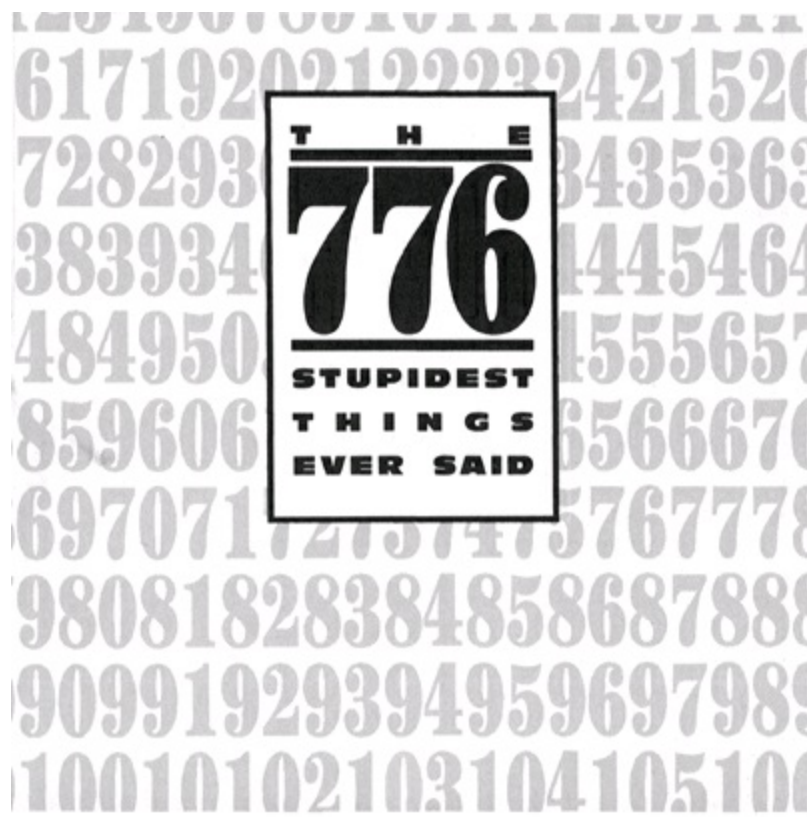


THE 776
STUPIDEST
THINGS
EVER SAID

ROSS
AND KATHRYN PETRAS



**R O S S A N D
K A T H R Y N
P E T R A S**

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INTRODUCTION

We've all done it at one time or another—put our foot in our mouth.

No one is immune to foot-in-mouth disease. People from all walks of life say the wrong thing at the wrong time. Of course, most of us are lucky. When we say something dumb, there's no television camera or newspaper reporter to capture our inadvertent blunders for time immemorial.

But those in the public eye aren't quite so lucky. Their verbal gaffes are recorded in the paper, on air—and now in this book.

This is a collection of the stupidest, most ridiculous, funny, asinine, and sometimes frankly frightening quotes in history—anything from misstatements to doublespeak to good old-fashioned idiocy.

The 776 Stupidest Things Ever Said is an irreverent look at our pundits, celebrities, politicians, and social leaders and how fallible we all are—them for saying dumb things, us for paying too much attention.

We already have *The Guinness Book of World Records*, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, and innumerable books listing the best quotations from the best minds in history—from Tacitus to Goethe to Gorbachev. So now (to paraphrase Jimmy Carter), Why not the worst?

The quotes we've collected in this book come from a wide range of sources—from daily newspapers across the country to magazines, from television shows to private collections. Along the way, we noticed something interesting: like most things, verbal blunders seem to come and go in cycles. While we always relish hearing or reading them, some eras are riper with them than others.

There have been several Golden Ages (of sorts) of the quotable stupidity. An early Golden Age came in the late 1700s and early 1800s, with Anglo-Irish statesman Sir Boyle Roche leading the pack in the misstatement race. One hundred years later, another Golden Age emerged—focusing on gaffes committed in the British Parliament. Then came the early 1920s and the emergence of a wholly American gaffe-watch, caused in part by the tortured syntactical meanderings of President Warren G. Harding.

The early 1940s brought another Golden Age. This one, like the attention of the American public in general, centered around Hollywood and the blunders of those connected to the Great American Dream Machine. World War II and the Cold War brought about a lull of sorts in the appreciation of the verbal gaffe. Save for periodic breaks (such as during presidential campaigns), irreverence in general was out.

Then came the late 1960s and a completely new American ethos. The youth revolution swept the nation. Suddenly anything and anyone were fair game. Watergate brought this Golden Age to a peak. And we haven't come off that peak yet. As Yogi Berra said, "It ain't over till it's over," and it ain't yet.

Just as there are Golden Ages of the verbal gaffe, there are the truly silver-tongued who have more of a knack for the inspired malapropism and verbal blunder than others. That's why we've singled out a few people for special attention: the little-known Sir Boyle Roche, Yogi Berra, Sam Goldwyn, and, more generally, the chief perpetrators of incomprehensible doublespeak—bureaucrats and academics.

But most of this book is a cross section—quotes from people in sports, the arts, the government and the world of business, the famous and the not so famous. Some of the quotes make one think twice about the people in charge of our government, our corporations, our society. Some are clearly mistakes. And others are just plain funny.

And that's really the bottom line. After all, everyone makes mistakes—so why not sit back and enjoy them? Read this book as a celebration of the verbal inanities even the best of us make ... a celebration of our humanity. It is our hope that it will make even the most tongue-tied of us feel better about ourselves. If the best and the brightest can do it and go on to become presidents, kings, and generals, why not me?

On Accident, Causes of:

... hazards are one of the main causes of accidents.

from the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration's booklet, "Safety with Beef Cattle," 1976

On Actuality:

Things are more like they are now than they have ever been.

President Gerald Ford

On Adages, Modern interpretations of:

As Duke Ellington once said, "The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Elkton."

Babe Ruth on a radio show, garbling the adage by the Duke of Wellington that Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton

On Addresses:

If at any time I change my address when I notify you I hope you will be so kind as to change also.

letter from a reader renewing his subscription, received by the business manager of Motor News

On Adoptions, Reasons Why You May Be Excluded from:

It would seem from the interviews and reports that both of you have had few, if any, negative experiences when children yourselves, and also seem to enjoy a marital experience where rows and arguments have no place. Under the circumstances, [adopted children would not have sufficient exposure to] negative experiences.

letter from the Lancashire (U.K.) Social Services Department, on why foster parents Harry and Esther Hough were not qualified to adopt as they "exuded excessive harmony," although they had already raised over forty foster children from birth to age eight

On Advice:

Life its own self, as Dan Jenkins said. Life its own self. Figure that one out, Norm. But what it means is, I have a lot more to learn from President Reagan.

George Bush, at the beginning of his presidency, when asked whether he was getting advice from his predecessor

On Advice, Not So Good:

Don't cut off your nose yourself.

Casey Stengel

On Age:

Bruce Sutter has been around for a while and he's pretty old. He's thirty-five years old. That will give you some idea of how old he is.

Ron Fairly, San Francisco Giants broadcaster

On Agreeing:

And what is more, I agree with everything I have just said.

attributed to Piet Koornhoff, South African cabinet minister, ambassador to United States

On Agreements:

If I entered into an agreement with that man, I would be sticking my head in a moose.

attributed to movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Air Pares, Free:

Gifts are positively corruptive.... [Free air fares] are harmless, or at least only potentially corruptive.

Lee Wilbur, staff aide on the House Appropriations Transportation subcommittee, explaining why it was okay for him to accept a free (first-class) round-trip flight to Spain

On Alliteration, Excessive:

Progression is not proclamation nor palaver. It is not pretense nor play on prejudice. It is not of personal pronouns, nor perennial pronouncement. It is not the perturbation of a people passion-wrought, nor a promise proposed.

President Warren G. Harding

On Ambassadors, Qualifications for Becoming:

This is the man who was not only the president of the National Council of Shopping Centers, but the International Council of Shopping Centers in 1986, and traveled around the world.

Senator Rudy Boschwitz of Minnesota in his recommendation for the appointment of Melvin F. Sembler to the post of ambassador to Australia, as quoted in Spy, May 1990. Sembler was appointed and confirmed shortly thereafter.

On Ambassadors, Reasons for Becoming:

I understand it's a nice life-style. I love golf, and I understand they have a lot of nice golf courses.

Chic Hecht, former senator from Nevada, explaining why he would like to be appointed ambassador to the Bahamas. (Note: Shortly after saying this, Hecht did become ambassador to the Bahamas.)

On American Greatness:

That's part of American greatness, is discrimination. Yes, sir. Inequality, I think, breeds freedom and gives a man opportunity.

Lester Maddox, ex-governor of Georgia

On Americans, Native:

Maybe we should not have humored them ... [when they asked to live on reservations]. Maybe we should have said, "No, come join us. Be citizens along with the rest of us."

President Ronald Reagan during a trip to Moscow, when a student asked him about U.S. treatment of Native Americans

On Americans, Native:

I don't feel we did wrong in taking this great country away from them. There were great numbers of people who needed new land, and the Indians were selfishly trying to keep it for themselves.

John Wayne, actor who played mostly cowboys in the movies

On Americans, Native, Where Co Find:

Get some more from the reservoir.

supposedly said by movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn after being told that the Western film he was working on required more Native American extras

On Americans, Where Co Find:

Wherever I have gone in this country, I have found Americans.

Alf Landon (in America), during a speech in his presidential campaign against FDR

On Animals, the Reason for:

I believe that mink are raised for being turned into fur coats and if we didn't wear fur coats those little animals would never have been born. So is it better not to have been born or to have lived for a year or two to have been turned into a fur coat? I don't know.

Barbi Benton, ex-Playboy bunny turned actress

On Answers:

I think we're on the road to coming up with answers that I don't think any of us in total feel we have the answers to.

Kim Anderson, mayor of Naples, Florida

On Answers, Clear:

My position on Vietnam is very simple. And I feel this way. I haven't spoken on it because I haven't felt there was any major contribution that I had to make at the time. I think that our concepts as a nation and that our actions have not kept pace with the changing conditions, and therefore our actions are not completely relevant today to the realities of the magnitude and the complexity of the problems that we face in this conflict.

Nelson Rockefeller, governor of New York, when asked in a press conference for his position on the Vietnam War. When a reporter followed up with a question asking what he meant, Rockefeller answered, "Just what I said."

On Applause:

They gave me a standing ovation.

ex-Houston Oilers and Florida State coach Bill Peterson

On Appreciation:

You're a parasite for sore eyes.

attributed to actor/director Gregory Ratoff

On Art, the Meaning of:

I juxtapose anticipated with anomalous imagery to create visual analogies. Discrepancy and contrast in scale are emphasized as I investigate perception and memory.

Sura Ruth, photographer, in a press release about a show of her photographs

On Art, Why Artists Get involved In:

I paint paintings because I can't get the experience in any other way but there are many more experiences that are equally satisfying to me and equally inept at answering all my questions, but hover in exactitude in describing themselves and defying me to define their logic.

Julian Schnabel, in his memoirs, CVJ: Nicknames of Maitre D's & Other Excerpts From Life

On Arc Critics, the Infallibility of:

Rembrandt is not to be compared in the painting of character with our extraordinarily gifted artist, Mr. Rippingdale.

John Hunt, nineteenth-century art critic

On Arting:

In terms of arting, where the reference condition is not fixed or even known conceptually but rather something coming to being, what can we hope through our formative hermeneutic movement? To make the "otherness" of the arting process more other, more "objective" in a newer sense and less "subjective" in the older sense, so that the arting process itself speaks more purely?

Kenneth R. Beittel, professor of art education at Penn State University, in Art Education, as reported in Edwin Newman's Strictly Speaking

On Artistic Appreciation, Fascist:

Culture is necessary, but it must be alive and not too much of it.

Virginio Gayda, official in Fascist Italy

On Artistry:

When it comes to ruining a painting, he's an artist.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn, on an abstract artist

On Assimilation by a Vice-President:

My fellow astronauts ...

Vice-President Dan Quayle, beginning a speech at an Apollo 11 anniversary celebration

On Athletes, Unusual Talents of:

Arnie [Palmer], usually a great putter, seems to be having trouble with his long putt. However he has no trouble dropping his shorts.

golf broadcaster on the air during a tournament

B

On Bad Deals:

My dear Mr. Wallis, just read *Sea Wolf* You told me in your office that it would be a 50-50 part (the role of Leach). I am sorry to say it is just the opposite.

George Raft, actor, in wire to Hal Wallis, producer

On Baseball:

Half this game is ninety percent mental.

Danny Ozark, manager of the Philadelphia Phillies

On Baseball Fans, Nude:

Would the fans along the outfield please remove their clothes?

Tex Rikards, public address announcer at Ebbets Field, Brooklyn, New York, after fans had used the top of the outfield fence for their coats

On Basic Language Instruction:

In the case of the first possessive, the pattern is: *Basic form of the first possessive*, (or corresponding possessive form if modified by a possessive adjective in English) plus *dative of the third person "his" form of the second possessive plus definite article plus third person "his" form of word possessed*, to agree in number and case according to its form and use in the sentence.

Hungarian: Basic Course, publication of the U.S. State Department

On Beards:

I've been traveling so much, I haven't had time to grow it.

Bob Horner, Atlanta Braves third baseman, on why he hadn't grown a beard

On Being in Two Places at One Time:

No refreshments shall be supplied to any member after the above named hours, and none shall be supplied for consumption off the club premises except to a member on the premises at the time.

By-law in a private social club rulebook

On Being Shot Through the Right Temple:

Isn't it a blessing of God it didn't hit him in the eye?

an elderly woman, when she and two others found a dead robber on the road, shot through the right temple

On Being There:

Well, sir, I met you this morning, but you did not come; however, I'm determined to meet you tomorrow morning, whether you come or not.

a challenger to a man who didn't show up for a scheduled duel, reported by nineteenth-century British writer J. C. Percy

On Believability:

Anything that man says you've got to take with a dose of salts.
movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Birds, Communist:

The lark is exclusively a Soviet bird. The lark does not like the other countries, and lets its harmonious song be heard only over the fields made fertile by the collective labor of the citizens of the happy land of the Soviets.
from a novel by the not so noted Soviet novelist D. Bleiman

On Birds, Strange Abilities of:

A man could not be in two places at the same time unless he were a bird.
Sir Boyle Roche, eighteenth-century M.P. from Tralee

On Birth:

I called the doctor, and he told me that the contraptions were an hour apart.
Mackey Sasser, New York Mets catcher, on his wife's labor

On Blacks vs. Whites:

It is just not accurate to believe that blacks were confined somehow to the lowest-paying jobs; rather, there was some tendency for blacks to be congregated in certain units which had a variety of characteristics including, in some instances, a somewhat lower average pay than some units where there might be a heavy concentration of white employees.
Ben Fisher, special assistant to the president of United Steelworkers of America, in New Times

On Blame:

We have only one person to blame, and that's each other.
Barry Beck, New York Ranger, on who started a brawl during the National Hockey League's Stanley Cup playoffs

On Blockbusters:

It will create an excitement that will sweep the country like wild-flowers.
movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Blockbusters:

This will start with a bang in Hollywood and degenerate throughout the whole world.
movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Bombing:

They [the bombs] are aimed exclusively at military targets.... Unfortunately there are some civilians around these targets.
Dwight D. Eisenhower, former President and general, standing up for the way the United States was handling bombing in North Vietnam

On Bombing:

Everybody should rise up and say, “Thank you, Mr. President, for bombing Haiphong.”
Martha Mitchell, wife of Attorney General John Mitchell, addressing a Republican Women’s Conference

On Bombing, the True Meaning of:

You always write it’s bombing, bombing, bombing. It’s not bombing, it’s air support.
U. S. Air Force Colonel David Opfer, air attaché in Cambodia, complaining to reporters about their coverage of the Vietnam War

On Bonuses, Reason for Giving Over \$195 Million in:

If we didn’t have bonuses, we wouldn’t have had anybody working for us.
Drexel Burnham Lambert spokesperson, explaining why the company gave over \$195 million in bonuses just before it filed for bankruptcy

On Books:

[Does] the published book contain the unpublished part?
James H. Campbell, King’s Counsel, to a witness in Britain’s Times Book Club case in the early 1900s

On Book Titles, Confidence-Building:

Correctly English in 100 Days

title from an East Asian book for beginning English speakers

On Bosses, Admiration of:

I first saw [President Reagan] as a foot, highly polished brown cordovan wagging merrily on a hassock. I spied it through the door. It was a beautiful foot, sleek. Such casual elegance and clean lines! But not a big foot, not formidable, maybe a little ... frail. I imagined cradling it in my arms, protecting it from unsmooth roads.

Peggy Noonan, speechwriter for the Reagan administration and Bush campaign who wrote the famous "slipped the surly bonds of earth" speech on the Challenger disaster and Bush's famous speech accepting the Republican nomination in her memoirs

On Bottles:

Every pint bottle should contain a quart.

Sir Boyle Roche, eighteenth-century M.P. from Tralee and preeminent word mangier, on government regulation

On Bread and Butter, Where Pound:

If you let that sort of thing go on, your bread and butter will be cut right out from under your feet.

Ernest Bevin, British Foreign Minister from 1945 to 1951

On Bribes, the Right Amount to Pay in:

I didn't want it to be too big. It would have made it look like we bought the decision.

Jake Jacobsen, former Associated Milk Producers lawyer, testifying to a federal jury on the \$10,000 he gave to former Treasury Secretary John Connolly for help on milk prices

On Bribes, What They Really Are:

I would categorize them more as gifts.

aerospace manufacturer Lockheed's chief operations officer, trying to explain about the over \$7 million paid to government officials from Holland and to an influential Japanese right-winger

On Bribes from Foreign Agents, Accepting:

I don't see anything unusual about it.

Edwin Edwards, Louisiana governor, in 1976, after admitting that his wife accepted \$10,000 from a Korean businessman with ties to the South Korean CIA

On Broadcasting:

We are experiencing audio technicalities.

Ralph Kiner, announcer for the New York Mets

On Bureaucracy, Great Moments in:

Due to an administrative error, the original of the attached letter was forwarded to you. A new original has been accomplished and forwarded to AAC/JA (Alaskan Air Command, Judge Advocate office). Please place this carbon copy in your files and

destroy the original.

a memo from the Alaska Air Command, February 1973

On Burial:

It is deplorable to think of a parish where there are 30,000 people living without a Christian burial.

clergyman fund-raising for a graveyard, as reported in the London Spectator, mid-1800s

On Business:

I suppose you think that on our board half the directors do the work and the other half do nothing. As a matter of fact, gentlemen, the reverse is the case.

a chairman of the board of a prominent company defending his fellow directors

On Business, Big:

I'll tell you, it's Big Business. If there is one word to describe Atlantic City, it's Big Business. Or two words—Big Business.

Donald Trump, real estate tycoon, looking down on Atlantic City from his helicopter, as quoted in a 1989 Time

C

On Campaign Promises, Strange:

[I want to] make sure everybody who has a job wants a job.

George Bush, during his first campaign for the presidency

On Capability:

Mike Andrews' limits are limitless.

Danny Ozark, Philadelphia Phillies' manager, about one of his players

On Capital Punishment:

Capital punishment is our society's recognition of the sanctity of human life.

Orrin Hatch, Republican senator from Utah, explaining his support of the death penalty

On Cartoon Characters, Little-Known Abilities off:

While you are away, movie stars are taking your women. Robert Redford is dating your girlfriend, Tom Selleck is kissing your lady, Bart Simpson is making love to your wife.

Baghdad Betty, Iraqi radio announcer, to Gulf War troops

On Casting, Classy:

For this part of a lady, somebody that's couth.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Celebrity, Extraterrestrial:

[I introduce to you the Reverend Father McFadden] known all over the world, and other places besides.

introduction in Parliament, nineteenth century

On Censorship:

We do not have censorship. What we have is a limitation on what newspapers can report.

Louis Nel, former Deputy Minister of Information for South Africa

On Censorship:

Without censorship, things can get terribly confused in the public mind.

General William Westmoreland on why the media should be muzzled in wartime

On Character Judgments, Government Officials and:

Your commitment and compassion, your humanitarian principles and your interest in protecting individual liberty and freedom have made an outstanding contribution to furthering the cause of human dignity.

Joseph Califano, Jr., then Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, in a letter of reference for cult leader and mass murderer Jim Jones

On Chickens, Similarities with Other Things:

Chickens, like two-edged swords, oftentimes come home to roost.

small-town newspaper editor in Wisconsin

On Childhood Innocence:

The boys never meant any harm against the girls. They just meant to rape.

Joyce Kithira, deputy principal of a Kenyan boarding school, commenting on a raid of a girls' dormitory by a gang of boys who raped 71 girls and killed 19

On China, Great French Observations on:

China is a big country, inhabited by many Chinese.

Charles De Gaulle, French President

On Chinese Sayings, George Bush and:

Hey, listen. I'm a member of the NRA. You're hurting my feelings, as they say in China.

President George Bush, explaining why he didn't come out strongly against violence against women in an address to the National Rifle Association

On Chivalry:

Chivalry is only reasonably dead.

George Bush, offering a chair to a woman

On Cigars:

The astonished Yahoo, smoking, as well as he could, a cigar, with which he had filled all his pockets.

Samuel Warren, lawyer and author, in his 1841 popular novel, Ten Thousand a Year

On Civil Rights, Great Strides Made in:

We may be finding that in some blacks when [the carotid choke hold] is applied, the veins or arteries do not open up like ... in normal people.

Daryl Gates, Los Angeles police chief, discussing a department investigation he said he had instituted in an effort to explain why a high percentage of blacks died as a result of police officers' using the choke hold on them

On Civil Rights, Great Strides Made in:

I'm not against the blacks and a lot of the good blacks will attest to that.

Evan Mecham, then governor of Arizona

On Civil Rights, Great Strides Made in:

I can't get over saying "colored." I said it all my life. All the Negroes seem to resent it and I don't know why.

Martha Mitchell, wife of Attorney General John Mitchell

On Civil Rights, Great Strides Made in:

I forgot no one was working. Everyone had Buckwheat's birthday off.

town commissioner of Mardela Springs, Maryland, commenting on Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday and the difficulty he had getting in touch with county employees

On Civil Rights, Great Strides Made in:

Booker T. Washington, the great black nigger ... uh ... educator ... uh ... excuse me for making that ... the great black educator ... the Negro educator.

Reagan Brown, Texas agriculture commissioner, addressing agriculture professors and attempting to refer to the accomplishments of Booker T. Washington

On Civil Rights, Great Strides Made in:

This country needs a spear chucker, and I think we've got him up on this podium.

Eugene Dorff, mayor of Kenosha, Wisconsin, introducing presidential candidate Jesse Jackson. He said later he had intended to say "straight shooter," but slipped.

On Clarifications:

[That report was] ... a wholly garbled version of what never took place.

Augustine Birrel, Chief Secretary for Ireland from 1907 to 1916, whose inability to stop the plotting that led to the Easter Rebellion forced him to retire

On Clarifications:

This is the operative statement. The others are inoperative.

Ron Ziegler, press secretary to President Richard Nixon

On Clarifications:

I never said I had no idea about most of the things you said I said I had no idea about.

Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State, clarifying himself before a 1987 congressional hearing

On Clarifications:

That was consciously ambiguous in the sense that any terrorist government or terrorist movement that is contemplating such actions I think knows clearly what we are speaking of.

Alexander Haig, then Secretary of State, when asked by a reporter to make a statement clearer

On Clarifications:

I stand by all the misstatements.

Dan Quayle, then vice-presidential candidate, defending himself against criticism for making verbal gaffes

On Clarity:

John Sununu (then governor of New Hampshire):

You're telling us that the reason things are so bad is that they are so good, and they will get better as soon as they get worse?

James A. Baker (then Secretary of the Treasury):

You got it.

On Clarity, Communistic:

The Gang of Four (and Lin Piao) were using an ultra-Left stance as a cover for a factional attempt to seize power. If the Gang of Four are incorrectly labeled leftists or ultra-“leftists,” this broadens the attack to include anyone who made honest “Left” errors. This would play into the hands of the Right in a situation where an evaluation of the positive and negative results of the Cultural Revolution could present an opportunity for rightist attacks on the real positive breakthroughs that have occurred. This is the significance of the correct evaluation of the Gang of Four that has been made—that they were, in essence, ultra-rightists and not leftists.

Pat and Roger Howard, from the Institute of Foreign Languages, Canton, China, in a 1977 issue of the Maoist newspaper, the Guardian

On Clear Thinking, Governmental:

An agency subject to the provisions of the Federal Reports Act may enter into an arrangement with an organization not subject to the Act whereby the organization not subject to the Act collects information on behalf of the agency subject to the Act. The reverse also occurs.

a memo from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

On Clear Thinking, Vice-Presidential:

We offer the party as a big tent. How we do that within the platform, the preamble to the platform, or whatnot, that remains to be seen. But that message will have to be articulated with great clarity.

Vice-President Dan Quayle. (This comment was awarded the British Golden Bull award.)

On Coercion:

I will not be cohorsed.

Danny Ozark, responding to rumors that he would be forced to quit due to reports that he was close to losing his job as manager of the Philadelphia Phillies

On Comebacks, Clever and Otherwise:

We on this side of the House are not such fools as we look.

House member overheard retorting to taunts

On Comedy:

Our comedies are not to be laughed at.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Commies, Pesky Peace-Loving:

[The Soviet Union is using] every device of propaganda in an effort to hinder the rebuilding of America’s defenses and force a hasty resumption of arms negotiations.

Eugene Rostow, director of the U. S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, in the Philadelphia Inquirer

On Communications, Better:

The communication and exchange of ideas on administrative policy matters is encouraged and maintained to optimize the use, mix and cost and administrative inputs in program results.

Treasury Board of Canada memo

On Communism, Little-Known Facts About:

Where fraternities are not allowed, Communism flourishes.

Barry Goldwater, senator from Arizona, speaking before the National In-terfraternity Conference

On Communism, Little-Known Facts About:

In every country the Communists have taken over, the first thing they do is outlaw cockfighting.

John Monks, Oklahoma state representative, arguing against a bill that would make cockfighting illegal in the state

On Communism, Little-Known Facts About Video Viewing Habits and:

I did not want to tire the population, because otherwise it would have stayed up too late.

Nicolae Ceausescu, Romanian dictator, explaining why television viewing was restricted to only two hours a night. He neglected to add that electricity was usually cut off during night hours due to his own economic mismanagement.

On Communists, Those Found in Congress:

Gerald Ford was a Communist.

Ronald Reagan in a speech. He later indicated he meant to say "Congressman."

On Compliments:

Elderly woman (on a hot day in St. Petersburg, Florida):

Good afternoon, Mr. Berra. My, you look mighty cool today.

Yogi Berra:

Thank you, ma'am. You don't look so hot yourself.

On Comprehensive Critical Studies, U.S. Lack of:

In *The Ironic German*, Thomas Mann is the subject of the first comprehensive critical study to be published in this country.

a book review in a 1959 Nashville Tennessean

On Conclusions, Why to Avoid:

We don't plan to conclude anything terribly specific in 1982 because of the program's abstract nature.

a National Institute for Education contract officer, commenting in The Washington Monthly on a program commissioned by HEW

On Congress:

[I support efforts] to limit the terms of members of Congress, especially members of the House and members of the Senate.

On Congressional Hiring Criteria, Great Moments in:

... only a white girl, prefer Floridians.

Rep. James A. Haley (D-Fla.)

... white Republican.

Rep. Vernon Thompson (R-Wis.)

... white—no pantsuits.

Rep. James J. Delaney (D-N. Y.)

... attractive, smart, young, and no Catholics and water signs.

Rep. Bob Eckhardt (D-Texas)

from the files of the Office of Placement and Office Management, 1974; as compiled in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 1974

On Congressional Wisdom:

Let me tell you that tolerance is one thing, intolerance another. To be a person intolerant of another person's right to have different views is my idea of tolerance, that is, until that person endeavors to make a public issue of his views.

Congressman Albert Johnson of Washington, chairman of the House Committee on Immigration

On the Constitution:

We need to take a look at it and maybe from time to time we should curtail some of those rights.

LeRoy Martin, Chicago police superintendent

On Consumer Protection, the Flip Side to:

Honest businessmen should be protected from the unscrupulous consumer.

Lester Maddox, then governor of Georgia, on why Georgia should not create a consumer protection agency

On Contortions:

Why should Irishmen stand with their arms folded and their hands in their pockets when England called for aid?

Sir Thomas Myles, speaking at a meeting in Dublin in 1902, about the Boer War

On Contracts:

A verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Conviction, Political:

If Governor Fields is right, I am going to stand by him because he is right. If he is wrong, I am going to stand by him because he is a Democrat.

Senator Augustus Owsley Stanley (D-Ken.) during the 1920s

On Conviction, Political:

Young people, do not be led astray by the theory of voting for the man and not for the party. Vote the straight Republican ticket regardless of the qualifications of the

candidate for office.

C. J. Travis, Supreme Court of Indiana in the 1920s

On Cooking:

The female teachers were instructed in cooking. They had, in fact, to go through the process of cooking themselves in turn.

in the annual report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland

On Corporate Etiquette:

Avoid saying “hello.” This elsewhere pleasant and familiar greeting is out of place in the world of business.

instructions of Morgan Guaranty Trust Company to New York employees

On Counting:

I want to gain 1,500 or 2,000 yards, whichever comes first.

George Rogers, New Orleans Saints running back

On Counting, Higher Mathematical Versions Of:

The interests of the employers and the employed are the same nine times out of ten—I will even say ninety-nine times out of ten.

Lord Curzon, British statesman and Viceroy of India from 1898 to 1905, Oxford University Chancellor, Foreign Secretary from 1919 to 1924

On Covert Operations, as Defined by an Ex-Army Intelligence Officer:

The word is not *covert*, it's *overt*. Covert means you're out in the open. Overt is what I did. [Which means] I was under cover.

Chic Hecht, Nevada senator, talking about his eighteen years of participation in covert operations as an army intelligence officer

On Cover-Ups:

No one in the White House staff, no one in this administration, presently employed, was involved in this very bizarre incident.... What really hurts in matters of this sort is not the fact that they occur, because overzealous people in campaigns do things that are wrong. What really hurts is if you try to cover it up.

President Richard Nixon, at the beginning of the Watergate affair

On Cover-Ups:

That is, because of, because of our, that is, we are attempting, the position is to withhold information and to cover up—this is totally true—you could say it is totally untrue.

President Richard Nixon, from 1973 White House transcripts, discussing whether or not to hide evidence concerning the Watergate break-in

On Cows:

A cow may be drained dry; and if the Chancellors of the Exchequer persist in meeting every deficiency that occurs by taxing the brewing and distilling industries, they will inevitably kill the cow that lays the golden milk.

Sir Frederick Milner, British Member of Parliament, c. 1900

On Cows, Passing:

The best way to pass a cow on the road when cycling is to keep behind it.

R. J. Mecredy, writer and publisher of cycling magazines in a column offering advice on country bicycling to novices

On Cramming, Reasons for U.S. Citizens to Begin:

We must have a nation of all-Americans. We must expel those who cannot recite the Constitution of the United States and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

ex-Iowa Governor William Harding

On Crime:

If crime went down 100%, it would still be fifty times higher than it should be.

Councilman John Bowman commenting on the high crime in Washington, D.C.

On Crime:

The streets are safe in Philadelphia, it's only the people who make them unsafe.

Frank Rizzo, ex-police chief and mayor of Philadelphia

On Crime:

The more killing and homicides you have, the more havoc it prevents.

Richard M. Daley, mayor of Chicago and son of former Mayor Daley, commenting on the rise of crime in his city

On Crime:

Outside of the killings, [Washington] has one of the lowest crime rates in the country.

Mayor Marion Barry, Washington, D.C.

On Crime Prevention, Great Ideas in:

When anyone is held up he shall immediately telephone the details to a telephone operator. She will plug in every phone in the city and relate the details of the holdup. Near every telephone a shotgun is to be kept hanging on the wall. When the story of the holdup is spread through the phones every citizen will seize his shotgun and rush to the street. All whistles will blow and at this signal all traffic, including pedestrians, will halt. Anyone besides Law officers who moves will be shot.

Rev. George W. Durham, Quindaro Methodist Church of Kansas City, on how to stop crime in Kansas City, as quoted in the Kansas City Journal, 1925

On Criticism:

That lowdown scoundrel deserves to be kicked to death by a jackass—and I'm just the one to do it.

a congressional candidate in Texas, reported by Massachusetts State Senator John F. Parker

On Criticism:

It rolls off my back like a duck.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Cutting the Budget:

When there is duplicity in personnel, it must be eliminated. Teachers who are of retirement age should be urged to do so.

Hoboken, New Jersey, city councilman in a political ad-letter

SPECIAL SECTION:

Sir Boyle Roche and “Irish Bulls”

Sir Boyle Roche was born with his foot in his mouth—and he kept it there.

He was an Irish soldier, later an Irish member of the British Parliament, who was made a knight in 1776 and then a baronet. But Sir Boyle was much more than just another politician.

He was the spiritual grandfather of such masters as Yogi Berra and Sam Goldwyn, the true father of the verbal blunder and malapropism, called in his day and up through the early 1900s the “Irish bull.”

The term “bull” itself came from the blunderings of a certain Obadiah Bull, an Irish lawyer in London. Unfortunately most of his errors are lost to history, but Sir Boyle is still vigorously alive, thanks to such collectors as G. R. Neilson in 1898 and James C. Percy in 1915.

Sir Boyle Roche was a forceful personality with a vigorous, sometimes florid way of mixing metaphors and everything else. For example, in the middle of an impassioned speech to the House of Commons on the French Revolution, he said:

“If those Gallican villains should invade us, sir ... perhaps the murderous martial law men would break in, cut us into joints, and throw our bleeding heads on the table to stare us in the face.”

Needless to say, like Elvis, he became “a living legend in his own time,” and probably a good number of his blunders were not made by him, but merely attributed to him.

As Sir Boyle himself said:

“Half the lies our opponents tell about us are not true.”

A few of Sir Boyle’s best:

- [They are] living from hand to mouth like the birds of the air.
(describing the poverty of Irish farmers)
- Little children who could neither walk nor talk were running about in the streets cursing their Maker.
(in a speech about the poor conditions of the times)
- All along the untrodden paths of the future, I can see the footprints of an unseen

hand.

- While I write this letter, I have a pistol in one hand and a sword in the other.
- The farmers of Ireland ought to dispense with the use of wooden gates, and put up cast-iron ones instead, as the latter would last forever and in the end could be utilized for making horseshoes.
- If you ever come within a mile of our house, will you stop there all night?
(in a letter to a friend)
- Many thousands of them were destitute of even the goods they possessed.
- I answer in the affirmative with an emphatic “No.”
- Sir, I would anchor a frigate off each bank of the river, with strict orders not to stir; and so, by cruising up and down, put a stop to smuggling.
(his suggestion for halting smuggling on the Shannon River)
- Anybody who wishes to diminish the brotherly affection of the two sister countries is an enemy to both nations.
(speaking about the union between Britain and Ireland)
- Single misfortunes never come alone, and the greatest of all national calamities is generally followed by one greater.
- The cup of our trouble is running over, but, alas, is not yet full.

D

On De-Sexed Language:

Senate Agriculture Chairman Jesse Helms:

Attaboy, Senator! Atta, uh, girl ... person ... what are you anyway?

Representative Paula Hawkins (R-Fla.):

I'm not a person, I'm a lady!

On De-Sexed Words:

[Personhole] is not an acceptable de-sexed word.

Shirley Dean, councilperson from the Berkeley, California, City Council, explaining why the Council changed the wording in a sewer equipment request back to manhole cover

On Death:

Before the Home Rule Bill is enforced, Asquith will have to walk over many dead bodies—his own included.

from a 1914 letter written by an Ulster Unionist about Herbert Henry Asquith, British Prime Minister, who introduced a bill to grant Ireland self-rule

On Death:

It is what we must all come to if we only live long enough.

reported by David Garrick, eighteenth-century English actor, manager, and dramatist

On Death:

My friends, I desire that you will make a post-mortem examination of me, and find out what ails me; for really I am dying to know what my disease is myself.

James Smithson, benefactor of the Smithsonian Institution, on his deathbed

On Death, Government Ability to Communicate After:

Your medical assistance is cancelled beginning 9/24/84 because of your death.

letter from the Iowa Department of Human Services

On Death, Government Ability to Communicate After:

Beginning in February 1976 your assistance benefits will be discontinued.... Reason: it has been reported to our office that you expired on January 1, 1976.

Illinois Department of Public Aid

On Death, Life After:

Beware! To touch these wires is instant death. Anyone found doing so will be prosecuted.

on a sign at a railroad station

On Death, the Pope, and Baseball:

Well, that kind of puts a damper on even a Yankee win.

Yankee broadcaster Phil Rizzuto, during a game in which news reached him that Pope Paul had died

On Death, the Pope, and Baseball:

We just lost a Pope, which is very sad, and now we lost to the Yankees, which is also very sad.

Humberto Cardinal Medeiros, discussing the loss of the Boston Red Sox to the Yankees during playoffs

On Death, Staying in the State of:

At the next election, we have got to give the third, and I hope the last, death blow to Home Rule.

Edward Henry Stanley, 15th Earl of Derby, then leader of the Liberal Unionists in the House of Lords during the debate on Irish Home Rule

On Death, the Walking Variety:

When an Englishman wants to get married, to whom does he go? To the clergy. When he wants to get his child baptised, to whom does he go? To the clergy. When he wants to get buried, to whom does he go?

William E. Gladstone, leader of the Liberal Party of England and Prime Minister, in a speech extolling the clergy

On the Death Penalty, Thought-Provoking Questions About:

Where would Christianity be if Jesus got eight to fifteen years, with time off for good behavior?

New York State Senator James H. Donovan on capital punishment

On Decision Making, Faster than Light:

If you leave this question to us for three years, we will settle it tomorrow morning.

Irish Member of Parliament during a nineteenth-century debate

On Definitions, Dubious Official:

Democracy: A government of the masses.... Results in mobocracy. Attitude toward property is communistic—negating property rights.... Result is demagogism, license, agitation, discontent, anarchy.

from the U. S. Army Training Manual No. 2000-25, 1928

On Definitions, New Governmental:

We found the term “killing” too broad.

State Department spokesperson on why the word “killing” was replaced with “unlawful or arbitrary deprivation of life” in its human rights reports for 1984-85

On Definitions, Obvious:

We may, of course, define emotions as the autopoietic immune system of the autopoietic psychic system; but again: is this emotionally adequate?

Niklas Luhman, in his article “The Individuality of the Individual,” in Reconstructing Individualism

On Dioxin, the Good Side and the Bad Side of:

[Exposure to dioxin is] usually not disabling but may be fatal.

Dow Chemical Company report, as quoted in The Progressive

On Diplomacy:

Anything concerning the Ambassador's swimming pool must be referred to as water storage tank not as *swimming pool*.

internal State Department memo, U. S. Embassy, Vientiane, Laos

On Diplomacy, Great Moments in:

You know, your nose looks just like Danny Thomas's.

President Ronald Reagan to the Lebanese Foreign Minister, during a briefing on the realities of the Middle East conflict

On Diplomacy, Great Moments in:

Some of them have marvelous minds, those black people over there.

Director of the United States Information Agency Charles Z. Wick, after a 1983 trip to Africa

On Diplomacy, Great Moments in:

Why thresh old straw or beat an old bag of bones?

Senator Everett Dirksen of Illinois, annoyed with attacks against Clare Boothe Luce and her nomination to be ambassador to Brazil, during a Senate debate. He quickly added that "old bag of bones" was not a reference to Luce.

On Diplomacy, Great Moments in:

Look, I'm going to tell you something, hon. You've crossed and uncrossed your legs twice and one time you showed me something I shouldn't see. Now am I going to complain that you're loosey-goosey or you got no class?

U.S. ambassador-nominee to Italy Pete Secchia to a female reporter from the Detroit News. He was later confirmed as ambassador to Italy.

On Diplomacy, Great Moments in:

This is a great day for France!

President Richard Nixon while attending Charles De Gaulle's funeral

On Diplomacy, Great Moments in:

I didn't know that guy was a nigger.

Senator James Eastland to his aide after welcoming Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, reported in New Times

On Diplomacy, Great Moments in:

German President Heinrich Lubke, on the tarmac in his role as official greeter in 1962, trying to say "How are you?":

Who are you?

President of India:

I am the President of India.

On Diplomacy, Great Moments in:

The only thing I regret is that your stay is not shorter.

Lord Aberdeen, trying to make a good impression while being visited by the colonial Premier to Ireland in the autumn of 1911

On Diplomacy, Great Moments in:

If I never get to Mexico again, it wouldn't bother me. I don't like the food or the climate.

Dan R. Eddy, Jr., member of the Texas Good Neighbor Commission, a state agency charged with promoting Texas-Mexico good relations

On Diplomatic Treaties, Similarities with Rice Dishes:

The treaty has to be concocted to satisfy all tastes. One prepares the seafood, the meat, the chicken, and the rice, but they are just an assortment of separate dishes until they are blended into perfect unity, and the result is paella—or a treaty for all.

Bernardo Zuleta, secretary general of the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference

On Directions, Giving Clear:

Yogi Berra (on the phone to a lost Joe Garagiola):

Where are you?

Joe Garagiola:

Some guy says to tell you I'm at the library.

Yogi Berra:

Oh, you ain't too far, just a couple of blocks. Only don't go that way, come this way.

On Directions, Giving Clear:

Separate together in a bunch. [And don't] stand around so much in little bundles.

director Michael Curtiz to movie extras

On Directions, Giving Clear:

Everybody move helter ... and skelter.

director Michael Curtiz to extras

On Directors:

They always bite the hand that lays the golden egg.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Disasters, Natural and Political:

This is the worst disaster in California since I was elected.

California Governor Pat Brown, discussing a local flood

On Distinguishing Characteristics:

... the deceased had an impediment in his speech.

mayor in Estremadura province, Portugal, giving tips while announcing a search for a drowned man

On Diversity:

We have every mixture you can have. I have a black, I have a woman, two Jews and a cripple.

James Watt, Secretary of the Interior, referring to an advisory group in his agency

On Divine Callings, Modern:

It's not listed in the Bible, but my spiritual gift, my specific calling from God, is to be a television talk-show host.

James Bakker, televangelist, PTL Network and Heritage USA founder. He said this before he was indicted.

On Dogs, Sparking:

Sir, it requires only a spark to let slip the dogs of war.

Lord Hartington, Duke of Devonshire, leader of the Liberal Unionists, during a debate on the critical state of relations between Russia and Turkey in 1877

On the Draft:

I did what any normal person would do at that age. You call home. You call home to mother and father and say, "I'd like to get into the National Guard."

Dan Quayle, then Republican vice-presidential candidate, defending his National Guard service during the Vietnam War

On Dualism, Human:

None but himself can be his parallel.

Louis Theobald, eighteenth-century English critic, famous collator of Shakespeare, and author of The Double Falsehood

On Dublin, Ireland—The First Jewish Mayor of:

It could only happen in America.

Yogi Berra

On Drugs, How to Fight Abuse of:

Now, like, I'm President. It would be pretty hard for some drug guy to come into the White House and start offering it up, you know? ... I bet if they did, I hope I would say, "Hey, get lost. We don't want any of that."

President George Bush talking about drug abuse to a group of students

On Drugs, How to Fight Abuse of:

... casual drug users ought to be taken out and shot.

Daryl Gates, Los Angeles police chief, telling the Senate Judiciary Committee what should be done with casual users of marijuana and cocaine

E

On Earth, Problems With:

The government is not doing enough about cleaning up the environment. This is a great planet.

contestant for Mr. New Jersey Male, when asked what he would do with a million dollars

On Economists, the Infallibility of:

In all likelihood, world inflation is over.

the managing director of the International Monetary Fund in 1959

On Economists, the Infallibility of:

There may be a recession in stock prices, but not anything in the nature of a crash.

Irving Fisher, economist, six weeks before the 1929 crash

On Economists, the Infallibility of:

Stock prices have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau.

Irving Fisher, economist, in a speech made nine days before the 1929 crash

On Economists, the Infallibility of:

The depression has ended.... In July, up we go.

Dr. Julius Klein, Assistant Secretary of Commerce, in a speech given on June 9, 1931. The following year, 1932, is generally considered the worst in the Depression.

On Education in New York:

There were allegations a number of students at schools in Brooklyn may have been involved in having some knowledge, particularly about social studies and possibly English.

Samuel Polatnick, executive director of the Board of Education's Division of High Schools (1975)

On Elections, Necessity of Voters for:

Minnesota voters played a major role in the victory of that state's gubernatorial primary elections yesterday.

National Rifle Association press release

On Electric Chairs, Traveling:

Folks read about the electric chair, they hear about it—but those folks with criminal minds don't care about the law. But if they see that chair moving down the highway, it may save a life.

Georgia State Senator Ronnie Walker on the need for a traveling electric chair that would traverse the state for county executions

On Eloquence:

[President Carter] speaks loudly and carries a fly spotter, a fly swasher—it's been a long day.

President Gerald Ford, in a speech during the 1976 presidential campaign

On Emphasis:

[I will] put down my foot with a strong hand.

overheard at a shareholders' meeting

On Emptiness, the Fullness of:

In a few weeks it had been found out that this promise was full of emptiness.

W. Brodrick, Lord Midleton, British statesman who served in various posts including Secretary of State for War for India in the early 1890s

On English:

If English was good enough for Jesus Christ, it's good enough for me.

a congressman to Dr. David Edwards, head of the Joint National Committee on Language, about the necessity for a commercial nation to be multilingual

On English:

Every nation must have its own traditional language as a primary language, which if it was not English is not likely to be.

George C. McGhee, "English—Best Hope for a World Language," Saturday Review/World

On English Conversation for Japanese Police, Helpful Sample Dialogues of:

Policeman: What countryman are you?

Sailor: I am sailor belong to the *Golden Eagle*, the British ship.

Policeman: Why do you strike this jinriksha man?

Sailor: He told me impolitely.

Policeman: What does he told you impolitely?

Sailor: He insulted me, saying loudly "the Sailor, the sailor" when I am passing here.

Policeman: Do you striking this man for that?

Sailor: Yes.

Policeman: But do not strike him for it is forbidden.

Sailor: I strike him no more.

from The Practical Use of (English) Conversation for Police Authorities, quoted in Jack Seward, The Japanese, 1972

On Entertainment:

It's dull from beginning to end. But it's loaded with entertainment.

Michael Curtiz, Hollywood director, on a musical

On Enthusiasm:

To aid and guide you on your pathway to learning, the following assignments will

help you to activate vehemently your newly acquired aim, “Enthusiasm.”

1. A vocabulary test will be given the day you return to school.
2. Oral book reports will be given the first week of school.

memo to 9th-grade students before Christmas vacation, quoted in Neil Postman, Crazy Talk, Stupid Talk, 1976

On the Environment:

It’s time to stand the history of wetlands destruction on its head.

George Bush, discussing wetlands protection with the group Ducks Unlimited

On Epitaphs, Great:

Here lies Captain Ernest Bloomfield. Accidentally shot by his orderly, March 2nd 1879.
Well done, good and faithful servant.

grave inscription of British soldier, in Northwest Frontier of modern-day Pakistan

On Equal Pay Act of 1963, Unusual Provisions of:

The College’s Affirmative Action Policy and the policy of non-discrimination which assure equal employment opportunity and access to programs are based on the following state and federal laws, and executive orders:

... 14) Equal Pay Act of 1963 (requires equal sex for equal work)

Evergreen State College handbook, reported in The Chronicle of Higher Education

On Equal Rights:

Equal rights were created for everyone.

contestant in the 1990 Mr. New Jersey Male pageant

On Equal Rights:

Human beings are not animals, and I do not want to see sex and sexual differences treated as casually and amorally as dogs and other beasts treat them. I believe this could happen under the ERA.

Ronald Reagan, speaking against the Equal Rights Amendment

On Errors, Typographical:

The hell it was. It was a clean base hit.

Johnny Logan, ex-Milwaukee Braves shortstop, after someone said that the newspaper’s reporting of O hits for the game was a typographical error

On Ethics, Congressional:

I’ve got 423 dairy farmers in my district, and I’ve got to rise above principle.

Tennessee State Representative John Bragg, on why he was for [fair trade pricing] price controls on milk but against it for liquors

On Etiquette, Military Juntas and:

It was a mistake. It shows a lack of politeness to kill people when the Pope asks us not

to do it.

Guatemalan government official on the execution of political prisoners just before the Pope's visit

On Etiquette, Pressing Moments in:

The chairs in the cabin are for the ladies. Gentlemen are not to make use of them till the ladies are seated.

instructions posted in a river cruise ship, Suir River, Ireland

On Eulogies, Bad:

A great Irishman has passed away. God grant that as many great, and who wisely love their country, may follow him.

Times of London, as reported in Handybook of Literary Curiosities, 1925

On Exaggerations:

All I said was that the trades were stupid and dumb, and they took that and blew it all out of proportion.

Ron Davis, Minnesota Twins pitcher, commenting on press reports quoting him as criticizing team managers for trading top players

Excess Verbiage, Necessity to Eliminate:

I savagely correct reports and drafts with a blue pencil. I cut them to ribbons, blot out the repetitions, mixed metaphors, circumlocutions, misspelled words, and dreary Madison Avenue or technical clichés, and the same writers, perhaps a bit angry or chagrined, triumphantly send back the same tripe the next day. Either they are figuratively thumbing their noses at an idiosyncrasy of the boss, or they are unteachable.

Robert Moses, former New York Secretary of State, New York City parks commissioner, CEO, New York City Tunnel Authority, and other municipal offices, on the need for clear and concise memos from his staff

On Exclusivity:

Members and Non-Members Only.

sign outside Mexico's Mandinga Disco in the Hotel Emporio, as reported in Far Eastern Economic Review

On Existentialism:

I can't think of any new existing law that's in force that wasn't before.

President George Bush, discussing import laws

On Explanations:

... the story is the unveiling of the possibility of the impossibility of the unveiling.

Professor H. Hillis Miller, of the University of California at Irvine, about Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "The Minister's Black Veil," in his presentation, "From the Theory of Reading to the Example Read"

On Explorers, Remarkable Feats by:

Questioner:

Was Captain Cook killed on his first voyage?

Richard Porson:

I believe he was, but he did not mind it much, but immediately entered on a second.

Richard Porson, Cambridge professor and English classical scholar in the late eighteenth century

On Exports, Routine:

[The exports include] thumbscrews and cattle prods, just routine items for the police.

Commerce Department spokesman on a regulation allowing the export of various products abroad

On Exposing Oneself While Campaigning:

Nixon has been sitting in the White House while George McGovern has been exposing himself to the people of the United States.

Frank Licht, then governor of Rhode Island, overvigorously campaigning for McGovern in the 1972 election

On Exposing Oneself While Off Duty:

What he does on his own time is up to him.

Harlon Copeland, sheriff of Bexar County, Texas, when one of his deputies was caught exposing himself to a child

F

On Facts:

Facts are stupid things.

Ronald Reagan, misquoting John Adams in a speech to the Republican convention

On Facts:

Some of the facts are true, some are distorted, and some are untrue.

a State Department spokesman, commenting on an article in Foreign Policy

On Facts:

Don't confuse me with the facts. I've got a closed mind.

Earl Landgrebe, Republican Congressman from Indiana and Nixon supporter, when told about incriminating conversations on the Watergate tapes

On Facts, Indisputable:

The power of the head of state is not unlimited. Why is it said the power of the President is not unlimited? Probably the idea comes from the English translation: "Is not unlimited."

Speaker of the Indonesian Parliament Kharis Suhud, in a 1988 TV interview, quoted in the Far Eastern Economic Review

On the Facts of Life, Some Misconceptions About:

Everyone who is for abortion was at one time a feces.

Peter Grace in an introduction to a Ronald Reagan speech; quoted on National Public Radio by Jim Angle

On Failure:

Even Napoleon had his Watergate.

Danny Ozark, Philadelphia Phillies manager, commenting about a Phillies' ten-game losing streak

On Failure, Reasons for:

We made too many wrong mistakes.

Yogi Berra, explaining why the Yankees lost the 1960 World Series

On Fame:

When I write about anything the public makes a point to know nothing about it.

Oliver Goldsmith, eighteenth-century Anglo-Irish poet, novelist, and dramatist

On Families, Importance of Large:

What really causes marital abuse is small families. If all women had a lot of brothers, this would never take place.

Charles Poncy, Iowa State Representative (D-Ottumwa)

On Families, What Are:

The first would be our family. Your family, my family—which is composed of an immediate family of a wife and three children, a larger family with grandparents and aunts and uncles. We all have our family, whichever that may be.

Dan Quayle, then vice-presidential candidate, during the 1988 campaign in a speech to Virginia schoolchildren

On Famous Addresses:

I've just returned from 10 Downing Street, so I know what I'm talking about.

movie mogul Sam Goldwyn in a political argument—he meant the Prime Minister's residence, number 10 Downing Street

On Fascism, Baseball Definition of:

Don't you know I'm a fascist? You know, a guy who says one thing and means another?

Danny Ozark, Phillies manager, quoted in Jay Johnstone, Temporary Insanity

On Fashion:

The cows started to look tired, something from last season. Buffalo are much more *sympathique*.

fashion designer Yves Saint Laurent, on why he bought a herd of buffalo for his estate in Normandy

On Father/Son similarities:

The similarities between me and my father are different.

Dale Berra, Yogi Berra's son

On Feet, Location of:

The clay feet of Germany will be revealed when we take off the gloves.

letter in the Sunday Chronicle, just before World War I

On Filling in the Boxes, Why You Shouldn't Worry if You Don't:

Information is voluntary. Failure to provide information could subject individual to be called on extended active duty when member might be eligible for assignment to Standby Reserve....

Privacy Act Statement, U. S. Air Force Reserve, mid-1970s

On Film Dialogue, Great Moments In:

Once they were men. Now they are land crabs.

dialogue from Attack of the Crab Monsters

On Film Roles, Bad Choices Concerning:

Who ever heard of *Casablanca*? ... I don't want to star opposite an unknown Swedish broad.

George Raft, on the role of Rick in Casablanca (although some say he actually wanted the role and was merely expressing sour grapes)

On Films, Must-See:

Chairman Mao Reviews the Mighty Contingent of the Cultural Revolution for the Fifth and Sixth Times

1967 film, People's Republic of China

On Fire Extinguishers:

I move, Mr. Chairman, that all fire extinguishers be examined ten days before every fire.

city councilman during debate

On Firm Stands:

[I am] pro-choice with limitations, pro-life with exceptions.

Senator John Warner of Virginia, in a statement kicking off his bid for reelection

On Fish, Strange Habitats of:

The right honorable gentleman has gone to the top of the tree and caught a very big fish.

Sir W. Hart Dyke, Member of Parliament

On Fitness, Role Models and:

If you're looking for a role model, you can't have someone who is not physically fit. Margaret Mead was a good role model, but she may not have looked good in a swimsuit.

Leonard Horne, Miss America Pageant director, on why a swimsuit competition is necessary

On Flags:

The new Irish Flag would be Orange and Green, and would in future be known as the Irish tricolor.

Smith O'Brien, Irish revolutionary

On Flexibility:

I've lived under situations where every decent man declared war first and I've lived under situations where you don't declare war. We've been flexible enough to kill people without declaring war.

Lewis B. Hershey, Lieutenant General and director of the Selective Service System, on the Vietnam War

On Flight Attendants, International:

The stewardesses of Southwest Airlines must go through four steps, such as hardship, tiredment, dirt feeling. Beside the quality of general stewardess.

from the first edition of Chinese airline Southwest Civil Aviation's Inflight Magazing (sic)

On Fly Balls:

Eric Show will be oh for ten if that pop fly comes down.

Jerry Coleman, San Diego Padres announcer

On Folks, Just Plain:

The witch wants quiet, regular, ordinary good government with everyone happy, plenty of fun and games, all fear of death being taken away.

Gerald Brouseay Gardner, famed British witch, explaining that most witches are actually conservatives

On Food Subsidies for Congressmen, Reasons for:

On the basis that it is essential and economical, economical for the country and for the Congress to have food available around here.

Representative Jamie L. Whitten (D-Miss.) on why food subsidies were being cut for the poor—but kept for the House and Senate restaurants

On Football:

It's not good for business if you care for a second whether blood is bubbling from a guy's mouth.

Minnesota Viking Joey Browner

On Football:

Football is one of the highest forms of spiritual exercise.

the Rt. Rev. William T. Manning as reported in the Manhattan press circa 1926

On Football, Flooded Fields In:

If there's a pileup, they'll have to give some of the players artificial insemination.

Curt Gowdy, television announcer, during an AFL all-star game marked by heavy rains that flooded the field

On Football, Losses and Mixed Metaphors In:

If you can't make the putts and can't get the man in from second on the bottom of the ninth, you're not going to win enough football games in this league, and that's the problem we had today.

Sam Rutigliano, Cleveland Browns coach, on why his team lost

On Footwear:

I have no weakness for shoes. I wear very simple shoes which are pump shoes. It is not one of my weaknesses.

Imelda Marcos, former First Lady of the Philippines, and owner of 3,400 pairs of shoes

On Forgetting Things:

I must have had ambrosia.

Milwaukee Brewers Jim Gantner, on why he forgot to appear on a talk show

On Forms, Proper use of:

This form must not be used only in cases previously reported on proper blank.

Cleveland, Ohio, official police form heading

On a 4-4 Win/Loss Record:

It just as easily could have gone the other way.

Chicago Cubs manager Don Zimmer on his team's 4-4 record on a road trip

On Fractions:

The poor man was absolutely robbed by that accursed system by fully one-tenth of his hard earnings. Nay! he was sometimes deprived of as much as one-twentieth.

Major O'Gorman, Member of Parliament, discussing the Tithe Bill

On Fraternal Organizations, Little-Known Pacts About:

Tolstoy was an unconscious Kiwanian.

Edward Scheve in a speech to the Huntington Park, California, Kiwanis Club, as quoted in the Watts Review

On Free Speech:

When I want your opinion, I'll give it to you.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn, to a young writer

On Freedom:

Man has been given his freedom to a greater extent than ever and that's quite wrong.

Martha Mitchell, wife of former Attorney General John Mitchell

On Freedom of Speech, Great Moments In:

Freedom of speech of the individual citizen must be based on the four basic principles of insisting on the socialist road, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the party, and Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong thought. The citizen has only the freedom to support these principles and not the freedom to oppose them....

People's Republic of China prosecutor, during the Wei Jingsheng case in 1979, in which defendant Wei, a human rights champion, cited the Chinese constitution guaranteeing free speech in his defense. He lost.

On Freudian Slips:

We need laws that protect everyone. Men and women, straights and gays, regardless of sexual perversion ... ah, persuasion.

Bella Abzug, New York politician, addressing a rally for the Equal Rights Amendment

On Freudian Slips:

I am speaking of a great man who should have been President and would have been one of the greatest Presidents in history—Hubert Horatio Horn-blower.

Jimmy Carter in a speech at the 1980 Democratic Convention

On Freudian Slips:

For seven and a half years I've worked alongside President Reagan. We've had triumphs. Made some mistakes. We've had some sex ... uh ... setbacks.

George Bush

On Freudian Slips:

[I ask you to] work together with me for a better life for oil ... I mean all.

Senator Henry Jackson, campaigning in 1976

On Freudian Slips:

The United States has much to offer the third world war.

Ronald Reagan in a speech, on what the United States had to offer the Third World. He repeated this error nine times in the same speech.

On Friendship:

His friends are legend. And I trusted him explicitly.

boxing announcer Harry Balogh, on a famous boxing commissioner

On Fulfillment:

My men grumble that they are frustrated—that there are no good targets left any more. But I always remind them of the plight of the pilots back in the States. “Let’s face it,” I tell them, “Vietnam is the only place in the world today where you can drop real bombs.”

a U. S. Air Force wing commander during the Vietnam War

On Fun, How to Have It:

We have to pursue this subject of fun very seriously if we want to stay competitive in the twenty-first century.

Singapore Minister of State for Finance and World Affairs George Yeo

On Fun, Innocent:

A jolly bunch of our young people went on a kayaking expedition Sunday that resulted in many exposures and a very enjoyable time.

an item in the Bald Knob (Arizona) Eagle

On the Future:

If we maintain our faith in God, our love of freedom, and superior global air power, I think we can look to the future with confidence.

General Curtis LeMay, in a speech given at Notre Dame’s Washington’s Birthday exercises, February 1956

On the Future:

Our pitching could be better than I think it will be.

Sparky Anderson, then Detroit Tigers manager, on the outlook for the coming year

On the Future:

I believe we are on an irreversible trend toward more freedom and democracy. But that could change.

Vice-President Dan Quayle

On the Future:

We see nothing but increasingly brighter clouds every month.

President Gerald Ford, on the economy, to a group of Michigan businessmen

On the Future:

We are not ready for any unforeseen event that may or may not occur.

Vice-President Dan Quayle in an interview with the Cleveland Plain Dealer

On the Future, How to Plan for:

We should not look at the immediate situation in terms of planning a new move in any time frame that is now immediately foreseeable.

Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, speaking to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

On the Future, Where It Is:

The Baltimore Colts are a bright young team. It seems as if they have their future ahead of them.

Curt Gowdy, sports announcer

On the Future, Where It Is:

It's a question of whether we're going to go forward into the future, or past to the back.

Vice-President Dan Quayle

SPECIAL SECTION:

Yogi Berra

Lorenzo Pietro Berra, or Lawrence Peter Berra, better known as Yogi Berra, is an American institution.

A great New York Yankee catcher and manager of both the New York Yankees and Mets, elected three times as the American League's most valuable player, Berra was noted on field for his hitting and catching, and off field for his pithy way of saying the wrong thing in a way that made the Yogi-ism wiser and more meaningful than the right way of saying it. For example, there's a lot of wisdom in Yogi's:

You got to be careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there.

Of course, other Yogi-isms are just plain fun. When someone asked Manager Yogi if Don Mattingly's performance as a first baseman had exceeded his expectations, Yogi answered: "I'd say he's done more than that."

Many Yogi-isms may have been attributed to Yogi rather than actually said by him. And some things he said evolved a bit in the retelling. For example, a careful *Sports Illustrated* survey found that Yogi's famous "It ain't over till it's over" probably began as "We're not out till we're out," referring to a 1974 pennant race. That became "You're not out of it till you're out of it" and so on until it became the quintessential Yogi-ism in

its final, pithy form.

But no matter. The fun of Yogi-isms is the fun of them, whether he actually said them or not. And he himself admitted he often didn't remember if he said a specific Yogi-ism or not. So, when reading Yogi, remember what Yogi said:

I could've probably said that.

Some of Yogi's Best:

- I want to thank all those who made this night necessary.
(addressing the crowd at a 1947 event in his honor)
- You give a hundred percent in the first half of the game, and if it isn't enough, in the second half you give what's left.
- Mantle's a switch hitter because he's amphibious.
- How can you say this and that when this and that hasn't happened yet?
- If you can't imitate him, don't copy him.
- A nickel ain't worth a dime any more.
- I don't know, I'm not in shape yet.
(when asked his cap size)
- He is a big clog in their machine.
(reportedly talking about Ted Williams)
- Slump, I ain't in no slump. I just ain't hitting.
- I got a touch of pantomime poisoning.
(explaining to his manager, Casey Stengel, why he couldn't play a game)
- If I didn't wake up, I'd still be sleeping.
- How can you think and hit at the same time?
- I wish I had an answer to that because I'm getting tired of answering that question.
(in response to a question about the '84 Yankees' dismal record)

G

On Gab, the Gift of:

Well, I think that's a—it's had some difficult times but I think we have—we, I think, have been able to make some very good progress and it's—I would say that it's—it's—it's delightful that we're able to—to share the time and the relationship that we—that we do share.

Senator Edward Kennedy, during a November 4, 1979, on-air interview with Roger Mudd, trying to answer the question "What is the present state of your marriage?"

On Gab, the Gift of:

Well, I'm going to kick that one right into the end zone of the Secretary of Education. But, yes, we have all—he travels a good deal, goes abroad. We have a lot of people in the department that does that. We're having an international—this is not as much education as dealing with the environment—a big international conference coming up. And we get it all the time—exchanges of ideas.

President George Bush, in February 1990, answering a high school student's questions about whether the Bush administration was getting ideas on education from other countries

On Gab, the Gift of:

But let me—I better switch over here for some more—and may I—a question—and I don't mean to offend with regard to follow-up—and I understand why you had them, but we've been reduced to the number of questions we get to ask when everybody has a follow-up. So ask them both at once.

President Ronald Reagan during a 1984 press conference

On Gay Rights, L.A.P.D. and:

It's easier to thump a faggot than an average Joe. Who cares?

a Los Angeles police officer, quoted in the Christopher Commission Report

On Geography:

You mean there are two Koreas?

a U.S. Ambassador-designate to the Far East, after being asked his opinion during congressional hearings on the North Korea-South Korea conflict, as reported by government officials

On Geography:

Ballarat is the fairest city south of the hemisphere.

Edward Murphy, Legislative Assemblyman from Victoria, Australia

On Geography:

The town of Albany contains 500 dwelling houses and 2400 inhabitants, all standing with their gable ends to the street.

Morse's Geography, the premier geography textbook in the United States during the 1800s

On Geography:

This is the greatest country in America.

Ex-Houston Oiler and Florida State coach Bill Peterson

On Geography:

I favor this irrigation bill in order that we may turn the barren hills of my state into fruitful valleys.

a senator, as reported by Massachusetts State Senator John F. Parker, in support of a pork-barrel bill

On Geography, Politicians' Knowledge of:

This is morally repugnant to millions of people, not only in the United States, but also in the 24th Congressional District.

Representative Alfred Santangelo of New York, in a debate on setting up a national lottery

On Georgia, Proud Boasts About:

Georgia produces enough fine apples each year for every man, woman and child in the state to have two bushels.

Georgia's sanitarium for the insane has for the past year every bed occupied and many waiting to be taken in.

from the Atlanta Constitution, 1924

On Getting Ahead:

It's not politics, it's just who you know.

Paul Guanzon, sportscaster, on how to become one

On Getting Ahead:

It's about 90% strength and 40% technique.

Johnny Walker, world middleweight wrist-wrestling champion, on what it takes to be a champ

On Getting Along with Others:

Contrary to popular belief, I have always had a wonderful repertoire with my players.

Danny Ozark, Philadelphia Phillies manager

On Gloves, Why One Should Wear:

I'm wearing these gloves for my hands.

Yogi Berra, when asked why he was wearing gloves

On God:

I can't understand how all this can happen. It's enough to make one lose one's faith in God!

Eva Braun, writing to a friend from Hitler's bunker during the siege and bombing of Berlin in April 1945

On God, Mortality of:

I believe that, next to God, Andrew Jackson was the greatest man who ever lived.

On Golf Clubs, Extra Uses for:

[A gun is] a recreational tool, like a golf club or a tennis racket. You can kill someone with a golf club, you know.

Martel Lovelace, NBA official

On Good Advice:

Light pranks add zest to your services, but don't pull the customer's ears.

from the Japanese Tourist Industry Board, Rules for Hotel Chambermaids, 1936

On Good Advice, the Flip Side:

You are invited to take advantage of the chambermaid.

from a guest directory at a Japanese hotel, 1991

On Good News, Bad News:

The good news is the war is over. The bad news is we lost.

White House photographer David Hume Kennerly, running into the Oval Office on the day Saigon fell to the Communists

On Good Taste:

We'll have a recording broadcast a fire fight, mortars exploding, bullets flying, Vietnamese screaming.... There's nothing offensive about it.

a spokesperson for "Vietnam Village," a 1976 Florida tourist theme park that reproduced a Vietnamese village during the war, complete with 56 Vietnamese refugees playing the parts of the villagers, describing what will happen after a tour group enters the park

On Government, Presidential Knowledge of the (Supposed) Branches of:

You know we have three great branches of this government of ours.... We have a strong President, supposedly in the White House. We have a strong Congress, supposedly in the legislative branch. We have a strong Supreme Court, supposedly heading the judiciary system.

President Gerald Ford in a 1974 speech

On Government, Truly Responsive:

No unmet needs exist and ... current unmet needs that are being met will continue to be met.

Transportation Commission on Unmet Transit Needs, Mariposa County, California

On Grammar:

Tenses, Gender, and Number: For the purpose of the rules and regulations contained in this chapter, the present tense includes the past and future tenses, and the future, the present; the masculine gender includes the feminine, and the feminine, the masculine, and the singular includes the plural, and the plural the singular.

in the revised (1973) state code for the Department of Consumer Affairs, California

On Graves, Empty and Full:

... the empty grave where all our ruined industries lie.

J. Ramsay MacDonald, then leader of Labor Party in House of Commons, later British Prime Minister, during a parliamentary debate

On Great Expectations:

As the Reagan presidency ends, it is time for the Bush pregnancy to begin.

Tommy Thompson, Wisconsin governor, anticipating Bush's inauguration

On Greeks, Stereotypes of:

Retraction: The "Greek Special" is a huge 18 inch pizza and not a huge 18 inch penis, as ... described in [an ad]. Blondie's Pizza would like to apologize for any confusion Friday's ad may have caused.

a correction printed in the Daily Californian, cited in Ronald D. Pasquariello's 1990 Almanac of Quotable Quotes

On Green Berets:

In a way, we're a kind of Peace Corps.

training director of the Fort Bragg Green Beret Center in 1969

On Guilty, Innocent Until Proven:

[Hackers should be given] a rapid trial ... with due process of law at the airport, then hanged.

Edward Davis, police chief of Los Angeles in 1973

On Gymnastics, Military:

The pale face of the British soldier is the backbone of our Indian Army.

Scottish M.P. in debate

On Gymnastics, Military:

They would never agree to peace so long as Prussian militarism held its head above water to trample underfoot our liberties.

Sir Edward Carson, Anglo-Irish politician (and lawyer who cross-examined Oscar Wilde), talking about World War I

On Gymnastics, Personal:

She disentangled her foot in the netting and wound it up.

George Eliot, English novelist (Silas Marner, etc.), writing in a novel

On Gymnastics, Political:

Gentlemen, a member of this House had taken advantage of my absence to tweak my nose behind my back. I hope that the next time he abuses me behind my back like a coward he will do it to my face like a man, and not go skulking into the thicket to assail a gentleman who isn't present to defend himself.

a Member of Parliament from Ballarat East, Australia

On Gymnastics, Political:

Against every bone in my body, I'm sitting here twisting both arms.

Representative Claude De Bruhl, North Carolina state legislator, when voting for a bill he opposed

On Gymnastics, Political:

They pushed their nomination down my throat behind my back.

J. Ramsay MacDonald, then British Member of Parliament, later the first Labour Prime Minister in the 1920s and 30s, modestly denying any role in the honor he was about to receive

H

On Haircuts:

Bob Davis is wearing his hair differently this year, short and with curls.... I think you call it a Frisbee.

Jerry Coleman, announcer for the San Diego Padres, on a ball player

On Haircuts:

Hrabosky looks fierce in that Fu Manchu haircut.

Jerry Coleman, talking about another ball player

On Haircuts:

On the mound is Randy Jones, the left-hander with the Karl Marx hairdo.

Jerry Coleman, talking about one more ball player

On Hairs, Splitting:

We didn't turn him down. We didn't accept him.

Springdale Golf Club (Princeton, NJ) president explaining why a black applicant was rejected. (Runner-up for Second Annual Doublespeak award.)

On Hawaii:

Hawaii has always been a very pivotal role in the Pacific. It is in the Pacific. It is a part of the United States that is an island that is right here.

Vice-President Dan Quayle, during a visit to Hawaii in 1989

On Health:

I've been laid up with the intentional flu.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Hearing:

So long as Ireland remains silent on this question England will be deaf to our entreaties.

Irish politician, late 1800s

On Helpful Hints:

Warning: Never use while sleeping

warnings with hair dryer, cited in US News & World Report

On Helpful Hints:

Replacing battery: Replace the old battery with a new one.

directions for a mosquito repeller, reported in Far Eastern Economic Review

On Hermeneutics, Quickie Definition of:

For John Caputo, hermeneutics means radical thinking without transcendental justification: attending to the ruptures and irregularities in existence before the metaphysics of presence has a chance to smooth them over. Radical Hermeneutics forges a closer collaboration between the hermeneutics and deconstruction than has previously been attempted.

an ad for Radical Hermeneutics, Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutics Project

On Hispanics:

Ecuadorians. I don't know what they are. I know they're not Hispanic.

Hazel Dukes, civil rights activist and New York City Off-Track Betting Corporation chief

On History, Finding Precedence in:

We have to go back centuries for a parallel to such treatment, and even then we don't find it.

anonymous speaker during a British parliamentary debate

On Holding Big Tilings:

I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs, A palace and a prison on each hand.

Romantic poet Lord Byron, in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, evidently meaning one on each side. This error was noted as early as 1870.

On Holidays:

Today is Father's Day, so everyone out there: Happy birthday!

Ralph Kiner, announcer for the New York Mets

On Honesty, Congressional Opinions of Their Own:

He's trying to take the decision out of the hands of twelve honest men and give it to 435 Congressmen!

Representative Charles Vanik of Ohio, when he heard that the indicted Spiro Agnew was asking to have his corruption case tried by the House instead of in a regular court

On Horses:

Bring on the empty horses!

director Michael Curtiz, telling film crew to bring on (riderless) horses for filming

On the House of Representatives, What They Do in:

Rep. Dan Rostenkowski (acting as Chairman):

Title IX of the recorded bill is now title X.

Rep. William L. Dickinson:

So there is no title IX. There is a title X and we have reopened title VIII, if I am correct.

Rostenkowski:

A new title IX was inserted by amendment, so there is now a title IX and a title X.

Dickinson:

There is a title VIII, there is a title IX, there is a title X, is that correct?

Rostenkowski:

Title X is the last title in the bill.

Dickinson:

So an amendment to either title VIII or title IX or title X would be in order at this time?

Rostenkowski:

Not title IX. Just title VIII and title X are open to amendment.

Dickinson:

Well, I had an amendment that I would like to offer. I thought it was to title IX if there is a title IX.

Rostenkowski:

If the gentleman's amendment was drafted to title IX, it will be in order to title X.

Dickinson:

Mr. Chairman, I have an amendment at the desk which I would like to offer to title VIII.

a few moments of discussion on the floor of the House of Representatives in 1982, as reported by The Washington Monthly

On Human Kidneys, in Dogs:

No one as yet had exhibited the structure of human kidneys, Vesalius having only examined them in dogs.

Henry Hallam, famous Oxford historian, in his monumental work, A View of the 'State of Europe in the Middle Ages, 1818

On Human Rights, Great Moments in:

The rights you have are the rights given to you by Committee. We will determine what rights you have and what rights you have not got.

J. Parnell Thomas, House Un-American Affairs Committee, to a witness

On Human Rights, Great Moments in:

You hear about constitutional rights, free speech, and the free press. Every time I hear these words I say to myself, "That man is a Red, that man is a Communist!" You never hear a real American talk like that.

Mayor Frank Hague, Jersey City, New Jersey, 1938

On Hunger:

There shouldn't be hunger, at least hunger unnecessarily of the people who would want otherwise to be fed.

Robert Carleson, Office of Policy Development

On Huston, John:

John, if you weren't the son of my beloved friend, Walter Huston, and if you weren't a brilliant writer, a fine actor, and a magnificent director—you'd be nothing but a common drunk.

Gregory Ratoff, producer, to John Huston, after John Huston refused to make a film history of his life

I

On Ideas:

I had a great idea this morning, but I didn't like it.
movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn to an aide

On Identities, Mistaken:

Due to a typing error, Gov. Dukakis was incorrectly identified in the third paragraph as Mike Tyson.
Fitchburg-Leominster (Mass.) Sentinel and Enterprise correction

On Immigrants, Eating All the Leftovers:

When I go to hotels in midtown for various conventions and awards ceremonies, I am continually served my food and drink by someone who not only isn't black, but can't even speak English. These people take home all excess food, including soda and in some cases wine.
Hazel Dukes, civil rights activist and New York City Off-Track Betting Corporation chief

On Immutability:

This strategy represents our policy for all time. Until it's changed.
Marlin Fitzwater, White House spokesperson under George Bush, on a just-released national security strategy

On Incest:

Inbreeding is how we get championship horses.
Carl Gunter, Louisiana state representative, explaining why he was fighting a proposed antiabortion bill that allowed abortion in cases of incest

On India:

India is the finest climate under the sun; but a lot of young fellows come out here, and they drink and they eat, and they drink and they die: and then they write home to their parents a pack of lies, and say it's the climate that has killed them.
Sir Colin Campbell, British officer charged by British War Department to report on morale problems with the British Army in India

On Injuries:

Benedict may not be hurt as much as he really is.
Jerry Coleman, announcer for the San Diego Padres, talking about a player's injury during on-air game coverage

On Injuries:

The doctors X-rayed my head and found nothing.
baseball great Dizzy Dean explaining how he felt after being hit on the head by a ball in the 1934 World Series

On Innovation:

We're launching this innovation for the first time.

New York City Mayor Jimmy Walker

On Instructions, Easy to Follow:

I'm the football coach around here and don't you remember it.

ex-Houston Oiler and Florida State coach Bill Peterson

On Instructions, Easy to Follow:

Fans, don't fail to miss tomorrow's game.

Dizzy Dean

On Integrity, Congressional

Grassley praised Senate colleagues "for making tough decisions to close tax loopholes which have led to abuses," and said he was particularly pleased at the Senate's willingness to protect farmers through a special concession.

in a press release from the office of Senator Charles E. Grassley, Iowa Republican, quoted in The Washington Monthly

On Integrity, Congressional

I suppose I felt my votes on these issues would carry me on the integrity image on all these other things I got careless on. I have come to the conclusion I have let my integrity become restricted to the issues too much, and not enough, perhaps, to every act and procedure of my office.

Oregon Senator Mark Hatfield, in a Portland Oregonian article, commenting on the gifts and free tuition for his son he was given by James Holderman, the (indicted) president of the University of South Carolina

On Intelligence, Military:

The infiltration group was composed of $\frac{1}{3}$ males, $\frac{1}{3}$ females, and $\frac{1}{3}$ party officials.

from a military intelligence document during the Vietnam War, quoted by ex-Army intelligence officer Bruce E. Jones

On Intelligence, Military:

This unit had an estimated strength of about 2,000 men, of which 300 were women.

from a military intelligence document during the Vietnam War, quoted by ex-Army intelligence officer Bruce E. Jones

On Interruptions:

Don't talk to me while I'm interrupting.

director Michael Curtiz

On Interruptions:

Keep quiet, you're always interrupting me in the middle of my mistakes.

director Michael Curtiz

On Inventing; or Preinventing:

It is curious to observe the various substitutes for paper before its invention.

Isaac D'Israeli, noted author and father of British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, in his book, Curiosities of Literature

On Invisibility, Visibility of:

Unseen powers, like the deities of Homer in the war of Troy, were seen to mingle at every step with the tide of sublimary affairs.

Sir Archibald Alison, famous nineteenth-century Scottish historian and lawyer, author of multi-volume histories of France, in his review of Guizot

On Irrevocability:

I am giving you a chance to redeem your character, something you have irretrievably lost.

Serjeant Arabin, famous London justice, Advocate General in the Whig government of the late 1830

J

On Jail-Building:

1. Resolved, by this council, that we build a new jail.
2. Resolved, that the new jail be built out of the materials of the old jail.
3. Resolved, that the old jail be used until the new jail is finished.

resolution of Board of Councilmen, Canton, Mississippi, mid-1800s

On Judgment, Good:

There's no textbook on judgment. I might make one or two other [mistakes], but it will certainly be with great forethought.

Marion Barry, mayor of Washington, D.C.

On Jumping the Gun:

I am in control here. As of now, I am in control here in the White House.

Alexander Haig, then Secretary of State, after President Reagan was shot, forgetting that in actuality he was fourth in line of succession

On Justice:

If a person is innocent of a crime, then he is not a suspect.

then Attorney General Edwin Meese explaining to the American Bar Association why the Miranda decision enabling those arrested to be advised of their rights was not necessary anymore

K

On Keeping Quiet at Meetings:

A little less quiet, please, Mr. Blackbird.

New York Athletic Commissioner General John J. Phelan, to boxer Joe Louis's trainer, "Chappie" Blackburn

On Kiddie Shows, Great Lines from:

I want you to take your balls in your hands and bounce them on the floor and then throw them as high as you can. Now, have you all got your balls in your hands?

announcer of children's radio show "Life with Mother," to her little audience, as reported by Geoffrey Moorhouse

On Killing, Putting an End to:

WISH—TO END ALL THE KILLING IN THE WORLD HOBBIES—HUNTING AND FISHING

from personal statistics of California Angel Bryan Harvey, flashed on the scoreboard at Anaheim Stadium, 1989

On Knee Surgery:

I've never had major knee surgery on any other part of my body.

Winston Bennett, University of Kentucky basketball forward

On Knowledge:

The President is aware of what is going on. That's not to say there is something going on.

Ron Ziegler, press secretary to President Richard Nixon, on a rumor that allied forces were attacking across the Laotian border

On Knowledge:

Gaylord Perry and Willie McCovey should know each other like a book. They've been ex-teammates for years now.

Jerry Coleman, San Diego Padres announcer

L

On Ladies, Fat, and Dutch Queens:

[The commotion] has something to do with a fat lady.

Dizzy Dean, baseball great turned sports announcer, explaining why there was a hubbub in the stands during a St. Louis Browns game he was covering

I've just been informed that the fat lady is the Queen of Holland.

Dizzy Dean, on air a few minutes later, after a studio executive quietly told him that the "fat lady" was actually the Queen of the Netherlands

On Language:

I'm no linguist, but I have been told that in the Russian language there isn't even a word for freedom.

President Ronald Reagan on why Russia was still—and presumably always would be—Communist, overlooking the word svoboda, or freedom

On Language and Meaning:

A written sign is proffered in the absence of the receiver. How to style this absence? One could say that at the moment when I am writing, the receiver may be absent from my field of present perception. But is not this absence merely a distant presence, one which is delayed or which, in one form or another, is idealized in its representation? This does not seem to be the case, or at least in this distance, divergence, delay, this deferral must be capable of being carried to a certain absoluteness of absence if the structure of writing, assuming that writing exists, is to constitute itself. It is at that point that the difference as writing could no longer [be] an [ontological] modification of presence.

Jacques Derrida, French deconstructionist, "Signature Event Context," Limited Inc.

On Languages:

Every monumental inscription should be in Latin; for that being a dead language it will ever live.

Samuel Johnson, eighteenth-century English writer, in a blunder noted by his contemporaries

On the Law, Great Rhetoric on:

There has been much talk here this afternoon about the law of the land. We are makers of the law of the land and makers of the law of the land ought to understand and respect the law of the land.

Senator Roger W. Jepsen, Republican from Iowa, during a congressional debate

On Leader, Following the:

Let the first contingent go ahead and I will send a man after you to lead the way.

J. C. Percy, bicycle club leader, addressing the group

On Leadership, What Ted Kennedy Thinks About:

Well, it's um, you know, you have to come to grips with the different issues that, ah ... that, ah, we're facing, I mean we have ... we have to deal with each of the various questions that we're talking about whether it's a question of the economy, whether it's in the area of energy.

Senator Edward Kennedy, during a November 4, 1979, on-air interview with Roger Mudd, explaining why he would be different than then President Jimmy Carter

On Legal Defenses, Great Moments in:

Did you get a good look at my face when I took your purse?

accused thief who undertook his own defense at his trial, to his alleged victim, as reported in the National Review. He got ten years.

On Legal Definitions, Important:

Buttocks: The area at the rear of the human body (sometimes referred to as the gluteus maximus) which lies between two imaginary lines running parallel to the ground when a person is standing, the first or top of such line being one-half inch below the top of the vertical cleavage of the nates (i.e., the prominence formed by the muscles running from the back of the hip to the back of the leg) and the second or bottom line being one-half inch above the lowest point of curvature of the fleshy protuberance (sometimes referred to as the gluteal fold), and between two imaginary lines, one on each side of the body (the "outside lines"), which outside lines are perpendicular to the ground and to the horizontal lines described above and which perpendicular outside lines pass through the outermost point(s) at which each nate meets the outer side of each leg....

part of a St. Augustine, Florida, ordinance drafted by city commissioners to regulate nudity on the beach and in restaurants

On Legal Ordinances, Questionable:

Section 4: Licenses shall be issued only to persons of good moral turpitude.

Clearwater, Florida, city ordinance on liquor licenses

On Letting It All (Almost) Hang Out:

President Richard Nixon:

Do you think we want to go this route now? Let it hang out, so to speak?

John Dean:

Well, it isn't really that.

H. R. Haldeman:

It's a limited hang-out.

John Ehrlichman:

It's a modified, limited, hang-out.

from the Nixon tapes

On Lies:

If I tell a lie it's only because I think I'm telling the truth.

On Lies:

I was not lying. I said things that later on seemed to be untrue.

Richard Nixon, discussing Watergate in a 1978 interview

On Lies, the Effect of:

Thus, the black lie, issuing from his base throat, becomes a boomerang to his hand, and he is hoist by his own petard, and finds himself a marked man.

small-town newspaper editor in Wisconsin

On Life, the True Value of:

It's not a matter of life and death. It's more important than that.

Lou Duva, on the upcoming fight of his protégé against boxer Mike Tyson

On Life After Death:

If Lincoln were alive today, he'd roll over in his grave.

President Gerald Ford

On Life After Death:

Yogi Berra (during a 20 Questions game):

Is he living?

Teammate:

Yes.

Yogi:

Is he living now?

On Life After Death:

If Cal Coolidge were alive today to witness this scene, he'd roll over in his grave.

representative in Massachusetts House

On Life and Death:

Smoking kills. If you're killed, you've lost a very important part of your life.

Brooke Shields, said to demonstrate why she should become spokesperson for a federal antismoking campaign

On Life Insurance. Reasons for Buying:

I'll get it when I die.

Yogi Berra, explaining why he bought a large life insurance policy

On Light, and Darkness, or Both or Neither:

The light which the Lord Chancellor had thrown upon the matter was darkness.

Lord Ribblesdale, British aristocrat and Master of the Buckhounds in the 1890s, called "the Ancestor" because of his patrician good looks

On Abraham Lincoln, Little-Known Accomplishments of:

It is indeed fitting that we gather here today to pay tribute to Abraham Lincoln, who was born in a log cabin that he built with his own hands.

an unnamed politician in a speech honoring Lincoln, as reported by Senator Morris K. ("Mo") Udall

On Linkages, Unclear:

I love California. I grew up in Phoenix.

Vice-President Dan Quayle

On Locker Rooms, coverage of Athletes In:

I think we probably expose our players to the media as well as anybody.

George Perles, Michigan State football coach, on allowing women reporters in the locker room

On Logic, Impeccable:

I desire what is good. Therefore, everyone who does not agree with me is a traitor.

George III of England

On Longevity:

A lot of people my age are dead at the present time.

Casey Stengel, baseball great, Yankees and Mets manager

On Love Scenes, How to Do:

Could you get a little closer apart?

Michael Curtiz, Hollywood director, to two stars

On Lying:

[It is] not fair to say that I have misinformed Congress or other Cabinet officers. I haven't testified to that. I've testified that I withheld information from Congress. And with regard to the Cabinet officers, I didn't withhold anything from them that they didn't want withheld from them.

Rear Admiral John Poindexter, in his testimony to a congressional hearing looking into the Iran-Contra affair

On Lying:

The President misspoke himself.

attributed to Ron Ziegler, Nixon's press secretary

On Lying:

I apologize for lying to you.... I promise I won't deceive you except in matters of this sort.

Spiro T. Agnew, Vice-President under Nixon, speaking to reporters about his assertions that he wouldn't be going to Cambodia. He made this apology on the plane headed to Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

M

On Machismo and Pestilence:

In the early sixties, we were strong, we were virulent....

John Connally, Secretary of Treasury under Richard Nixon, in an early seventies speech, as reported in a contemporary American Scholar

On Man in Space, Early Predictions of:

The United States is at peace with all the world, and sustains friendly relations with the rest of mankind.

President Benjamin Harrison in a speech to Congress

On Manure, Problems with:

... when floors are wet and slippery with manure, you can have a bad fall.

from the U. S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration's booklet, "Safety with Beef Cattle," 1976

On Mardi Gras:

Even if they had it in the streets, I wouldn't go.

attributed to movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Mayors, Responsibilities of:

I am not the leader of Washington. I am not the business leader of Washington. I am not the spiritual leader of Washington. I am not the civic leader of Washington. I am not the social leader of Washington. I am the political leader of Washington. That's where my responsibility ends.

Marion Barry, mayor of Washington, D. C., defending himself against critics who held his lack of leadership partly responsible for the high murder rate in D.C.

On Meat Eating, Greatness and:

In the whole history of the world, whenever a meat-eating race has gone to war against a non-meat-eating race, the meat eaters won. It produces superior people. We have the books of history.

Senator Carl Curtis (R-Neb.) during a debate on banning DES as a food additive for livestock, 1975

On Mediocrity:

Even if he were mediocre, there are a lot of mediocre judges and people and lawyers. Don't they deserve some representation on the court?

Senator Roman Hruska (R-Neb.), defending Judge Harold Carswell, the first Nixon nominee for the Supreme Court, against charges that he was mediocre

On Mental Illness:

My boy friend is a split personality—a kind of Jekyll of all trades.

Dorothy Stickney's (theater and film actress from the thirties through the fifties) manicurist

On Metaphors, Mixed:

Since the Government has let the cat out of the bag there is nothing to do but take the bull by the horns.

Jeremiah MacVeagh, Member of Parliament

On Metaphors, Strange:

When shall the lion of autocracy walk hand in hand with the floodgates of democracy?

James Sexton, Member of Parliament, in a speech

On Metaphors, Strange:

The apple of discord is now fairly in our midst, and if not nipped in the bud it will burst forth in a conflagration which will deluge society in an earthquake of bloody apprehension.

a Nebraska newspaper editorial, circa 1870, reporting on legislative turmoil

On Metaphors, Strange:

The gutless, no-good 100th Congress ... will write off freedom in Nicaragua, throw them to the alligators, and hope the alligators will eat someone else and eat us last and they can peel off a slice of that salami and they will not bother us for now. Do not rock the boat.

Senator Steve Symms (R-Idaho)

On Metaphors, Strange:

It is no use for the honorable member to shake his head in the teeth of his own words.

William E. Gladstone, leader of the Liberal Party of England and Prime Minister, in a speech

On Metaphors, Strange:

As we debate this bill, that sword of Damocles is hanging over Pandora's box.

from New York City Council debates, quoted by Molly Ivins, New York Times Magazine

On Metaphors, Strange:

[This item is] a mere fleabite in the ocean of our expenditure.

Lord Randolph Churchill, father of Winston, during a Parliament debate

On Method Acting, Overdoing:

... the greatest villain that ever lived, a man worse than Hitler or Stalin. I am speaking of Sigmund Freud.

Telly Savalas, actor, discussing a role he was going to play

On the Mideast Crisis:

Why can't the Jews and the Arabs just sit down together and settle this like good Christians?

overheard during a congressional debate; also attributed to Arthur Balfour, British statesman, Prime Minister, and Foreign Secretary

On the Mid-Term, Necessity for:

As a compensating measure, the focus of shorter-and longer-term analyses would be extended to include the mid-term. Although this approach will in some measure reduce the comprehensive nature of the intended analysis, the compromise will provide adequate data for meaningful progress toward integrative policy development.

Department of Energy's revolutionary decision to include all the stuff in the middle, from the 1981 Budget Revision Report

On Military Intelligence, Our British Allies and:

It is necessary for technical reasons that these warheads should be stored with the top at the bottom, and the bottom at the top. In order that there may be no doubt as to which is the top and which is the bottom, for storage purposes, it will be seen that the bottom of each head has been labeled with the word TOP.

British Admiralty instruction dealing with the storage of warheads and torpedoes (quoted in Outrageous Quotations)

On Military Preparedness:

We have permitted our naval capability to deteriorate. At the same time we are better than we were a few years ago.

Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, on the ups and downs of the U. S. Navy in 1982

On Military Spending and Procurement, Utter Lack of Any Use of Influence in:

I think there are very few indeed who try to take advantage of their former positions in the military to sell us defense products.... Most officers are not salesmen. A friend of mine who retired told me, "The idea of going back and trying to peddle products on the basis of my military friendships is so repulsive that I would rather starve to death."

U. S. Army General Earle Wheeler, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1969

On Minds, the Importance of:

What a waste it is to lose one's mind—or not to have a mind. How true that is.

Vice-President Dan Quayle addressing a United Negro College Fund affair and garbling their slogan—"A mind is a terrible thing to waste."

On Mobil Oil, Durability of:

At this point, I would like to emphasize that our emergency planning [for a nuclear attack by the Soviets] is predicated on the idea that it is possible for our nation to survive, recover, and win and that our way of life, including free enterprise, the oil industry, and Socony Mobil Oil Company, can survive, recover, and win with it.

Maxwell S. McKnight, security adviser to Mobil, speaking in 1963

On Modern Art, Hitler's Sensitivity to:

Anyone who sees and paints a sky green and pastures blue ought to be sterilized.

Adolf Hitler, painter of stiff, inhuman cityscapes and sponsor of the Aryan art movement which lost popularity after April 1945

On Modernity:

Let's bring it up to date with some snappy nineteenth-century dialogue.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Money:

In the prosecution of the present war, every man ought to be ready to give his last guinea to protect the remainder.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir John Parnell, in the Irish House of Commons, 1795, during a debate on the leather tax

On Money, Earning:

The directors' fees have been hardly earned.

the chairman of a brewery trying (and failing) to defend his board of directors and a poor balance sheet

On Money, Finding a Million Dollars in the street:

I'd find the fellow who lost it, and if he was poor, I'd return it.

Yogi Berra, answering Casey Stengel's question, "What would you do if you found a million dollars?"

On Money, Value of:

I'll fight him for nothing if the price is right.

Marlon Starling, WBA welterweight, talking about fighting the titlest Lloyd Honeyghan

On Motherhood, Sanctity of:

That's what [golf] really needs—some striking female to take over and become the next superstar. It would have been Nancy Lopez, but Nancy turned to motherhood and so has her body.

Frank Chirkinian, producer for CBS Sports

On Mouth-Watering Names for Soft Drinks:

Bite the wax tadpole.

Coca-Cola name as originally translated into Chinese. It was changed to mean "May the mouth rejoice."

On Movie Stars:

He [Steve McQueen] must have made that before he died.

Yogi Berra about a Steve McQueen film

On Movies with Sound, Bad Predictions About:

Novelty is always welcome, but talking pictures are just a fad.

Irving Thalberg, MGM production head in the late 1920s

On Music:

Among the interrelated matters of a time and place, Muzak is a thing that fits in.

chairman of the board of scientific advisers of Muzak, as quoted in Edwin Newman's Strictly Speaking

On Music:

Muzak promotes the sharing of meaning because it massifies symbolism in which not

few, but all, can participate.

chairman of the board of scientific advisers of Muzak, as quoted in Edwin Newman's Strictly Speaking

On Music:

[The U. S. Navy urgently] needs modern musicians.

Michael Dukakis, 1988 Democratic presidential candidate, during a campaign speech. He meant munitions.

SPECIAL SECTION:

Samuel Goldwyn

Samuel Goldwyn probably would have preferred to be remembered only as one of the founders of the Hollywood film industry. But Goldwyn's mangled syntax has entered our language and culture, and along with *The Best Years of Our Lives*, for which he won an Oscar, Sam Goldwyn is remembered for such convolutions as his immortal:

Any man who goes to a psychiatrist ought to have his head examined.

Goldwyn was born in Poland but came to the United States early in his life, in time to help found the Hollywood film industry. Along with Jesse Lasky and Cecil B. De Mille, he organized the Jesse Lasky film company in 1916. Later he struck off on his own with the Goldwyn Production Company, which was then merged with Louis B. Mayer's company to form Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, probably the most powerful Hollywood studio. Describing his own career, Goldwyn supposedly said:

I was always an independent, even when I had partners.

And so he went on to produce independently such classics as *Wuthering Heights* and *Guys and Dolls*.

Along the way, he became famous for his "Goldwynisms," which delighted the Hollywood community and, as with anything else in Hollywood that becomes successful, spawned hundreds of imitations. The question with a Goldwynism, then, is did he actually say it or was it coined by some Hollywood flack or gossip columnist? Goldwyn himself toward the end of his life ended up denying he ever said many of his best—but by this time he was sick and tired of them.

Some are clearly false. "I can answer you in two words—im possible" is an old joke and was (probably) not said by Goldwyn at all. On the other hand, the famous "Gentlemen, include me out," is most likely bona fide, and not apocryphal as long believed. But as with Yogi Berra and Sir Boyle Roche, it really doesn't matter whether he said it or not. Like Boyle Roche and Yogi Berra, Goldwyn deserves much credit for exploring new linguistic territory. As he (supposedly) said:

I've gone where the hand of man has never set foot.

Some off Goldwyn's best:

- Give me a smart idiot over a stupid genius any day.
- Why call him Joe? Every Tom, Dick, and Harry is called Joe.
- I want you to cohabit with me.
(asking a female writer to collaborate on a story with him)
- You've got to take the bull by the teeth.
- I read part of it all the way through.
- I love the ground I walk on.
- I want to make a picture about the Russian secret police: the GOP.
- You write with great warmth and charmth.
(apocryphal)
- A verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on.
- I ran into George Kaufman last night. He was at my house for dinner.
- I can't make it, but I hope you'll give me a raincoat.
(when asked to dinner)
- I'm going out for some tea and trumpets.
- When asked by his secretary if she could destroy some old files:
Go ahead. But make copies of them first.
- When told a director was "too caustic":
To hell with cost, pay him what he wants.

N

On Napalm:

Well, it seems pretty ridiculous to me that people can be so emotional about how you kill people. What's so bad about nape anyway?

pilot at Danang Air Force Base, 1970

On Natural Disasters:

It should have a big exciting finish—like an earthquake, a catechism of nature.

Harry Rapf, high-ranking MGM executive in the 1930s and '40s

On Nature, Improving:

I happen to be one of those people who thinks the aesthetics of a place are improved by putting a nice transmission line through it.

Montana Power Company Chairman Jo McElwain, quoted in the Portland Oregonian

On Nature, Improving:

The wild animals love to traverse over packed-down snowmobile tracks, for these machines do just that, pack the snow and do no harm to the growth underneath. Snowmobiles actually make it possible for the animals to move through their habitat just a bit easier.

Al Donohue, chairman of the Montana Tourism Advisory Council, in the Great Falls Tribune

On Nature, Improving:

It's unfair that it remain empty and unspoiled.

Hugh Stone, developer of a proposed subdivision, on delays in permits to begin construction

On Nature Lovers:

I have a great feeling for the soil. My brother is the leading conservational-ist in the world, and I just love sitting on my bulldozer and experiencing nature.

golfer Gary Player, quoted in the Sarasota Herald-Tribune, on his plans to build new golf courses in Florida

On Nazism, Great Thoughts of:

Thorough mastication avoids needless waste and payment of unnecessary expenses to foreign countries.

from the Storm Trooper paper, Das Schwarze Korps

On Nixon Impersonators Taped in the Oval Office, Possible:

There are guys that can talk like Nixon and sound like him, and I don't even believe the tapes are authentic.

Earl F. Landgrebe, former Indiana representative, discussing why it may not have been Nixon's voice on the Nixon tapes

On Nonsequiturs:

Look, I want to give the high five symbol to high tech.... The truth is, it reminds a lot of people of the way I pitch horseshoes. Would you believe some of the people? Would you believe our dog?

George Bush in a speech given at a Ford Aerospace plant

On Novels and Poems (We Think), What They Are:

The writer's verbal medium obtains a function that constitutes the work's literariness, and in this event a "world-semantic component" serves to establish coherence in the correspondence between text-structure and world structure. In poetic discourse, the utterance is a textual resultant between the "self" existing in society and its new articulation in the represented world.

Myriam Diaz-Diocaretz, University of Utrecht, in a symposium book, The Difference Within

On Nuclear Attack, What to Do in a:

It would be a good thing to take your bankbook to the fallout shelter with you.

Federal Reserve System suggestion

On Nuclear Attacks, IRS Role In:

During state of national emergency resulting from enemy attack, the essential functions of the Service will be as follows: (1) assessing, collecting, and recording taxes....

Internal Revenue Service Handbook, 1976

On Nuclear Meltdown, Why Long Islanders Don't Need to Worry About:

Actual meltdown takes three to five days, and that's certainly enough time to evacuate Long Island.

George Koop, legislative candidate in Suffolk County, on New York's Long Island, in support of a local nuclear power plant

On Nuclear Power:

Nuclear power is the cleanest, the most efficient, and the most economical energy source, with no environmental problems.

President Ronald Reagan, quoted in a 1980 Sierra magazine, before various nuclear disasters in the 1980s

On Nuclear War, Diet Advantages of:

The defense board standard for immediate postattack food consumption calls for an average daily caloric intake of 2,200 calories.... A daily intake of 2,200 calories would probably be adequate for a month or more, or perhaps even beneficial in view of the estimate that 20 per cent of all adults and 20 per cent of all children are obese.

A. F. Shinn, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, speaking of Department of Agriculture preparations for nuclear war

On Nuclear War, President Reagan Clarifying the Issue of:

Question:

Do you think there could be a battlefield exchange without having buttons pressed all the way up the line?

President Reagan:

Well, I would—if they realized that we—if we went back to that stalemate, only because our retaliatory power, our seconds, or our strike at them after their first strike would be so destructive that they couldn't afford it, that would hold them off.

On Nuclear War, Television Shows:

Some programs have been theatrical masterpieces, but all we're seeing is the negative side of nuclear war.

Senator Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), discussing television shows about the nuclear war

On Nuclear War, Vital Questions Concerning Standard of Living After:

In fact, living standards within the first year following either attack (UNCLX or CIVLOG) could compare favorably with those enjoyed in this country in the late 1950s.

The net effect of the attack indicates a reduction in per capita value-added of approximately \$660.

two economists speaking at a Fort Monroe, Virginia, seminar sponsored by Civil Defense in 1967. A UNCLX (300 megaton) attack would kill half the population of the United States.

On Nuclear War, Wealth Redistribution Advantages for:

It is also quite likely that the general public finds the thought of nuclear attack so horrible that the additional horror of a postattack policy for wealth distribution would be considered of marginal importance.

Henry Peskin, Office of Emergency Planning

On Nuclear Weapons:

This kind of weapon can't help but have an effect on the population as a whole.

President Ronald Reagan

On Nuclear Weapons:

Atomic energy might be as good as our present-day explosives, but it is unlikely to produce anything very much more dangerous.

Winston Churchill, in 1939

O

On Odds:

The odds that we won't win a game this season are 999 out of a hundred.
high school football coach to sports writer Phil Pepe

On Odds:

Every person now living in the United States has one chance out of fourteen of dying of tuberculosis and one chance in fifty of becoming affected with this disease.
Dr. Linsly R. Williams, then managing director of the National Tuberculosis Association, quoted in the Congressional Record

On Oil Pipelines:

The caribou love it. They rub against it and they have babies. There are more caribou in Alaska than you can shake a stick at.
George Bush, then Vice-President, on the Alaska pipeline

On Oil Rigs, Inoffensive Nature of:

It isn't as if you were looking at the ocean through a little frame and now somebody put something in the way.
Ronald Reagan, on why offshore oil rigs shouldn't bother anybody

On Old-Fashioned American Virtues, Congress and:

I'm one of those who sort of vacillates as we can afford to vacillate. My bend toward conservatism is purely and simply based on ... economic circumstances.... It may be that, by the next campaign, circumstances would be somewhat better and it may be that I would be somewhat more liberal.
Congressman Ike Andrews (D-N.C.)

On Oliver North, the Irrepressible:

He had the love and respect of everyone who worked for or with him. He knew what he wanted and how to get it. He possessed great charm and wit and was, it is said, the first man to bring real humor and fun to the White House since Kennedy.
actor David Keith, on Oliver North, whom he played on a TV miniseries

On Omissions:

It will be noticed that some omissions will also appear in this edition.
Thomas Carlyle, Victorian essayist, historian, critic, and social commentator, in the opening of his famous Oliver Cromwell

On Opposites:

I told you to make one longer than another, and instead you have made one shorter than the other—the opposite.
Sir Boyle Roche, British statesman and father of the verbal blunder

On Orders:

Sit down and go out.

the mayor of Birmingham, Alabama, to an unruly council member

On Outlawing Killing, Murder, Assassinations, CIA Enthusiasm for:

I suppose [we could have one], but the actual writing of a statute might be a little difficult.

CIA Director William Colby, on congressional suggestions for a law barring political assassinations

On Overeagerness:

I happen to be a Republican President, ah, the Vice-President.

Dan Quayle while stumping for Republican candidates

On Overpopulation, Why God Isn't Worrying About:

Heaven is a place large enough to accommodate 299,900,000,000,000 souls with a mansion of 100 rooms each, $16 \times 16 \times 16$.

Rev. Dr. W. Graham Walker, speaking at the Highland Street Christian Church, Memphis, Tennessee, 1926

On Oxygen:

Folks, this is perfect weather for today's game. Not a breath of air.

Curt Gowdy, network sports announcer, on air

P

On the Pentagon, \$999.50 Pliers Bought for:

They're multipurpose. Not only do they put the clips on, but they take them off.
Pratt & Whitney spokesperson explaining why the company charged the Air Force nearly \$1,000 for a pair of pliers

On the Pentagon, \$1,496 Pliers Bought for:

What you're not recognizing is that the original proposal was significantly higher.
U. S. Air Force major general, defending the purchase of a tool kit which included \$1,496 pliers. Boeing's original asking price was \$5,096.

On People:

To hell with the public! I'm here to represent the people!
New Jersey state senator

On People, Half:

The 37 fellows (of the Royal University) are divided into 29 fellows and 8 medical fellows. Half of these 29 fellows are attached to the University College.... The other half of the 29 fellows are distributed over the country.
Michael McCarthy, in his book Priests and People

On Permanence:

It could permanently hurt a batter for a long time.
Pete Rose, Cincinnati Red, speaking about a brushback pitch

On Permanence:

It's never happened in a World Series competition, and it still hasn't.
Yogi Berra, talking about pitcher Don Larsen's perfect World Series game

On Personal Banking:

It won't be long before customers should be able to complete most of their banking transactions without any personal contact. This will enable banks to offer more personal contact.
Credit and Financial Management Magazine, 1976, predicting the future of banking

On Personal Choice:

One problem that we've had even in the best of times ... is the people who are sleeping on the grates. The homeless who are homeless, you might say, by choice.
President Ronald Reagan, on "Good Morning America," January 31, 1984

On Personality:

Some quiet guys are inwardly outgoing.
Ralph Kiner, Mets broadcaster

On the Personal Touch:

Nothing could be more personal than a tape.

Julie Nixon Eisenhower

On Pesticides:

Sure, it's going to kill a lot of people, but they may be dying of something else anyway.

Othal Brand, member of a Texas pesticide review board, on chlordane

On Philosophy:

Beauty is love made real, and the spirit of love is God. And the state of beauty, love and God is happiness. A transcendent state of beauty, love and God is peace. Peace and love is a state of beauty, love and God. One is an active state of happiness and the other is a transcendent state. That's peace.

Imelda Marcos, campaigning for her husband, Ferdinand Marcos, then Philippine President

On Photographs, Bad:

That picture was taken out of context.

Jeff Innis, New York Mets pitcher, on a bad picture taken of him

On Physics, New Theories of:

In no way is it possible for a person to be in two places at the same time, especially if there is a great distance in between.

Judge Amado Guerrero, Mexican Tenth District Federal Court, on a defendant's alibi

On Pickles, Political:

We find ourselves in this pickle because you bought that jar and filled it not with pickles but with water, and now you're trying to jam it in the public's face.

Albert Blumenthal, Democratic leader in New York State Assembly, replying to Republican charge that the Democrats had put the state in a pickle, as quoted in Edwin Newman's Strictly Speaking

On Pistols, Plying Variety:

Mr. John Burns held a pistol at their heads, but now it had come home to roost.

overheard during English parliamentary debate

On Pockets, Where Found on Human Body:

If you put the honorable member on an uninhabited island they would not be there twenty-four hours before they had their hands in the pockets of the naked savages.

unnamed politician, overheard during a debate

On Poetry, the Meaning of Emily Dickinson's:

The style is clitoral, as far as I'm concerned.

Professor Paula Bennett, of the Department of Humanities and Social Science, Seattle Central Community College

On Police:

Get the thing straight once and for all. The policeman isn't there to create disorder. The policeman is there to preserve disorder.

Richard Daley, mayor of Chicago

On Political Bravery:

We move to Camp David and hide. They can't get in there.

H. R. Haldeman, White House Chief of Staff, on the Watergate tapes, suggesting how they could avoid subpoenas

On Political Campaigns, What It Would Take to Participate in:

... let's assume that ... a disaster should occur. Let's assume that an airplane drops out of—or under—both of the people we're talking about, both Ford and Reagan. Let's assume that, if you want to assume a macabre situation, then I might do it.

John Connally, ex-Republican presidential candidate in the 1980 campaign, explaining to Barbara Walters what it would take for him to reenter the race

On Political Debates, Great Moments in:

Walter Mondale (Democratic candidate):

George Bush doesn't have the manhood to apologize.

George Bush (Republican candidate):

Well, on the manhood thing, I'll put mine up against his any time.

On Political Genius:

By golly, what do you suppose is behind that?

Ronald Reagan, when told about an attack on Iraq by Israeli fighters

On Political Stances:

I hope I stand for anti-bigotry, anti-Semitism, anti-racism. This is what drives me.

George Bush in 1988 when aides accused of anti-Semitism resigned from his campaign

On Politicians, Plying:

The honourable member is a disgrace to the colours he is flying under.

Irish parliamentary member, in a 1914 debate

On Politics:

We are in favor of a law which absolutely prohibits the sale of liquor on Sunday, but we are against its enforcement.

1920s Democratic platform in Syracuse (as a result of being caught between the saloon and antisaloon forces)

On Politics:

When you get married that closely to something, you get very unhappy when it does not grow up to be an All-American. This thing is poohing out, and we do not like it.

Representative Daniel Flood, Pennsylvania, questioning the Secretary of the Navy about certain missiles

On Politics:

Politics makes strange bedclothes.

Rosalind Russell, 1940s and '50s movie star

On Politics:

Politics is very partisan.

Pierre Rinfret, New York gubernatorial candidate

On Pollution:

Approximately 80% of our air pollution stems from hydrocarbons released by vegetation, so let's not go overboard in setting and enforcing tough emission standards from man-made sources.

President Ronald Reagan

On Pollution:

I've always thought that underpopulated countries in Africa are vastly underpolluted.

Lawrence Summers, chief economist of the World Bank, explaining why we should export toxic wastes to Third World countries

On Pollution, Causes of:

America's lands may be ravaged as a result of the actions of the environmentalists.

James Watt, Secretary of the Interior under Reagan

On the Poor, Accepting and Loving:

Sometimes [they] don't smell too good, so love can have no nose.

evangelist wife Tammy Faye Bakker, preaching about the poor

On Popularity:

Nobody goes there anymore. It's too crowded.

Yogi Berra, explaining why he didn't want to go to dinner at a particular restaurant

On Population Growth:

I note the tremendous progress of this city.... You have had practically a doubling of population. Where has that progress come from? That progress has not come primarily from government, but it has come from the activities of hundreds of thousands of individual Mississippians given an opportunity to develop their own lives.

Richard Nixon, Republican presidential candidate running against JFK, during a campaign speech on private enterprise

On the Postal Service:

Mail from El Paso to Middletown, Tex., will not travel 1,794 miles as alleged. In fact it will travel no further than it does not.

a U. S. Postal Service statement, quoted in the New York Times

On Posterity:

I don't see, Mr. Speaker, why we should put ourselves out of the way to serve posterity. What has posterity ever done for us?

Sir Boyle Roche, eighteenth-century M.P. from Tralee and famous word mangier, speaking in Parliament

On Posterity, at Amended:

By posterity, sir, I do not mean our ancestors, but those who are to come immediately after them.

Sir Boyle Roche, correcting himself

On Poultry Inspectors, Little-Known Importance of:

The crime bill passed by the Senate would reinstate the Federal death penalty for certain violent crimes: assassinating the President; hijacking an airliner, and murdering a Government poultry inspector.

Knight Ridder News Service dispatch

On Poverty:

The poor don't need gas because they're not working.

California Senator S. I. Hayakawa, explaining why we shouldn't worry about the effect on the poor if gas prices rose several dollars a gallon

On Poverty:

The elderly eat less.

California Senator S. I. Hayakawa, explaining why the elderly don't need a special exemption on food stamp eligibility

On Poverty:

He's living beyond his means, but he can afford it.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Poverty, Conditions of:

Mr. Thornton Burke gave a terrible picture of life in the East End of London, where he said there were thousands of people grinding their faces in the dust of poverty and trying at the same time to keep their heads above water.

from a brochure by an antipoverty group in London

On Poverty, Key Reasons for:

Low earnings seem to be the key reason why someone who usually works full time is a member of a poor family.

U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: conclusions of a study detailing poverty in America

On Prayers, Ineffective Ones:

May the word of the Lord be as a nail driven in a sure place, sending its roots downwards and its branches upwards.

prayer by a clergyman in a small English town

On Precipices and Cliffs, Where Pound:

You are standing on the edge of a precipice that will be a weight on your necks all the rest of your life.

statement by member of Dublin Corporation

On Precognition, Religious:

There will be a procession next Sunday afternoon in the grounds of the Monastery; but if it rains in the afternoon, the procession will take place in the morning.

from a statement read to a church congregation

On Predictions, Bad:

They couldn't hit an elephant at this dist—

General John Sedgwick, Union commander in the Civil War, speaking his last words as he was watching enemy troops during the Battle of Spotsylvania Court House

On Predictions, Bad:

Once we have got a Republic it is for you and me to have such a party formed in Ireland that we may take the machinery in our hands, and making the road level go forward uphill to make the new horizon.

Dublin labor leader, late nineteenth century

On Predictions, Strange Sports:

We're not going to be any three-clouds-and-a-yard-of-dust team.

ex-Houston Oiler and Florida State coach Bill Peterson

On Presence:

I'm impressed by the continuity of his physical presence.

Howard Cosell, sports commentator, commenting on a quarterback

On the Present:

Yesterday, you may remember, we made each other a promise. I now recall it, but you already sense all the trouble we will have in ordering all these presents, these past presents which consist of a promise, whose opening toward the present to come is not that of an expectation or an anticipation but that of a commitment.

Paul de Man, a noted scholar of the popular academic discipline of deconstructionism. From Memoires for Paul de Man; with translations and notes by Jonathan Culler.

On the Presidency:

The President is guilty of misdemeanors. It is inherent in the office.

Leonard Garment, special White House consultant, on then President Richard Nixon's involvement in Watergate

On the Presidency:

Now I'm no cowboy. I pitch horseshoes for a living, but I don't ride these broncos.

George Bush in Texas, explaining what his job as President entailed

On the Presidency:

I am now going over and sign, and as you can notice how cold it is, twelve pens there are too cold—they can only sign one letter, each pen. If my name came out to thirteen letters, I would have misspelled it.

President Ronald Reagan at the signing ceremony of a Social Security bill

On the Presidency:

I wouldn't want anything to happen to the President of the United States, even though I might be in some kind of line of succession. It probably will never happen, but it's nice to think about anyway.

Senator Warren Magnuson, upon becoming president pro tem of the Senate

On the Presidency, Reasons to Run:

Well, I'm—were I to make the announcement and to run, the reasons that I would run is because I have a great belief in this country, that it is—there's more natural resources than any nation of the world, there's the greatest educated population in the world, the greatest technology of any country in the world, and the greatest political system in the world....

Senator Edward Kennedy, during a November 4, 1979, on-air interview with Roger Mudd

On Press Agents, Good Advice From:

[You reporters] should have printed what he meant, not what he said.

Earl Bush, press aide to Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, Sr., scolding reporters

On Principles, Political:

I will talk to my stockbroker, and unless he gives me some good reason why I shouldn't, I would be pleased to dispose of [my South African investments]. I am very much opposed to apartheid.

California State Senator Milton Marks, on his South African stockholdings; in the Los Angeles Times

On Priorities:

Here at the ministry we have other, more urgent, situations to deal with.

Jorge Luna of the Peruvian Labor Ministry after hearing that gold miners in the jungle were enslaving thousands of children

On Problems:

Everyone wants to jump into my throat!

Michael Curtiz, Hollywood director, complaining to his assistant

On Problems, Big:

This problem is a two-headed sword: it could grow like a mushing room.

Gib Lewis, Speaker of the Texas House, quoted by Molly Ivins in the New York Times Magazine

On Profits, How to Divide Equally:

The profits shall be equally divided and the residue goes to the governor.

On Promises:

I have not renege*d* on my promise. I have changed my mind.

New York gubernatorial candidate Pierre Rinfret, on why he released only one of the tax returns he had promised to show the public

On Publishing:

Send all the details. Never mind the facts.

telegram from the editor of the old New York World to his Washington correspondent

Q

On Qualifications:

After finding no qualified candidates for the position of principal, the school department is extremely pleased to announce the appointment of David Steele to the post.

Philip Streifer, superintendent of schools, Barrington, Rhode Island

On Qualifications for Holding Political Office:

Anyone can be elected governor. I'm proof of that.

Joe Frank Harris, two-term Georgia governor, talking about who might fill his shoes

On Questions:

If you ask me anything I don't know, I'm not going to answer.

Yogi Berra to a radio broadcaster before an interview

On Questions:

Let me ask you a question, for your information.

attributed to Gregory Ratoff, 1930s and '40s Hollywood director of films such as Intermezzo

On Questions, Answering:

In a general way, we try to anticipate some of your questions so that I can respond "no comment" with some degree of knowledge.

William Baker, CIA spokesman, to the press

On Questions, Rhetorical:

Have we gone beyond the bounds of reasonable dishonesty?

CIA memo; introduced during the Westmoreland/CBS libel suit

On Quiet:

If you can't keep quiet, shut up!

Gregory Ratoff, 1930s and '40s Hollywood director of films such as Intermezzo, to his crew

On Quiet:

I want to hear it so quiet we can hear a mouse dropping.

Gregory Ratoff

On Quiet:

After being told the correct metaphor for quiet was a pin:

Exactly, like a mouse pin dropping.

Gregory Ratoff

On Quotes:

I really didn't say everything I said.

Yogi Berra, in The Sporting News, discussing the sayings he has become famous for

On Quotes:

Don't quote what he says. Say what he means!

campaign aide for Senator Barry Goldwater, then making a bid for the '64 presidency, to reporters

R

On Race Relations:

Sure, I look like a white man. But my heart is as black as anyone's here.

George Wallace, Alabama governor and then presidential candidate, during a campaign speech to a largely black audience

On Race Relations:

Why would we have different races if God meant us to be alike and associate with each other?

Lester Maddox, former governor of Georgia

On Radioactive Leaks, the Nonnews-Worthiness of:

The thing is this—we have incidents happening here all the time.

Department of Energy spokesman at Hanford, Washington, on why no announcement was made on a leak of radioactive material

On Rape:

I say this a lot, and I probably shouldn't: the difference between rape and seduction is salesmanship.

Bill Carpenter, mayor of Independence, Missouri

On Rats:

I smell a rat, I see him floating in the air, but mark me, I shall nip him in the bud.

Sir Boyle Roche, eighteenth-century Member of Parliament from Tralee and famous word mangier

On Reading the Crowd:

They made an animal-type grunting sound when the National Guard was mentioned. There were some good-natured grunts. Let me admit theoretically that some people hissed.

David Beckwith, press secretary to Vice-President Dan Quayle, commenting on rumors that West Point cadets hissed at Quayle

On Ronald Reagan, Empathy of:

If I listened to him [Michael Dukakis] long enough I would be convinced that we're in an economic downturn and people are homeless and going without food and medical attention and that we've got to do something about the unemployed.

President Ronald Reagan, during the presidential campaign, talking about Democratic candidate Michael Dukakis's criticism of the Administration

On Ronald Reagan, Sense of Humor of:

My fellow Americans. I've signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes.

President Ronald Reagan, before he was going to make a radio broadcast, unaware that the mike was already on

On Rebukes:

Sir, you have tasted two whole worms; you have hissed all my mystery lectures and been caught fighting a liar in the quad, you will leave Oxford by the next town drain.

Rev. William A. Spooner telling a student to leave his class for nonattendance and lighting fires; his classic spoonerism

On the Recession, Where to Find:

The recession has been in the back of my mind, but I've seen no sign of it whatsoever.

Auntie Pasta executive interviewed in Gourmet News, April 1991

On Record Executives, Great Decisions of:

You'll never make it—four groups are out. Go back to Liverpool....

Decca Records executive to the Beatles in 1962

On Red Lights, Meaning of:

He can run any time he wants. I'm giving him the red light.

Yogi Berra, talking about new Yankee Rickey Henderson, known for his base-stealing ability

On Redundancy:

I'm for abolishing and doing away with redundancy.

J. Curtis McKay of the Wisconsin State Elections Board

On Reform, Political:

We must restore to Chicago all the good things it never had.

Richard Daley, mayor of Chicago

On Reform, Teamsters and:

To those who say it is time to reform this organization and that it's time the officers stopped selling out its members, I say "Go to hell."

Frank Fitzsimmons, Teamsters Union president

On Relatives:

This extraordinary man left no children behind him, except his brother, who was killed at the same time.

from a biography of French revolutionary leader Robespierre, in a nineteenth-century Irish paper

On Relatives:

Are you any relation to your brother Marv?

Leon Wood, New Jersey Nets guard, to Steve Albert, Nets TV commentator

On Relatives:

My dear Sandby. I'm glad to see you. Pray is it you or your brother?

Sir W. Caulfield, British literary figure, greeting a friend

On Religion, Newspapers and:

It isn't like I came down from Mount Sinai with the tabloids.

Indianapolis Colts coach Ron Meyer

On Religion and Sports:

If Jesus were a football player, he'd play fair, he'd play clean, and he'd put the guy across the line on his butt.

Barry Rice, football player for evangelist Jerry Falwell's Liberty University

On Religion and Sports:

If Christ were a ballplayer, he'd be the best there was. He'd take out the guy at second base, then he'd say, "I love you," pick him up, slap him on the butt and come back to the dugout.

Brett Butler, Los Angeles Dodger

On Religion and Sports:

I can't perceive God being on the mound in the ninth inning and saying [a loss] is the way it should be. I perceive Him as being an individual who would beat you any way He can as long as it's within the rules.

Dick Balderson, general manager of the Seattle Mariners

On Religion and Sports:

If Jesus were on the field, he'd be pitching inside and breaking up double plays. He'd be high-fiving the other guys.

Tim Burke, Montreal Expos pitcher

On Repeating Yourself:

I have reiterated over again what I have said before.

Mayor Robert F. Wagner of New York

On Reputations:

His reputation preceded him before he got here.

Don Mattingly, New York Yankee, on Mets pitcher Dwight Gooden

On Retreat, Other Words for:

Should the Red hordes continue to pour across the Yalu, it might not only render impossible the resumption of our offensive, but conceivably could eventuate in a movement in retrograde.

General Douglas MacArthur in a press conference, commenting on the situation in Korea

On Revolutions, What to Do in:

I would take my own head by the hair, cut it off, and presenting it to the despot, would say to him, "Tyrant, behold the act of a free man."

a perhaps overzealous French revolutionary speaking to mob in Paris in 1789, reported by Anglo-American revolutionary Thomas Paine

On the Rhythm Method According to Experts:

... the safe times [for sex] are the week before and the week of ovulation.

Dr. Ruth Westheimer, in First Love: A Young People's Guide to Sexual Information. The typo ("safe" for "unsafe") resulted in a huge book recall and the issuance of a new, corrected edition.

On Riding:

Now ride off in all directions.

Michael Curtiz, directing Gary Cooper on a horse

On Being Right:

You are partly one hundred percent right.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Riots, Interesting Ways to Control:

... airplanes may be used for the purpose of keeping rioters off roofs by means of machine gun fire ... infantry should and will invariably constitute the major part of any command employed in suppressing domestic disorders ... armored cars will be especially valuable in riot duty....

General Douglas MacArthur, Military Aid in Disturbances (1935), in which he also comes out against the use of blanks, as an "admission of weakness." Shoot to kill, he urged. From George Seldes, famous muckraking journalist of the era.

On Roles, Acting:

It's a great role and you'll play it to the tilt.

Gregory Ratoff, Hollywood director

On Franklin Roosevelt, Comparisons with:

I think I've made a difference in my phase of the broadcast industry, but I don't think I've impacted on the world in the manner of Franklin Roosevelt.

Howard Cosell, sports broadcaster

On Franklin Roosevelt, Dubious Comparisons with:

I'm not trying to compare myself with Roosevelt, but he couldn't walk either.

George Wallace, campaigning in the 1976 presidential race

On Ropes:

Those who vote for this bond issue will be putting a rope around their necks which will suck at their vitals like a deadly vampire.

overheard during congressional debate

On Rotarians, Reasons Not to Join the:

At the Lincoln Park traps on Sunday ... over 80 shooters took part in the program. Rotarians, Be patriotic! Learn to shoot yourself.

from Chicago Rotary Club journal, Gyrator

On Rules, Strange:

Under the rules of the contest, any concrete canoe that sinks directly to the bottom of Round Pond is not allowed to continue in the race.

from rules for a West Point contest printed in a local newspaper

On Running:

I'm very sorry, but I ran like a fire hydrant.

Michael Curtiz, Hollywood director, apologizing for being late to an appointment

On Russian Spies, Statements Made When Discovered:

In all other respects, he's done a very good job.

Press Officer Noel Jones, of the British Embassy in Moscow, commenting on Konstantin Demakhin, embassy driver for nineteen years, who, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, announced that he had been a KGB spy

SPECIAL SECTION: Academese and Bureaucratese

There are two kinds of languages that deserve a special nod of the head. We're talking about the pseudolanguages used by the academic and the bureaucrat—acadamese and bureaucratese.

These are fatty, high-cholesterol languages. They use big words when small ones will do just as well. They use jargon words instead of words we all understand. They often employ confusing syntax, filled with ands, ors, and buts, commas, semicolons, and dashes. They are marked by confusing statements and intricate, technical-sounding explanations that sound like they're filled with meaning. Until someone bothers to analyze them.

For example, if you're in the government, and someone asks you how the redecorating of your house is going, you never just say, "Fine." Instead, as Walter Annenberg, then ambassador to Great Britain, said to the Queen of England, you say:

We're in the embassy residence, subject, of course, to some of the discomfiture as a result of a need for elements of refurbishments and rehabilitation.

Much better.

The trick, then, is to speak long-windedly and carry a big shtick.

And while you're at it, try to make up new words, preferably with hyphens. That's how we get such gems as: "non-ecological boundary" instead of "fence"; "personnel backload" (meaning withdrawal of troops); "physical freeway" instead of "corridor"; and the ever popular CIA-coined "termination with extreme prejudice."

Every year, the Committee on Public Doublespeak of the National Council of Teachers, headed by William Lutz, gives awards for the "best" examples of the year. It must be a tough job. There's so much of this stuff around. It's a twentieth-century bonanza of obfuscation.

One common use of this language is to “nuance” the facts—you sort of tell the truth but make it sound much nicer. If the listener doesn’t watch himself, he may think you’re saying the opposite of what you’re really saying.

Advertisers are masters of this. They use such dubious actfectives as “re-manufactured,” “genuine imitation,” or (even classier) “genuine faux.” This means “fake.” Car dealers sell “pre-owned” cars. This means “used.”

Government agencies get even more verbose, covering up the facts with strings of technical gibberish. For example, a Federal Aviation Administration report talked about the “premature impact of the aircraft with the terrain below.” This means the airplane crashed. During the Three Mile Island nuclear reactor disaster, officials talked about the possibility of a “rapid energetic disassembly.” This means the reactor might explode.

Press secretaries, in particular, are proponents of “carefully crafted nuanced answers.” During Watergate, Ron Ziegler explained that President Nixon made “inoperative statements.” He “misspoke.” Larry Speakes explained that President Reagan spoke with “misprecision.” Lies? Not exactly. Truth? Not exactly either.

In short, the problem with this high-fat diet of words and symbols is that it clogs the brain. Thoughts are crowded out by words. People are deceived. No one knows what is going on.

But isn’t that the point?

Alexander Haig, one of the masters of the art of confusing speech, may have summed up academese and bureaucratese best when, during a March 1981 Time interview, he explained:

No, no. I’m not saying anything of the kind; in fact, I’m very consciously avoiding saying anything.

Exactly.

Some Examples:

- Alongside the synchronicity inherent in the sociotext, the ideological construction of the subject may be explored in a diachronic direction. Given all the variables that come into play in the sociotext, the represented and the empirical worlds meet as two correlatives without becoming fused. By now I hope it is evident that the sociotext does not refer to an instance derived from sociocritique (yet both meet at crucial points) or from sociology, or sociolinguistics, or social psychology.

Myriam Diaz-Diocaretz, University of Utrecht, in her essay, “Sieving the matriheritage of the sociotext,” in The Difference Within, edited by E. Meese and Alice Parker

- Despite all the deprecation I cannot bring myself to accept the notion that the inter-relation among our men and women has departed.

President Warren G. Harding

- By a yea-and-nay vote of 337 yeas to 76 nays, Roll No. 57, the House disagreed to

the Senate amendment to the House amendment to the Senate amendment to the House amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 3128, to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 2 of the first concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 1986 (S. Con. Res. 32, Ninety-ninth Congress) returning the measure to the Senate.

voting on a budget reconciliation measure recorded in a 1986 Congressional Record

- Post-modernism needs to be dealt with in the same manner as modernism, that is, as either exclusive or inclusive. The definition of exclusive post-modernism depends on a conception of exclusive modernism. Exclusive post-modernism wants to invert exclusive modernism and, in the process, destroy it.... Inclusive post-modernism is merely the latest stage of inclusive modernism, that is, modernism that encompasses post-modernism. Thus, both exclusive post-modernism and pluralism are opposed to exclusive modernism. But pluralism is broader than exclusive post-modernism, since it views art as open in every direction, including that of exclusive modernism.

Irving Sandler, art critic, in a 1980 Art Journal, as quoted by Spy

- I am concerned that with modern communications there is a penchant for episodic emphasis.

Alexander Haig, then Secretary of State, commenting in Time magazine on media coverage of El Salvador

- Concretely my class' study of hamburgers not only involved English and philosophy in our use of writing, reading, and conceptual analysis, but it also included economics in the study of the commodity relations which bring hamburgers to the market, history, and sociology in an assessment of what the everyday diet was like before the rise of the hamburger, and health science in terms of the nutritional value of the ruling burger.

Ira Shor, professor at the City University of New York (quoted in a New York Times op-ed column by author and teacher Rachel Erlanger)

- Notice is hereby given that the applications listed in the attached appendix are accepted for filing. Because the applications listed in the attached appendix are in conflict with applications which were accepted for filing and listed previously as subject to a cutoff date for conflicting applications, no application which would be in conflict with the applications listed in the attached appendix will be accepted for filing.

a Federal Communications Commission public notice, circa 1983, on applications being accepted for FM broadcast licenses (chosen as a "Memo of the Month" by The Washington Monthly)

- It is true that some rhetorics have denied their imbrication in ideology, doing so in the name of a disinterested scientism. More recently, the discussion of the relation between ideology and rhetoric has taken a new turn. Ideology is here foregrounded and problematized in a way that situates rhetoric within ideology, rather than ideology within rhetoric.

James Berlin, English professor at Purdue University, from his article "Rhetoric and Ideology," in the magazine of the National Council of Teachers of English, College English (quoted in a New York Times op-ed column by author and teacher Rachel Erlanger)

- Both the black and white teachers studied emitted few reinforcements and those emitted tended to be traditional (distant, reinforcers), although most teachers stated

a preference for proximity reinforcers (material rewards and close personal contact).

from a Journal of Educational Psychology article

- The most important consequence might well be that the theory of autopoietic systems seems to bar all ways back to an anthropological conception of man. It precludes, in other words, humanism.... This means we have to invent new conceptual artificialities in order to give an account of what we see when we meet someone who looks and behaves like a human being. How do we know that he is one?

Niklas Luhman, "The Individuality of the Individual," Reconstructing Individualism

- It is a tricky problem to find the particular calibration in timing that would be appropriate to stem the acceleration in risk premiums created by falling incomes without prematurely aborting the decline in the inflation-generated risk premiums.

Alan Greenspan, chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, in testimony before a Senate committee

- [We] must continue to be deeply concerned about abuses to human rights wherever they occur; but, there are such questions as whether amelioration of those abuses is best achieved under the glare of public criticism and animosity and confrontation, or whether it is best achieved in a quieter dialogue between states with a healthy relationship.

Alexander Haig, Secretary of State, in response to a Time reporter's question of whether he thought human rights diplomacy should be conducted privately instead of through Congress

- The management of information requires organizing and structuring data into conceptually clear and logical component ideas that can be transmitted in forms that are user-friendly.

from a New York City Board of Education memo

- Concretizing Mission ... capacity building of personnel resources and personal abilities of central board of education, districts and school to facilitate generating vehicles to assist schools in nurturing student achievement.

from a memo written by the New York City director of the Office of Professional Development and Leadership Training, when asked by the schools chancellor to report to him about her most pressing problems and how she was intending to solve them

- At the moment, we are subsumed in the vortex of criticality.

Alexander Haig, then Secretary of State

- At such a time, the stimulation of trans-national linkages necessary for meaningful two-way communication must supersede propagandistic and chauvinistic functions which in the past constituted too large a share of our activities.

Joseph Daniel Duffey, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, in a written public statement about the work his bureau did

- I think our performance in terms of the liftoff performance and in terms of orbital performance, we knew more about the envelope we were operating under, and we have been pretty accurately staying in that. And so I would say the performance has not by design drastically improved. I think we have been able to characterize the performance more as a function of our launch experience as opposed to it improving as a function of time.

a NASA administrator being interviewed during the official investigation of the space shuttle Challenger explosion

a NASA administrator, being interviewed during the official investigation of the space shuttle Challenger explosion, replying to a question about whether the performance of the shuttle program improved with each launch

- The criticality in answering your question, sir, would be a real foot race as to which one would be considered more critical, depending on the particular time that you looked at your experience with that.

a NASA official testifying about the space shuttle Challenger explosion (Nom-NASA, Morton Thiokol, and Rockwell International were awarded the 1986 "Doublespeak" award)

S

On Salaries:

People think we make \$3 million and \$4 million a year. They don't realize that most of us only make \$500,000.

Texas Ranger baseball player Pete Incaviglia

On Salvation:

It was necessary to destroy the village in order to save it.

an American officer in Vietnam in a 1968 report on the razing of Vietnamese village Ben Tre

On Samoans:

You all look like happy campers to me. Happy campers you are, happy campers you have been, and as far as I am concerned, happy campers you will always be.

Vice-President Dan Quayle, addressing a group of Samoans during a Pacific trip

On School Administration, Great Ideas on:

Notice to Teachers: All teachers seem to have the wrong conception of the course of study about teaching the grades. I say to all teachers that "All grades are to be taught every year." Do not quibble about this with your patrons. It must be as I say.

The Odd Grades as Major Grades and Even Grades as Minor Grades to be taught in the Even Years. And the Even grades as Major Grades and the Odd Grades as Minor Grades in the Odd Years. Respectfully, T. J. Leathers, Supt.

Kentucky notice to teachers, 1924

On School Administration, Great Ideas on:

No. 1, to determine what it is, at different age and ability levels, that children ought to know, believing that we can never determine if children know what they ought to know if we haven't determined what it is we think they ought to know.

Kentucky Governor Wallace Wilkinson on his education reform package, in the 1970s

On Scores:

And Kansas City is at Chicago tonight, or is that Chicago at Kansas City? Well, no matter. Kansas City leads in the eighth, 4 to 4.

Jerry Coleman, Padres announcer, going through the scoreboard on air

On Screenplays:

You call this a script? Give me a couple of \$5,000-a-week writers and I'll write it myself.

producer Joe Pasternak

On Seasickness, Where to be Overcome by:

Yogi Berra:

You mean you get seasick?

Rube Walker:

Do I ever!

Yogi Berra:

On water?

as reported by sportswriter Phil Pepe

On Seeds, Flaming:

God hath kindled a seed in this nation.

Oliver Cromwell, seventeenth-century Lord Protector of England, in a famous address to the nation

On Seeing:

I saw no corn standing in ricks, a thing I never saw before and would not have believed it had I not seen it.

William Cobbett, late eighteenth-and early nineteenth-century English writer and champion of the poor, in his most famous book. Rural Rides

On Segues, Great:

If you think the football game was exciting, wait until you hear the report from Tom Aspell from Amman, Jordan.

Tom Brokaw, NBC News anchorman, just after an NFL game had been broadcast, in his lead-in to a story about the Gulf War

On Self-Identity:

Hi, folks, I'm Jerry Gross. No, I'm not, I'm Jerry Coleman.

Jerry Coleman, San Diego Padres announcer on air

On Sermons, Surrealistic Ones:

We often pursue the shadow until the bubble bursts and leaves nothing but the ashes in our hands.

from a sermon by a British clergyman

On Servants, Headless:

We have spoken of that sanguinary year, 1793. In those troubled times it was that French domestics set an example of the greatest devotion. There were many even who, rather than betray their masters, allowed themselves to be guillotined in their place, and who, when happier days returned, silently and respectfully went back to their work.

Figaro, Paris, February 1890; from an essay on home life during the French Revolution

On Sex:

Making love is a mental illness that wastes time and energy.

People's Republic of China, official Communist Party proclamation, 1971

On Sex:

Sex will outlive us all.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Sex and the Bible:

Sexual orientation is against everything in this book [said while waving a Bible].
Robert Shaw, Chicago alderman, in a city council debate on gay rights

On the Sexes:

Letter from A.M., Mc.W. to *Watertown* (New York) *Daily Times*:
Is it possible for a doctor to determine the sex of an unborn child by listening to the fetal heartbeat? (A.M., McW.)

Answer:

No. In any case, anybody's guess is as likely to be right as wrong. About half of all babies are boys or girls.

On the Sexes:

Ladies, without distinction of sex, would be welcome.
from a handbill for a political demonstration in the early 1900s

On the Sexes:

My sister's expecting a baby, and I don't know if I'm going to be an uncle or an aunt.
Chuck Nevitt, basketball player at North Carolina State University, as reported in Sports Illustrated

On the Sexes:

The Great Synod of 1920 will always be memorable for having at length admitted women to be enrolled in the list of registered vestry men.
the Very Rev. Dr. Ross, speaking about the Tuam Diocesan Synod

On the Sexes, Determining Physical Differences Between:

I don't know. They were wearing a paper bag over their head.
Yogi Berra after he had seen a streaker and was asked if the person was male or female

On the Sexes, Differences Between:

As poet, actress, literary critic and artist, Mrs. Wyatt Cooper, better known as Gloria Vanderbilt, has often been called an up-to-date and very feminine version of the many-faceted Renaissance man.
a Life magazine staff writer in the introduction to a series of photos of Gloria Vanderbilt (October 4, 1968)

On the Sexes, Differences Between:

You should hear her sing. She's a female Lena Horne.
producer Joe Pasternak

On Sexual Harassment:

Sexual harassment on the job is not a problem for virtuous women.
Phyllis Schlafly, conservative activist and founder of the Eagle Forum

On Sexual Preference:

We're well aware of the male homosexual problem in this country, which is of course minor, but to our certain knowledge there is not one lesbian in England.

Lord Chamberlain of England to Lillian Hellman during a discussion of the play The Children's Hour (from Lilly by Peter Feibleman)

On Shakespeare, Little-Known Facts About:

Quite a number of people also describe the German classical author, Shakespeare, as belonging to the English literature, because—quite accidentally born at Stratford-on-Avon—he was forced by authorities of that country to write in English.

from the Deutscher Weckruf und Beobachter, 1940

On Shakespeare, Soviet Confirmation of Little-Known Facts About:

I asked one of the principal actors of the dramatic theater about Shakespeare, and he told me that he is just learning German, so that he may soon be able to read Shakespeare in the original.

from the Soviet literary magazine Literaturnaya Gazeta, 1940

On Shakespeare (Wilhelm), Unique Contributions to Human Literature:

Shakespeare has not only shown human nature as it is, but as it would be found in situations to which it cannot be exposed.

Samuel Johnson, great eighteenth-century English writer

On Shoes:

I never put on a pair of shoes until I've worn them five years.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Shoes:

A tax on leather would press heavily on the barefooted peasantry of Ireland.

Crofton Moore Vandeleur, British statesman

On Silence, Sounds of:

Lead us in a few words of silent prayer.

ex-Houston Oiler and Florida State coach Bill Peterson

On Silos, Senatorial Interest in Missile:

Wait a minute! I'm not interested in agriculture. I want the military stuff.

Senator William Scott (R-Va.) during a Pentagon briefing in which army officials began telling him about missile silos

On Similarities:

Me and George and Billy are two of a kind.

Mickey Rivers, Texas Rangers outfielder, on his warm relationship with Yankee owner Steinbrenner and manager Billy Martin

On Singing Styles:

They were singing without accompaniment. You know—acapulco.

director Gregory Ratoff, telling of hearing a singing group

On Sleep:

The best cure for insomnia is to get a lot of sleep.

attributed to Senator S. I. Hayakawa

On Sleep:

I usually take a two-hour nap, from one o'clock to four.

Yogi Berra, explaining what he does before night games

On Sleeves, Where Found on Human Body:

The time has come to strip to the waist and tuck up our shirt sleeves.

overheard during political debate

On Smokescreens by a Presidential Candidate:

I didn't inhale.

Bill Clinton, as Democratic presidential candidate, answering rumors that he had smoked marijuana

On Solidity:

We appeal down to the fundamental principles which underlie the tossing waves on the surface.

former Archbishop of Canterbury, in speech in House of Lords

On Space Exploration:

Mars is essentially in the same orbit. Mars is somewhat the same distance from the sun, which is very important. We have seen pictures where there are canals, we believe, and water. If there is water, that means there is oxygen. If oxygen, that means we can breathe.

Vice-President Dan Quayle

On Space Exploration, Bad Predictions About:

Space travel is utter bilge.

Sir Richard Woolley, 1950s Astronomer Royal of Britain, predicting the likelihood of space travel

On Space Exploration, the Final Word on:

I think space exploration is very important and can yield a lot of knowledge.

contestant for Mr. New Jersey Male, when asked what he would do with a million dollars

On Speaking:

Mr. Speaker, if I had said that I would not have been allowed to.

anonymous speaker during British parliamentary debate

On Speaking, Without Speaking:

I am not going to trouble the House further than to express my unutterable disgust at the way in which I have been treated.

John O'Conner, M.P. in House of Commons, 1907

On Speech:

Ladies and gentlemen, if this coercion measure is passed no man in Ireland will be able to speak upon politics unless he is born deaf and dumb.

Lord Charles Russell, Liberal Member of Parliament, in an 1880 speech

On Speeches, Great:

Having a speech writer would definitely be too plastic. I just try to remember six key words before every talk.

Mark Spitz, swimmer and Olympic gold medalist, on whether or not he had people write his speeches for him

On Speeches, Great Political:

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to be with you today. For immediate release only.

New Mexico Senator Joe Montoya, at a dinner speech in Albuquerque. He had rushed in late and read straight from his press release.

On Speed:

Brooks Robinson is not a fast man, but his arms and legs move very quickly.

Curt Gowdy, network sports announcer, on air during the 1971 World Series

On Spelling:

Mr. Speaker, this bill is a phony with a capital F.

Congressman during a heated congressional debate

On Sponsorship, Appropriate:

This portion of “Women on the Run” is brought to you by Phillips’ Milk of Magnesia.

Harry Von Zell, radio announcer in the 1950s

On Spontaneity, Political:

[It was a] semi-planned spontaneous stop.

Douglas Scamman, 1992 Bush New Hampshire presidential campaign manager, on a staged campaign stop at a farm

On Sports:

Baseball is 90 percent mental. The other half is physical.

Yogi Berra

On Sports:

Now Juantorena opens his legs—and really shows his class.

David Coleman, broadcaster at the 1976 Montreal Olympics

On Sports:

No manager is ever going to run a tail-end club and be popular because there is no strikeout king that he’s going to go up and shake hands with and they’re going to love you because who’s going to kiss a player when he strikes out and I got a shortstop which

I don't think could have been a success without him. If you mix up the infield, you can't have teamwork. It's a strange thing if you look it up that the Milwaukee club in the morning paper lost a doubleheader and they got three of my players on their team and you can think it over.

Casey Stengel, Yankees manager, talking about how he managed

On Sports:

Luis Tiant comes from everywhere except between his legs.

Curt Gowdy, on air discussing pitcher Luis Tiant during the first 1975 World Series game between the Reds and the Red Sox

On Sports, Bad Calls In:

Anyone who can't tell the difference between a ball hitting wood and a ball hitting concrete must be blind.

Yogi Berra, while arguing with an umpire's call. The umpire said the ball had hit a concrete outfield wall and was in play; Berra said the ball hit a wooden barricade behind the wall and was a home run.

On Sports Fans:

I love sports. Whenever I can, I always watch the Detroit Tigers on radio.

President Gerald Ford

On Sports Individuals:

He's kind of in a mold by himself.

Floyd Peters, defensive coordinator of the Minnesota Vikings, on Bears running back Neal Anderson

On Sports Records:

Young Frank Pastore may have pitched the biggest victory of 1979. Maybe the biggest victory of the year!

Jerry Coleman, Padres broadcast announcer

On Sports Records:

Pete Rose has three thousand hits and three thousand fourteen overall.

Jerry Coleman, Padres broadcast announcer

On Sports, Strange Moments in:

He slides into second with a stand-up double.

Jerry Coleman, Padres broadcast announcer

On Sports, Strange Moments in:

McCovey swings and misses, and it's fouled back.

Jerry Coleman, Padres broadcast announcer

On Sports, Strange Moments in:

Toronto hockey fans will be glad to learn that their goalie made his first girl ever in the last ten seconds of play.

On Sports, Strange Moments in:

If Rose's streak was still intact, with that single to the left the fans would be throwing babies out of the upper deck.

Jerry Coleman, Padres broadcast announcer, about a hit made by Pete Rose

On Sports, Strange Moments in:

Rex Morgan winds up his career today, the only starter in the starting lineup.

Curt Gowdy, sports announcer, on air during an NCAA basketball final

On Sports, Strange Moments in:

Rich Rolkers is throwing up in the bullpen.

Jerry Coleman, Padres broadcast announcer

On Sports, Strange Moments in:

There's a hard shot to LeMaster—and he throws Madlock into the dugout.

Jerry Coleman, Padres broadcast announcer

On Sports, Strange Moments in:

They throw Winfield out at second and he's safe.

Jerry Coleman, Padres broadcast announcer

On Sports, Strange Moments in:

He fakes a bluff.

Ron Fairly, Giants broadcast announcer

On Sports, Very Strange Moments in:

Winfield goes back to the wall. He hits his head on the wall and it rolls off! It's rolling all the way back to second base! This is a terrible thing for the Padres!

Jerry Coleman, Padres broadcast announcer, attempting to tell radio listeners about a fly ball hit by a member of the opposing team

On Stamp Collecting, Communist:

Down with the greedy Stamp Bourgeoisie! Long Live the Red Philatelic International, leader and guardian of the world's working class philatelists and numismatists! Proletarian stamp and coin collectors, Unite!

from the front page of the 1924 Russian magazine for stamp collectors, the Red Philatelist. This manifesto was published in English, French, German, and Russian.

On Stars, What It Takes to Become One:

I looked at all the superstars. What is their different thing? Their hair.... I wanted to be a star. I said, "I have to fix my hair."

Rob Pilatus, one half of Grammy-winning group Milli Vanilli, who were later found to be lip-synching to prerecorded songs sung by other singers, commenting on his over \$700 hairstyle

On Statistics:

These are not my figures I'm quoting. They're from someone who knows what he's talking about.

congressman in debate

On Statuary:

Frances has the most beautiful hands in the world, and someday I'm going to make a bust of them.

movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Staying Power:

The thing that's kept Jeff around is his longevity.

Don Smith, defensive end with the Atlanta Falcons, on his long-playing teammate Jeff Yates

On Stones, Living:

The very recognition of these or any of them by the jurisprudence of a nation is a mortal wound to the very keystone upon which the whole vast arch of morality reposes.

Thomas De Quincey, nineteenth-century English essayist, author of, among others, Confessions of an English Opium-Eater

On Strangers:

What do you mean, stranger? I don't even know you.

Michael Curtiz, director, to a man on the Warner Brothers movie lot who greeted him with a "Howdy, stranger."

On the Strategic Defense Initiative:

I don't think the American public wants to be bothered with the what, when, and how of lasers in space and things like that. Whether the technology will work or how much it will cost—these are peripheral arguments.

Rick Sellers, executive director of the Coalition for the SDI, as quoted in the Washington Post

On Strength:

Gil Hodges is so strong he could snap your eyebrows off.

Casey Stengel, famed manager of the New York Yankees and Mets

On Strikes, How to Solve:

I still feel that the best answer is a head-on-head, man-to-man negotiation between the union and the airline.

President George Bush during the 1989 Eastern Airline's pilots' strike

On Suicide, How to Stop:

The only way to stop this suicide wave is to make it a capital offense, punishable by death.

Irish legislator in Parliament

On Sunshine:

I selected a shady nook and basked in the sunshine.

R. J. Mcreedy, writer and publisher, describing a day during his summer vacation

On Superlatives:

It's more than magnificent. It's mediocre!

attributed to Samuel Goldwyn, film producer

On Surprises:

This is a delightful surprise to the extent that it is a surprise and it is only a surprise to the extent that we anticipated.

James Baker, Secretary of State, discussing administration reaction to the Kohl/Gorbachev German reunification agreement

On Swords:

I will draw my sword from the hilt, and will not cease firing until I have proved every statement true.

speaker at a Walthamstown town council meeting

On Syntax, Chicago-Style:

The problems will be explained to the people which I think the people are interested in. I said the explanations will be given to the people in the problems I think concerns them.

Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, Sr.

T

On Taking a Stand:

I am philosophically opposed to any fare increase.... That does not mean I will not support one.

Fairfax County, Virginia, Supervisor Joseph Alexander

On Talking:

It was hard to have a conversation with anyone, there were so many people talking.

Yogi Berra, talking about a dinner at the White House

On Talking:

I'm not going to discuss what I'm going to bring up.... Even if I don't discuss it, I'm not going to discuss it.

President George Bush, talking about his relationship with the press

On Talking:

Last night I neglected to mention something that bears repeating.

Ron Fairly, San Francisco Giants broadcaster, during on-air game coverage

On Talking:

If I wasn't talking, I wouldn't know what to say.

Chico Resch, New York Islanders goaltender

On Talking, Not:

He got me by the throat so that I could not speak and I asked him several times to let me go.

victim testifying during an assault case

On Talking, Hot:

There is a great deal more I want to say, but I don't want to say any more, and I won't.

a delegate to the National Association for the Prevention of Consumption, Manchester, U.K.

On Tape Erasures:

Some sinister force had come in and applied the other energy source and taken care of the information on the tape.

Alexander Haig, giving his theory on the 18½-minute gap in the Nixon tapes to special judge John Sirica

On Taste:

I want this house overfurnished in perfect taste.

Michael Curtiz, director, talking about a set design

On Taste, Bad:

Well, David, did you do any fornicating this weekend?

Richard Nixon to David Frost before an interview

On Taxation, Nuclear War and:

If a third or more of our population were killed in an attack (a conservative estimate by the standards of the Rand Corporation's "Study of Nonmilitary Defense") a stronger estate tax would have a tremendous revenue potential.

from a 1963 Federal Reserve System planning document

On Taxes:

Sure, some people pay money they may not owe. We make mistakes.

IRS Commissioner Fred Goldberg, Jr., responding to a magazine article that reported IRS billing errors of \$7-15 billion

On Taxes:

Only the little people pay taxes.

Leona Helmsley, hotel magnate, who was later indicted for nonpayment of taxes

On Teachers, Infallibility of:

He has never learned anything, and he can do nothing in decent style.

Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, composer, theoretician, and one of Ludwig van Beethoven's teachers

On Teachers, Infallibility of:

It doesn't matter what he does, he will never amount to anything.

one of Albert Einstein's teachers, giving his opinion on Einstein's future to Einstein's father

On Teachers, Infallibility of:

[He is] overage and certain to prove mediocre.

Francesco Basily, principal of the Royal and Imperial Conservatory of Milan, rejecting the application of composer/musician Giuseppe Verdi to study at the conservatory

On Telephone Instructions, Clear:

To speak to a guest in another room: Please follow these instructions: 1st Floor—add 250 to the room number and dial, on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Floors—dial the number required. 5th Floor—subtract 250 from the room number and dial, e.g. to contact Room 510 dial 260 except for Room 542 whose number is 294.

telephone instructions posted in the Zimbabwe Sun Hotel, as reported in the Far Eastern Economic Review

On Telephones:

The telephone company is urging people to please not use the telephone unless it is absolutely necessary in order to keep the lines open for emergency personnel. We'll be right back after this break to give away a pair of Phil Collins concert tickets to caller number 95.

a Los Angeles radio DJ shortly after the February 1990 earthquake

On Telephones:

Nassau County NYNEX Telephone Directory (1991) Listing:

Federal Bureau of Investigation (718) 459-3140 If No Answer Call (718) 459-3140

On Telephone Wires, Being Quantum Mechanically in More than One Place:

... the number of new overhead wires would be comparatively small, and would be placed underground.

Postmaster General, during debate explaining ease of a rewiring project

On Telling It All:

The [deleted] is a key element of the Worldwide Military Command and Control System (WWMCCS) warning network.... [Deleted] currently consists of [deleted] satellite; two [deleted] satellites; an [deleted] for [deleted] from the [deleted] satellite; a [deleted] for [deleted] and the [deleted] satellites; and a [deleted] which provides [deleted] for the [deleted].... Using these data, [deleted] can be inferred.

a portion of an arms control impact statement submitted to Congress by the Pentagon, 1980

On Telling It Like It is:

Telling it like it is means telling it like it was and how it is now that it isn't what it was to the is now people.

Jill Johnston, in the Village Voice

On Thank You's, Heartfelt:

I cannot tell you how grateful I am—I am filled with humility.

Gib Lewis, Speaker of the Texas House, quoted by Molly Ivins in the New York Times Magazine

On Thoughts, Where Found:

As I was sitting on my seat, a thought struck me.

from a maiden congressional speech, as reported by Massachusetts State Senator John F. Parker

On Time:

It gets late early out there.

Yogi Berra, after he dropped a fly ball during the 1961 World Series, explaining that the sun gets in players' eyes out in Yankee Stadium's left field

On Time:

The time is here, and is rapidly approaching.

William Field, Member of Parliament

On Time:

Tom Seaver:

What time is it?

Yogi Berra:

You mean now?

On Time Passing, Reminiscences About:

We've all passed a lot of water since then.

attributed to an old Hollywood producer, reminiscing about one of his first films

On Time and 3 A.M., the Right Time for an Execution:

We want to minimize as much as possible the impact on the lives of the people who live in Marin County—and at that hour, there's not that much traffic.

San Quentin warden, explaining why he set the execution time for Robert Alton Harris at 3 A.M.

On Toooh Dirt, Removing:

Pull another end of gross and put along the ditch gap of bow-finger and turn up to get down along another bow-finger then return to button on the center.

directions from a Japanese tooth flosser (grosser), with the accompanying motto: "Help you use gross smoothly and clean tooch dirt," reported in Far Eastern Economic Review

On Top Hits, Catchy Chinese:

"Indignantly Condemn the Wang-Chan-Chiang-Yao Gang of Four."

Hit song of 1976, according to the People's Daily, Beijing, China

On Tourism, Bad Reasons for:

Come to think of it, why wait until May to visit Memphis? April is the month the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in the city.

from an item in USA Today

On the Trade Deficit, Nuclear War and:

[After a nuclear attack] ... so far as the balance of payments is concerned, our results show exports consistently exceeding imports by amounts varying from about 150 to 200 percent.

two economists speaking at a Fort Monroe, Virginia, seminar sponsored by Civil Defense in 1967

On Translations, Bad:

Equal goes it loose.

German President Heinrich Lübke, translating "It will soon begin" (Gleich geht es los) into English

On Translations, Bad:

Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave.

ad slogan "Pepsi Comes Alive" as initially translated into Chinese

On Translations, Bad:

I desire the Poles carnally.

President Jimmy Carter's mistranslation in a 1977 speech in Poland

On Translations, Bad:

We pray for MacArthur's erection.

sign supposedly erected by Japanese citizens in Tokyo, when General MacArthur was considering a run for United States President

On Translations, Bad:

1. At the rise of the hand of the policeman, stop rapidly. Do not pass him or otherwise disrespect him.
2. If pedestrian obstacle your path, tootle horn melodiously. If he continue to obstacle, tootle horn vigorously and utter vocal warning such as “Hi, Hi.”
3. If wandering horse by roadside obstacle your path, beware that he do not take fright as you pass him. Go soothingly by, or stop by roadside till he pass away.
4. If road mope obstacle your path, refrain from pass on hill or round curve. Follow patiently till road arrive at straight level stretch. Then tootle horn melodiously and step on, passing at left and waving hand courteously to honorable road mope in passing.
5. Beware of greasy corner where lurk skid demon. Cease step on, approach slowly, round cautiously, resume step on gradually.

from an official Japanese guide for English-speaking drivers, 1936

On Transportation, Legal Minds and:

When two trains approach each other at a crossing, they shall both come to a full stop and neither shall start up until the other has gone.

a law in Kansas

On Travel:

If you come to a fork in the road, take it.

Yogi Berra (widely attributed to Berra, although some say he never actually said it)

On Trees:

A tree’s a tree. How many more do you need to look at?

President Ronald Reagan

On Trees:

There is today in the United States as much forest as there was when Washington was at Valley Forge.

President Ronald Reagan

On Trees:

When you see one redwood, you’ve seen them all.

President Ronald Reagan

On Trees, Second Thoughts About:

I don’t believe a tree is a tree and if you’ve seen one you’ve seen them all.

President Ronald Reagan

On Tributes, Great Presidential:

A real lady who has given unwittingly of her philosophy to the nation.

President Gerald Ford on adviser Ann Armstrong

On Troubles, Presidential Words of Comfort About:

Remember Lincoln, going to his knees in times of trial in the Civil War and all that stuff. You can't be. And we are blessed. So don't feel sorry for—don't cry for me, Argentina.

President George Bush, in a January 15, 1992, New Hampshire campaign speech

On Trustworthiness:

That fellow is a crook. His word isn't worth the paper it's written on.

attributed to movie mogul Samuel Goldwyn

On Truth:

I don't want to tell you any half-truths unless they're completely accurate.

Dennis Rappaport, boxing manager, explaining his silence regarding boxer Thomas Hearns

On Truth:

There are two kinds of truth. There are real truths and there are made-up truths.

Marion Barry, mayor of Washington, D.C., on his arrest for drug use

On Truth:

If I told you the truth, I'd be a hypocrite.

Michael Curtiz, Hollywood director, when asked his opinion of a producer

On Truth, the Meaning of:

The honorable member did not want the truth; the honorable member had asked for facts.

Joseph Chamberlain, nineteenth-century British statesman, leader of the Liberal Unionists, and later Colonial Secretary

On the Twentieth Century, Great Observations About:

[The Holocaust] was an obscene period in our nation's history ... this century's history.... We all lived in this century. I didn't live in this century.

Dan Quayle, then Indiana senator and Republican vice-presidential candidate during a news conference in which he was asked his opinion about the Holocaust

On Twenty-Twenty Hindsight:

You know, I've always wondered about the taping equipment. But I'm damn glad we have it.

President Richard Nixon to White House aide H. R. Haldeman

On Typesetting, Great Moments in:

Several of the Rev. Dr. Mudge's friends called upon him yesterday, and after a

conversation the unsuspecting pig was seized by the hind leg, and slid along a beam until he reached the hot-water tank.... Thereupon he came forward and said that there were times when the feelings overpowered one, and for that reason he would not attempt to do more than thank those around him for the manner in which such a huge animal was cut into fragments was simply astonishing. The doctor concluded his remarks, when the machine seized him and in less time than it takes to write it the pig was cut into fragments and worked up into delicious sausage. The occasion will be long remembered by the doctor's friends as one of the most delightful of their lives. The best pieces can be procured for tenpence a pound, and we are sure that those who have sat so long under his ministry will rejoice that he has been treated so handsomely.

from an English newspaper in the late 1800s, when two stories—one on a patent pig-killing and sausage-making machine and the other on the Rev. Dr. Mudge being presented with a gold-headed cane—were mistakenly pieced together by typographers

U

On U.S. History:

[Students and their ancestors] have been coming to the land now called the United States for millennia.

a City University of New York professor in a newsletter

On Unanimity:

Resolved unanimously with one dissenting voice.

from the report of an Irish Board of Guardians meeting

On Uncertainty, Clarity of:

There's a lot of uncertainty that's not clear in my mind.

Gib Lewis, Speaker of the Texas House

On Understanding the Pentagon:

OPSDEP: Short for Operations Deputy. By JCS charter, the Army representative is the DCSOPS. However, the ADCSOPS (JA), who is the DEPOPSDEP, may act for the OPSDEP on all joint matters. The use of the term OPSDEP also includes DEPOPSDEP. OPSDEPs or DEPOPSDEPs can approve papers for the JCS.

Army Joint Actions Handbook

On Understatements:

The fact that my father was President and Chief Justice of the United States was a tremendous help and inspiration in my public career.

Senator Robert A. Taft, son of President William H. Taft

On Understatements:

A lot of guys said it was fate that stopped it. Probably I would have been dead if it went over.

Dave Munday, stuntperson and daredevil, after the foam-padded barrel he was in caught on a crag inches away from the edge of Niagara Falls

On Understatements:

Ron Ziegler: So it was a really terrific year except for the downside.

Questioner: What downside?

Ziegler: Watergate.

Press Secretary Ron Ziegler when asked about the accomplishments of the Nixon administration

On Understatements (Made in the Depths of the Great Depression):

The country is not in good condition.

Calvin Coolidge, ex-President, sharing his erudite opinion on the Great Depression in January 1931

On Unemployment:

It [unemployment insurance] provides prepaid vacations for a segment of our country which has made it a way of life.

President Ronald Reagan

On Unemployment:

Now we are trying to get unemployment to go up and I think we're going to succeed.

President Ronald Reagan at a 1982 GOP fundraiser

On Unemployment, High:

The right to suffer is one of the joys of a free economy.

Howard Pyle, aide to President Dwight Eisenhower, commenting on the unemployment situation in Detroit

On Unemployment, Reasons for:

When a great many people are unable to find work, unemployment results.

Calvin Coolidge, ex-President, discussing the United States economic situation in 1931

On Unforgettable Moments:

Steve Balboni (Kansas City Royals player):

Hitting your first grand slam is a thrill. I'll always remember this.

Commentator:

But you hit one back in '83.

Steve Balboni:

You're right. I guess I forgot about that one.

On Uniforms, Numbers on:

There's someone warming up in the bull pen, but he's obscured by his number.

Jerry Coleman, San Diego Padres announcer

On Uniforms, Numbers on:

Q: Do the Broncos have your number, Christian?

A: Do they have my number. I don't know. Do they have a guy with the number 35?

Chiefs back Christian Okoye, as reported in Sports Illustrated

On Unknowns:

We received yesterday morning from an unknown source whose immense generosity is well known to us ...

Leon Daudet, French royalist leader, speaking about a large amount of money received by his Royalist Party

On Urban Centers, Interesting Facts About:

Bison, elk, and puma are now extinct in the city of Macon.

a report sponsored by the Federal Writers' Project, Georgia, 1936

V

On Verbs, New:

I've tasked Bill. I've said, "Bill, work the problem."

President George Bush about drug czar William Bennett's job

On Verbs, New:

I have said that the court usurped its authority.

Alabama Governor George Wallace, on a court ruling on the school prayer issue

On Verbs, New:

You'd better caveat that statement.

Alexander Haig, then Secretary of State

On Verbs, New Uses for:

I would like the government to do all it can to mitigate, then, in understanding, in mutuality of interest, in concern for the common good, our tasks will be solved.

President Warren G. Harding, trying to make a point about the government's role, as quoted in H. L. Mencken's essay "Gamalielese." Mencken coined the term "Gamalielese" (based on Harding's middle name, Gamaliel) to refer to Harding's pretentious way of speaking.

On Vietnam Vets:

No wonder we lost the war.

dubious quip by Dorchester, Massachusetts, Judge Paul King, to a Vietnam vet appearing before him

On Violence, the CIA and:

I have definitional problems with the word "violence." I don't know what the word "violence" means.

William Colby, director of the Central Intelligence Agency

On Virility, Congressional:

We're finally going to wrassle to the ground this giant orgasm that is just out of control.

Arizona Senator Dennis DeConcini on a balanced budget amendment

On Virility and Poultry, Interesting Facts About:

It takes a virile man to make a chicken pregnant.

Perdue chicken ad, as mistranslated abroad

W

On Waffling:

I'm not indecisive. Am I indecisive?

Jim Seibel, mayor of St. Paul, Minnesota

On Walking:

Mr. Asquith was like a drunken man walking along a straight line—the further he went the sooner he fell.

Sir Edward Carson, famous Irish politician, and cross-examiner of Oscar Wilde

On War:

This is not a conventional war. We have to forget propriety.

Colonel Robert A. Koob, tentative head of jury in the Sergeant Charles E. Hutto case. Hutto was accused of assault in the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War.

On War:

If we let people see that kind of thing, there would never again be any war.

senior Pentagon official on reasons why United States military censored footage showing Iraqi soldiers sliced in two by U.S. helicopter fire

On War Movies, People in Responsible Positions of Government and:

It made me nostalgic for arms talks and violence—it's a great dialectic.

former Secretary of State Alexander Haig, after seeing a blood and guts military movie, The Package

On Watching:

You can observe a lot by watching.

Yogi Berra

On Watergate:

What was Watergate? A little bugging!

Richard Nixon

On Watergate:

I'm not going to comment from the White House on a third-rate burglary attempt.

Ron Ziegler, Nixon press secretary

On Watergate, Future Presidents and:

I applaud President Nixon's comprehensive statement which clearly demonstrates again that the President was not involved with the Watergate matter.

George Bush, prior to President Nixon's realization that maybe he was involved after all

On Weapons:

Fortunately, the rebels had no guns except pistols, cutlasses and pikes....

Sir Boyle Roche, eighteenth-century M.P. from Tralee, in a letter to a friend

On Weapons, Dumb Roman Predictions About:

I will ignore all ideas for new works on engines of war, the invention of which has reached its limits and for whose improvements I see no further hope.

Sextus Julius Frontinus, first century a.d. Roman engineer

On Weather:

Man, it was tough. The wind was blowing about 100 degrees.

Mickey Rivers, Texas Rangers designated hitter, on the weather during a game

On Weathermen:

There is some possibility of showers tonight, according to Col. H. B. Hersey, government meteorologist, although it is probable there will be no rain.

weather report in the L.A. Express

On Wine, Types of:

We are in a pretty mess; can get nothing to eat, and no wine to drink, except whiskey.

Sir Boyle Roche, eighteenth-century M.P. from Tralee, and preeminent word mangier, in a letter to a friend about the poor state of Ireland

On Winning:

Bobby Knight told me, "There is nothing that a good defense cannot beat a better offense." In other words, a good offense wins.

Vice-President Dan Quayle, speaking extemporaneously to an audience at the City Club of Chicago

On Winning:

The secret to keeping winning streaks going is to maximize the victories while at the same time minimizing the defeats.

John Lowenstein, Baltimore Orioles outfielder

On Wisdom, Congressional:

This is no time to pull the rug out in the middle of the stream.

Representative Silvio Conte, of Massachusetts, during a heated House debate

On Wisdom, Congressional:

That's the most unheard-of thing I ever heard of.

Senator Joseph McCarthy, talking about a witness's testimony

On Wisdom, Congressional:

I do not feel that we should allow a shortage of funds to prevent cities from financing needed projects.

Hubert Humphrey, Minnesota senator and former Vice-President

On Wisdom, Congressional:

I think that the free-enterprise system is absolutely too important to be left to the voluntary action of the marketplace.

Congressman Richard Kelly (R-Fla.)

On Wisdom, Congressional:

There are instances where it is in the best interests of the nation not to vote the will of the people.

ex-Speaker of the House Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill, Jr., on why Congress gave itself a pay raise without voting on the record for the raise

On Wisdom, Parliamentary:

I am ignorant of the Government's reasons, but I disapprove of them.

James C. Percy, citing an English Member of Parliament during a heated parliamentary debate circa 1910

On Wives, Those Who Aren't Female:

I am glad to say that the first man to knock him down for doing such a thing was his own wife.

a political campaign manager, talking about a man who didn't support his candidate

On Wives, Those Who Bark:

The faithful watchdog or the good wife standing at the door to welcome the homecoming master with honest bark ...

small-town newspaper editor in Wisconsin, mid-1800s, infamous for word mangling

On Women:

Nobody can influence me. Nobody at all. And a woman still less.

the ex-Shah of Iran

On Women:

I consider that women who are authors, lawyers, and politicians are monsters.

Pierre Auguste Renoir, French Impressionist painter and sculptor

On Women:

Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure she will have for it, even as her accomplishment and recreation. To those duties you have not yet been called, and when you are you will be less eager for celebrity.

Robert Southey to Charlotte Bronte, famed novelist

On Women:

There has been no exclusion. We have simply excluded all the women.

Nicolas Romanoff, descendant of last Czar of Russia Nicholas II, explaining why no women were invited to a meeting to form a family foundation, as reported in Fortune magazine

On Work:

Work is the curse of the drinking classes.

Rev. William A. Spooner

On Working Your Way From the Bottom Up:

My family worked for everything we had. We even have a deed from the King of England for property in South Carolina. Now these jerks come along and try to give it to the Communists.

Martha Mitchell, wife of Attorney General John Mitchell

On Writing:

This is the best biography by me I have ever read.

orchestra leader Lawrence Welk, looking at his book on display at an American Booksellers Association convention

On Writing:

I'm astounded by people who take eighteen years to write something. That's how long it took that guy to write Madame Bovary, and was that ever on the best-seller list?

Sylvester Stallone, actor

On Writing:

You can't do it that way. You spoil the anticlimax.

Michael Curtiz, film director, to a writer rewriting a scene

On Writing, Necessity of Humane for:

... Writing, a reality not independent of human activity, is historically saturated and organized, embedded within the domain of productivity, and the word is "the ideological phenomenon par excellence." ...

Myriam Diaz-Diocaretz, University of Utrecht, in her essay "Sieving the matriheritage of the sociotext," in The Difference Within, edited by E. Meese and Alice Parker

On Wrong, the Rightness of:

Caesar did never wrong save with just cause.

William Shakespeare, in Julius Caesar, as noted in The Handybook of Literary Curiosities, by W. Walsh, 1871

Y

On Yes-Men and -Women

The President doesn't want any yes-men and yes-women around him. When he says no, we all say no.

Elizabeth Dole, then assistant for public liaison to President Reagan, later Secretary of Labor under President Bush

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