

# Horse sense

By  
ERNEST V. JOINER



• It has been a long time since anyone washed my editorial mouth with soap for uttering a forbidden word, but a Mail Pouch reader has done it this week. She objects to my having called an ecology nut a son-of-a-bitch. Admittedly, the language isn't elegant. But it is accurate. It is forceful. It leaves nothing to the imagination. And, after all, if a person is a son-of-a-bitch, is there another word to describe him? He might be referred to as "The offspring of casual and indiscriminate canine copulation," which would offend few readers. But it could also be interpreted as a compliment by the recipient of the slur, which would be unfortunate.

• Some people like flowery prose oozing with Victorian sweetness. Others prefer that an editorial writer call a spade what it is, and never mind the evasions, hypocrisy and subterfuge. I prefer the hard, direct, hard-hitting approach, even at the expense of bruising the tender sensibilities of my readers.

• Education, of course, has nothing to do with using or not using strong language. Probably one of the best and most exhaustive treatises on the subject is "The Anatomy of Swearing," by Ashley Montagu, the well-known anthropologist and social biologist, who is widely published. He points out that swearing is an art which has suffered at the hands of generations of unimaginative practitioners. The doctory swearers have enriched our language for centuries. The swearers have been with us since man first began communicating. "Swearing," Montagu writes, "is probably coeval with the birth of language." Through the centuries, only the self-styled civilized peoples of the Western World have failed to understand the virtue of judicious swearing; and have, consequently, condemned it out of hand.

• Why swear? Why use the abrasive, pungent and often socially stigmatized nouns and adjectives? Well, it is a relief mechanism for feelings that might otherwise manifest themselves in more violent and dangerous acts. Swearing, gentle readers, is a cathartic. It purges anger, releases tensions. A good cry, a good laugh and a good cussword have each in their own way been recognized as serving the useful function of bringing relief to the harassed mind. And, believe me, the ecologists are harassing me! Samuel Butler once wrote that nice people are people with dirty minds, people who have spent the greater part of their lives in repressing and inhibiting the thoughts that the healthier-minded accommodate more easily or get out of their systems by free and uninhibited expression. Wise men (and even wise women) have recognized that swearing is the art of achieving eloquence with an economy of words. Today, even words should be conserved along with energy, food, newsprint and water.

• This is probably what Dr. Samuel Johnson had in mind when he said, "I like a good swearer." But swearers have led a terrible life; still are. For centuries reformers have behaved like fiends, Montagu points out, to exorcise the spirit of language and cleanse it of what they deem to be unclean. In the name of the law (which they demanded) they have "hung, drawn, quartered and otherwise abused their victims. In 15th century France, for example, swearers and blasphemers had a lip slit, and if they persisted they might have their tongues removed."

• The expression which has led to this inquiry, son-of-a-bitch, has a long and distinguished history. Its modern use dates back to the early 18th century. Without it there is grave doubt we could have won World Wars I and II! Recent Presidents of the United States, all educated men, have been known to apply the term to certain newspaper reporters. Was there any other manner by which President Truman could have disposed of a critic of his daughter's singing? Still, Byron used the term in Don Juan (11th canto) whilst describing the manners of a civil servant in issuing a passport, and ending on this note: "If he (the civil servant) found not in this spawn of taxborn riches, like lap-dogs, the least civil sons of bitches." Soocrates was the first man to use the dog in this connection, as far as I can find. He swore by the dog. But the Romans got credit for introducing the epithet to the Western World, with their "damna canicula." It came to France as "sacré chien." When it hit England it was simply "damned dog." But it achieved flowering perfection in the United States as an insult and a challenge to instant combat. Unfortunately, more modern use is turning it into a term of endearment and affection, as: "Why, you good old son-of-a-bitch!" Sorry times.

• So much for that expression, which is hoary and venerable with years and which has served mankind so well. I believe the only other word by which my critic is repelled is "damn." The common expression, "I don't give a damn" is pure Indian in origin. In India the coin of least value was once the dam. The Duke of Wellington, fighting in India, enriched the language when he outbursted: "I don't care a two-penny dam!" It has since been refined, but its original sentiment is fairly well preserved in modern usage.

• The great literature of the ages is crammed with profanity, obscenity and blasphemy. The finest bit of scatological pornography in the English language, according to Montagu, is Mark Twain's 1601-A Conversation At the Social Fireside as it Was in the Time of the Tudors. It concerns a nobleman who "broke wind" at the court of Queen Bess, "the fellow to which the Queen had admirably not heard the like before." This work was written for Twain's friend, the Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Twichell. It has been published throughout the English-speaking world, but never legitimately. "Thus," says Montagu, "do little minds drive away the work of their betters." I have a copy of 1601. It is a work of art, even though the theme is rather heavy.

• Those who would not read the profanities must necessarily deprive themselves of the pleasures of Shakespeare, the Old Testament, Aristotle, T.E. Lawrence, Winston Churchill, Byron, Browning, Coleridge, Darwin, Demosthenes, Dryden, Emerson, Stephen Leacock, John Massfield, H.L. Mencken, Alexander Pope, Plutarch, Bertrand Russell, Jonathan Swift and Hugh Walpole. Plus a thousand more unrecalled masters of literary style and substance.

• There is a story told about Mark Twain, a great dispenser and admirer of the art of profanity. His wife, unable to control his outbursts, became so frustrated that she decided to treat him to some really eloquent swearing. Mark listened until she had exhausted the repertory so well-learned from him and then dryly remarked: "The words are there, my dear, but the music is wanting."

• Swear words must be carefully orchestrated. As Twain remarked, the music must accompany them. It may be of some consolation to my Mail Pouch critic, and to others who may share her views, that I am resolved not to abuse and thus destroy the effectiveness of gatty expressions by their too frequent use. The proper music must be used to make them shine like the diamonds they are. They are far too precious, too devastating in their editorial application, for any writer to employ them willy-nilly.



"Okay... let's try it again."

## The mail pouch

EDITOR:

I know that this letter will probably never see the editor's Mail Pouch, because my last one didn't. But I would like to say something I feel is important to our community.

I truly enjoyed the Gazette-Times when you first took over and still do, most of it. The only objection I have is, why do you have to print such filthy words? Each week they seem to get worse. Must you express your thoughts with such words?

This is a nice community, and our only source of local news is the Gazette-Times. Last week you called the ecology nut such a word that is only degrading to you and our community.

In all kindness, I know that you are very nice person and hope that next time you don't like someone you will call him a fanatic, knothead or something not so vulgar. I'm sure, with your education, you can think of some nice words to call someone and still get your point across.

MRS. CHARLENE PAPINEAU,  
Lexington.

EDITOR:

Happy to have you back in print. We enjoy your Horse Sense just as we did your Opinion column in the Sebastopol Times.

Enclosed is a column from the San Jose (Ca.) paper about parking meters. We thought you might enjoy it. We live in Los Gatos, Ca., where they kicked out the parking meters years ago.

MR. & MRS. BRUCE FRANK,  
Los Gatos, Ca.

(ED. NOTE--Thank you. The column on parking meters you enclosed is re-published on this page because of its timely application to the situation in Heppner.)

EDITOR:

I would like to send a word of thanks to Eva Swanson Hamlett and all her committee who made the lone High School classes 1932-1938 reunion such a complete success. I'm sure I'm speaking in behalf of all those who attended. Thank you all, and we hope to be together for another reunion in five more years.

JOYCE CARLSON DARST,  
Eugene.

EDITOR:

Will you please publish this open letter to the Morrow County Livestock Assn. in your Mail Pouch?

On behalf of the sheep members of the Hoof and Horn Livestock Club we appreciate the part you played in the 4-H Auction. I am referring to the price difference your organization paid.

All of us deeply appreciate your generosity. Without your support our profit wouldn't have been so great. Thank you.

SANDRA PALMER,  
Sheep Junior Leader,  
Mark Sargent, Rhonda  
Sargent, Pam Cantin, Cathy  
Palmer and Mary Ann Greenup



"I don't know how them astronauts can find that moon -- it's so dark and foggy out there I can't even see it!"

**THE GAZETTE-TIMES**  
MORROW COUNTY'S NEWSPAPER  
Address: Heppner, Ore., 97334, Tel. 674-9228, P.O. Box 337.  
The Heppner Gazette was established March 20, 1882. The Heppner Times established Nov. 18, 1897. Consolidated Feb. 15, 1972.  
Member: National Newspaper Assn., Oregon Newspaper Publishers Assn.  
Ernest V. Joiner, Publisher  
Ernie Ceresa, Photography Sports  
SUBSCRIPTION RATES: \$5 per year in Oregon, \$4 elsewhere. Single copy, 15 cents. Mailed single copy, 25 cents. Minimum billing, \$1.

# Mayor of Hardman

DEAR MISTER EDITOR:

I see by the papers where these "Who's Who" outfits all over the country is catching down the country on account they invite anybody and everybody to get wrote up in their books and to buy their books.

The Government agencies that are trying to "alert the public" are calling these folks the "vanity press."

Mister Editor, the wonder to me is that it's any of the Government's business. This country runs on vanity, cause that's the stuff that sells everything we use from cars to cigarettes, from clothes to colleges, from toothpaste to automatic garage door openers. The desire to buy is built on making a show with other folks, and the products are made to fill the desire.

Actual, all the "vanity press" is doing is telling folks they have "been selected" to be included in such and such a publication. Course, everybody that has a Social Security number or a credit card is important enuff to be selected, and fer sure they will want the \$25 book that tells all about their reasons fer being famous and successful. This is the oldest selling pitch in the book, and no more brazen than most.

The fellers at the country store Saturday night took up this matter, and it was agreed they made a pore impression on the "Who's Who" press. Zeke Grubb said his preacher gets selected regular to appear in different books about distinguished people, but the preacher says he just ignores em.

Zeke's preacher said the only difference between gitting in "Who's Who" and gitting a honorary degree is about \$200,000. If you got \$25 you can git a book with your name in it, and if you give some college a new libery wing you git "Dr." in big type on paper suitable fer framing.

It's the same, Zeke's preacher said, as putting somepun extry in the collection plate to git your name on a stained glass window.

Ed Doltittle said you can thumb through any magazine you pick up and git the same message "Who's Who" is selling. You got to wear our shirt to look successful, the ads tell us, and if you smoke this cigar and drink whisky the gals will know at a glance you're first class material.

And a cyclopedia salesman never has come to his door, Ed allowed, that didn't start off by telling him about some big shot that bought a set of books, and about how so-and-so down the road recommended Ed fer a set.

Furthermore, Ed went on, this vanity business works backwards as good as forwards. Folks brag about how much they owe, and how much a feller can borrow these days is took as a measure of success.

A feller that pays his bills from one month to the next is a "pore risk," but the big operator that can go in debt \$30,000 jest by signing his name and paying 10 per cent interest is a fit subject fer "Who's Who in the World of Finance."

Mister Editor, they is a heap of difference between growing and swelling, but folks get em mixed up.

Yours truly,  
MAYOR ROY.

## the lee side Leigh Weimers

I was inside having my hair cut--all of it, not just one--and thus was blissfully unaware of what was happening out in the street.

But happening it was. They told me about it later: This lady had come riding up on a motorcycle, sort of, given my car the once over and then slipped a note under the windshield wiper.

I found the note when I got outside, too late: "City of San Jose," it read, "Parking Citation and Complaint."

Right, I'd been zapped. A parking ticket. But if the city thinks it has a complaint...

Before we go on, you probably think I'm going to complain about parking meters and such only because I got a ticket, right? I'm a bad sport, right?

Well, you're right indeed. I'm not only a bad sport--I'm a rotten sport.

But my dislike of parking meters and what they do goes back a lot further than this week.

It began, probably, when I first came to San Jose. San Jose had parking meters then--I'm not one of your pioneer natives who remembers when the valley was covered with blossoms and the nearest thing to the curb was a hitching post. As far as I can remember locally, San Jose always has had meters.

Which may be part of the problem. It certainly seemed to be then. I recall, Macy's had just announced that it was going to locate away from the downtown business district. In something new called a "shopping center." With acres of free parking. Being basically cheap, that last bit caught my eye.

It caught the eye of some people downtown, too. Might not this free parking be a threat to their few curbside spaces, each guarded by a mechanical sentry and patrolled by the boys in blue? They worried.

Pish tush, a majority of city leaders replied. (Or words to that effect.) Downtown is downtown. Who would want to leave it for any reason? Shopping centers may have frills but they are only a fad and the shoppers know this.

Uh huh. You see how that turned out.

Before you could say "re-zoning" there were shopping centers all over the place. Except in the center of the city, where fewer and fewer people were shopping.

Yet the parking meters stayed. The merchants offered to validate tickets from parking lots--if the shopper bought something at their stores--but that was hardly competitive with the suburban freebies. The shoppers knew that. Heck, even an economic dummy like myself knew.

Still, the parking meters remained. How else can we ease the downtown parking congestion, the experts stressed? Well, from that point of view, perhaps they were right. The meters certainly have lessened the congestion downtown. Thanks to them you now can find a parking place almost anywhere you choose. The same applies, unfortunately, to the Sahara.

Some people--myself among them--began complaining publicly. Still the meters are there, as unremoved as the municipal mentality. Where would we be without their revenue, the experts ask? Well, where would the downtown core's assessed valuation be if those cussed meters had been yanked in time? Right back atcha!

Parking meters in San Jose have outlived whatever dubious usefulness they ever had, I'm convinced. They may be all right in San Francisco where space is at a premium and paying parking lot fees is like playing Russian roulette (choose between 25 cents the first half hour and 50 cents for every 33 and one-third minutes thereafter" or "15 cents the first 27 minutes, .007 cents every second thereafter, compounded half-hourly").

But who'd want to pay to park in Oakland, for instance. Or you-know-where else.

I'll tell you one thing--this is the last time I'll park where I got that ticket. There's something that lacks warmth in finding a note on your windshield marked "violation copy."

Was that two things? Sorry. But like Phase Four, inflation and parking meters, I just had to get my two bucks' worth.



## How to kill a convention

By  
LESTER KINSOLVING

"The classic heresy of the 20th century is that truth will invariably emerge from dialogue," contends the periodical of the English Diocese of Peterborough.

Nowhere is this better illustrated than at the national religious conventions, where the language utilized by some of the more experienced delegates (and group dynamics hustlers) is wondrous almost to the point of being occult. Such esoteric linguistics have been described as "Baffletalk" by Emily Louise Conrad, in an article written for Eternity magazine.

"Baffletalk" is mastered, she explains. She lists three columns of nine numbered words which are frequently used by speakers at religious conventions -- such as:

Indigenous, incremental, normative, contextual, optimal, viable, infrastructure, etc. etc. etc.

"Now choose a three-digit number -- your area code, or the last three digits of your zip code will do nicely," she directs in order to make a random selection of the numbered words.

The result, if memorized, can dazzle an entire convention enabling the greenest freshman delegate to achieve immediate national recognition by taking the floor to inform the assemblage:

"What we really need in dealing with this issue is multi-dimensional, determinative involvement!"

In short order this technique can enable one to move up to the forensic major league, where one can be a star by calling for:

"Action-oriented orchestration of innovative inputs which can maximize the vital thrust towards a nonalienated infrastructure."

If, despite such verbal snowstorms, the convention seem to be on the verge of actually accomplishing something specific (which one opposes) it is time to shift immediately into verbiage that is wonderfully simple and simply wonderful -- but no less lethal to any and all progress.

An example of this is provided in a brief article which was sent to this writer, which has neither author's name nor publication -- but which is entitled "How To Avoid Action":

For every proposal set up an opposite and then "concede" to a "middle ground" (no action at all).

Profess not to have the answer. (This lets you out of having any answer to all) -- while earnestly cautioning against proceeding too rapidly (which helps avoid ever getting started).

Emphasize righteously that "This problem cannot be separated from other related problems..." (Translation: We can't solve this problem until we have solved all related problems -- which means never.)

Ask what is meant by the question. (By the time this is explained to the satisfaction of even a small minority, it is time to go home.)

Earnestly caution the gathering that "We had better wait until we can consult an expert!" or, as an equally effective action-stopper: "Let's appoint a committee!"

In closing, be sure to congratulate the problem. "It has stimulated discussion, contributed to growth, opened new vistas and shown us the way." (We may have wasted two perfectly good hours, but that problem surely deserves a medal.)

