapers: quite simply, for the giddy sense of power it provides. The power of the press rests in the hands of those who own one. One needn't be the New York Times to have dangerous and addictive amounts of fun and, Spencer Tracy movies aside, the real joy of newspapering (as distinct from wallpapering, which pays well) lies in cackling at the chance to skewer whoever and whatever you want. This said, on to the noble bits.

If anything can be said to have a beginning, the Edge was pulled, shrieking and thrashing, from the womb of the Gulf War. A loose knit cabal of aging revolutionaries (see, Old Left, New Left, and New Improved Left) assembled the morning after the night Bagdad will never forget, to, um, take matters into our own hands. For the record, our subversive cell consisted (entirely) of Reverend Billy, Bill Wickland (now the Edge's close to distinguished foreign correspondent), and myself. As I recall, at least three of us had hangovers.

Our idea, and one we quickly launched, was the Peace Paper. Gathering together the talents of other aging malcontents (poets, journalists, and activists vile and various), we purloined a computer (you don't want to know whose) and published what might be the planet's largest anti-war broadside to date -- one large sheet of newsprint that just kept on unfolding. A shotgun marriage of pamphleteering and origami that managed to be both political and charming.

Our fate was sealed. Ink was in our blood, not to mention several hundred Bobay tonics. We dreamed dreams, vowed brotherhood and aimed for the top. "Wow," we said simultaneously. "We could do a national Peace Paper." One of us, I think Wickland, said, "Very far out." We would be the new Rolling Stone. We would be the voice of the New Old Left. Or maybe the Old New Left. Whatever. We could empower the disenfranchised, right injustice, free the chickens. We could be somebody. Then we could sell the gig to Time-Warner and retire.

But the sleazeballs pulled out before we got our business plan together. (Yes, Virginia, they can bomb the oldest city on the planet, strafe and rocket the Garden of Eden, and be home before the resistance hits the streets. No, there won't be another Vietnam.) Through the disappointment and heartbreak, it was Reverend Billy's strength that held us together (okay, maybe a few drugs, but nothing heavy). Poking through the ashes of our dreams, Billy said, "Today, Cannon Beach. Tomorrow the world."

So here we are, two years later. Or is it three? Memory goes fast when you're into arts and letters.

And social responsibility. Did I mention that?



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TAX TALK

Check this Tax Break

When you sell your home, the difference between the adjusted sales price and your cost basis is treated as a capital gain and is subject to tax. You may be able to defer the tax for a time, but it usually becomes due eventually.

However, once you reach age 55, you may exclude from tax up to \$125,000 of gain on a home sale. You must have owned and lived in the house at least three of the five years before the sale.

You may use the election only once. If a married couple sells their home and uses the exclusion, neither one can take advantage of it again. Keep that in mind if you sell your home because of a marriage or divorce. Choose the right time to use this big tax break.

NOTE: The general information in this column should not be acted upon without professional guidance.

Bruce E. Nims, P.C.

Certified Public
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