

SPEEDBUMPS

October, 2001

*Tough times are like Speedbumps . . . they only slow you down a little . . .
they don't throw you off your course!*

A Hallmark Card

Laughter in a Hurting World

I think laughter may be a form of courage. As humans, we sometimes stand tall and look into the sun and laugh, and I think we are never more brave then when we do that.

Linda Ellerbee

If I have caused just one person to wipe away a tear of laughter, that's my reward.

Victor Borge

Humor is an affirmation of dignity . . . our declaration of superiority over all that befalls us.

Susan Allen

Browsing the materials we collected for this issue of *Speedbumps*, we were taken by the number of items that were humorous. Our first reaction was to beef up the issue—add more serious, practical material. After all, you paid your hard earned money for this little rag and we certainly didn't want to be perceived as frivolous.

When we conferred with our primary *Speedbumps* consultant, our 17-year-old son Tyler, he strongly encouraged us to make this an "all humor" issue. He believes there is more than enough practical stuff around and far too little laughter. Our first reaction was, "But Tyler, you don't understand." Unfortunately, we could not think of anything he didn't understand. Frankly, it is hard to find arguments against the value of humor and laughter in our personal and organizational lives.

In addition to Tyler's belief that there are more than enough serious ideas and notions in this world, there are at least two additional compelling arguments supporting his position. The first is the relationship of laughter to health and healing. As you might know, in 1964, the former *Saturday Review* editor, Norman Cousins, was stricken with ankylosing spondylitis, a serious, painful, connective tissue disease. He concluded his traditional treatment of hospitalization and medication was not adequate. Each day his friends brought old reels of *Candid Camera* and Marx Brothers movies, which they watched together in his hospital room. Cousins found that ten minutes of belly laughs provided him two hours of restful, pain free sleep. When his "degree of inflammation" was measured after a hearty laughing spell, it measured a significant decrease. These amazing results were reported in 1976 in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Second, a workplace full of laughter can be extremely productive and profitable. Southwest Airlines, the most efficient, productive and profitable commercial airline in aviation today, is a great example of laughter and success.

Known as the zaniest airline in the business, it is common for flight attendants to sing the airplane safety instructions or ask passengers to sit down so the pilot can see in the rear view mirror to back the plane from the jet-way. When the crew is preparing the plane for arrival, don't be surprised to hear, "Flight attendants, prepare your hair for landing." The company's recently retired president Herb Kelleher has arrived at work dressed as Elvis and surprised passengers by hiding in the overhead compartment of the company's planes. Last summer he showed up at one of Dallas's toniest hotels to make a major lunch time presentation to the city's financial movers and shakers attired in the company's typical summer uniform—a polo shirt, khaki shorts and tennis shoes.

A touch of folly is needed if we are to extricate ourselves successfully from some of the hazards of life.

La Rouchefoucauld

While we were preparing this issue of *Speedbumps*, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were viciously attacked. We again wondered if a *Speedbumps* issue full of jokes, puns and other foolishness was appropriate.

While again struggling to decide if a humor issue was still fitting, we were reminded of the words of Grady Nutt. You may remember him as the "Prime Minister of Humor" on the television program, *Hee Haw*. Grady administered only the highest form of comedy--affirming, healing humor.

One phrase, which he spoke often, best expressed who he was, his calling and his conviction about laughter.

Laughter is the hand of God on the shoulder of a troubled world.

Clearly, this is a time of momentous hurt and an all-consuming sense of uncertainty. In the coming days, we wish for you the good fortune of much healing laughter.



Dan Pryor



Nancy Pryor

PS. Grady Nutt was killed in an airplane crash in 1982. Speaking at his memorial service, Paul Duke said, "If laughter is the hand of God on the shoulder of a troubled world, then Grady was the glove." Might we too find ways to be gloves for those around us?



Speedbytes

To err is human, but it feels divine.

Mae West

If I'd known I was gonna live this long, I'd've taken better care of myself.

Jimmy Durante,
who lived into his mid-80's

- When Jell-O is hooked to an EEG, it registers movements virtually identical to a healthy, human brain.
- A dime has 118 ridges around the edge.
- Every time you watch *101 Dalmations*, you'll see 6,469,952 black spots.
- The man who commissioned the *Mona Lisa*, refused it.
- When the name "Alan Smithee" is credited as a film's director, it means the director has disavowed the project and does not want his real name used.
- Panama Hats are made in Ecuador.
- Kemo Sabe means "white shirt" in Apache.
- No word in the English language rhymes with orange, month, silver, or purple.
- The original American Express card was purple. The card was changed to the familiar green in 1969.

All snippets are from a great little book that's chocked full of interesting, mainly useless facts—*Who Knew? ... Things You Didn't Know About Things You Know Well* by David Hoffman (MJF Books, 200)

Words

Stability in language is synonymous with rigor mortis.

Ernest Weekley

A chrysanthemum by any other name would be easier to spell.

William J. Johnston

...and sentences!

Being president is like running a cemetery; you've got a lot of people under you and nobody's listening.

President William Clinton

What You Don't Say

So live that you wouldn't be ashamed to sell the family parrot to the town gossip.

Will Rogers

Each year The *Washington Post's* "Style" section challenges readers to take any word from the dictionary, alter it by adding, subtracting, or changing one letter and creating a new definition.

- *Intoxication*: Euphoria at getting a tax refund, which lasts until you sober up and realize it was your money to start with.
- *Reintarnation*: Coming back to life as a hillbilly.
- *Giraffiti*: Vandalism spray-painted very, very high.
- *Sarchasm*: The gulf between the author of sarcastic wit and the person who doesn't get it.
- *Inoculatte*: To take coffee intravenously when you are running late.
- *Hipatitis*: Terminal coolness.
- *Glibido*: All talk and no action.
- *Dopeler Effect*: The tendency of stupid ideas to seem smarter when they come at you rapidly.

Thanks to David Clanton for passing along these new words to our limited lexicon.



Likely you've heard that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. The following are the winners of the worst analogies ever written by high school students contest from the Washington, D.C. area. Maybe there is still a bit to be learned.

- The little boat gently drifted across the pond exactly the way a bowling ball wouldn't. (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- From the attic came an unearthly howl. The whole scene had an eerie, surreal quality, like when you're on vacation in another city and "Jeopardy" comes on at 7:00 PM instead of 7:30PM. (Roy Ashley, Washington)
- Her hair glistened in the rain like nose hair after a sneeze. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)
- Her vocabulary was as bad as, like, whatever. (unknown)
- The hailstones leaped from the pavement, just like maggots when you fry them in hot grease. (Gary F. Hevel, Silver Springs)



Bill Orr, a college friend from Monahans, Texas frequently quoted his high school speech teacher, "Silence speaks!" Recently our cousin, the good doctor Pat Pryor from Waco, Texas sent the following story that illustrates the West Texas wisdom of Bill's speech teacher.

Lucille, the town gossip and self-appointed monitor of the town's morals, confronted Leroy, a local "good old boy," of being a drunk because she saw his blue Chevy pickup truck parked outside the Nite Owl, the town bar.

Leroy stared at her for a moment, said nothing, and walked away.

Later that evening, he parked his truck in front of Lucille's house and left it there all night.

We need “back up” on isle # 3

The world is for the most part a collective madhouse. Practically everyone, however “normal” his facade, is faking sanity.

John Aston

“Back up” may become a common term heard in grocery stores if the “road rage” trend in this country finds its way into American supermarkets. There’s already some evidence to support this notion. Originally reported in *The Grand Rapids Press*, two mothers were charged with assault and battery in what the police called “isle rage.”

According to police reports, mother #1’s shopping cart unintentionally bumped into mother #2’s shopping cart, thus awaking the sleeping child of Mother #2. Mother #1 apologized for her inadvertent mistake.

Not satisfied with the apology, mother #2 hid in the parking lot waiting for mother #1. When mother #1 reached the parking lot, mother #2 attacked. Punches were thrown, and hair was pulled before witnesses pried the two apart.

We don’t know about you, but this incident has brought about a whole new meaning to the word *bump* for us. The upside of this disturbing trend is that grocery shopping is no longer a chore. It’s now an adventure. (*Dallas Morning News*, August 7, 2001)



Spectacles I

I didn’t want to be known as Kate Smith.

Katherine Hepburn on why she divorced Ludlow Odgen Smith

George Carlin is weird, strange, perverse, and funny and sees the world through a street savvy set of spectacles. He also has a new book, *Napalm & Sillyputty* (Hyperion, 2001). A lover of the English language, he makes several interesting observations about the world we live in and the language we use to confuse each other.

Should you be inclined to purchase his book, or read all the good parts standing in Borders Books, be forewarned—it is not for the fainthearted. At times the book is inappropriate, politically incorrect, an equal offender of just about everyone and clearly profane. Other than that, it’s a great read. Throughout the book, Carlin has a series of “Short Takes.” Here are some of his tamer observations.

- I recently bought a book of free verse. For twelve dollars.
- When I was a kid, if a guy got killed in a western movie I always wondered who got the horse.
- Barbara Bush has a slogan: “Encourage your child to read every day.” What she should be doing is encouraging children to question what they read everyday.
- Why do they bother to say “raw sewage”? Do some people actually cook that stuff?
- You rarely run into a damsel anymore.
- Guys don’t seem to be called Lefty anymore.
- If you really want to put a faith healer to the test, tell him you want a smaller shoe size.
- After you die, your “stuff” becomes your “personal effects.”
- You rarely see a ninety-three-year-old guy working on his resume.
- Here’s how you get rid of counterfeit money: Put it in the collection plate at church.
- I don’t have a fear of heights. I do, however, have a fear of falling from heights.
- In Los Angeles, there’s a hotline for people in denial. So far no one has called.

I’ve had a wonderful evening, but this wasn’t it.

Groucho Marx
to a Hollywood Hostess

Spectacles II

Does the name Pavlov ring a bell?

Unknown

She had the Midas touch. Everything she touched turned into a muffler.

Lisa Smerling

Unlike George Carlin, Richard Lederer developed his perverse observation of the English language writing newspaper and magazines articles, writing books on language and delivering commentaries on National Public Radio. In *Crazy English—the Ultimate Joy Ride Through Our Language* (Pocket Books, 1998) he, like Carlin, makes some rather interesting observations about American English...

- Why do we call it newsprint when it contains no printing, but when print is put on it, it is called a newspaper?
- Why does a man get a *hernia* and a woman a *hysterectomy*?
- Why can your nose run and your feet smell?
- Why do we call food servers *waiters*, when it's the customer who does the waiting?
- A one night stand—so who's standing?
- To sleep with someone—so who's sleeping?
- There is no difference between pre-planning and planning, pre-boarding and boarding, pre-heating and heating and pre-recording and recording.
- Why do we wear a pair of pants but not a pair of shirts?



Famous Last Words . . .

I've always been interested in people, but I've never liked them

Somerset Maugham

- I can make this light before it changes.
 - Pull the pin and count to what?
 - Are you sure the power is off?
 - It's strong enough for both of us.
 - I'll hold it and you light the fuse.
 - I wonder where the mother bear is?
 - That's odd.
 - I've seen this done on TV.
 - This doesn't taste right.
 - What duck?
 - Nice doggie.
 - What does this button do?
 - The odds of that happening are a million to one.
- Found on the *Car Talk* web site (cartalk.com)



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214.340.8861 • 214.340.8919
e-mail SPEEDBUMPS@aol.com

Total Reciprocal Concept

Haig: Because of the fluctuational predispositions of your position's productive capacity as juxtaposed to government standards, it would be momentarily injudicious to advocate an increment.

Aide: I don't get it.

Haig: That's right.

Every culture has its own language. It is one of the way things get done. Just as different countries speak unique languages; so do companies, clubs, religious traditions, schools and sports. Whenever people come together regularly around a common task, unique jargon emerges—like it or not.

Jargon is very beneficial, especially when you have absolutely nothing to say. When you wish to say nothing, you need the *Jargon Generator* created by the Allen Resource Group (919.471.2859) in Greensboro, NC.

To use the *Generator*, select three numbers between 1 and 9 and apply them to the corresponding sequential columns. For instance, 246 is "total reciprocal concept."

1. integrated	1. management	1. outputs
2. total	2. organizational	2. flexibility
3. systematized	3. monitored	3. analysis
4. parallel	4. reciprocal	4. mobility
5. functional	5. logistical	5. factors
6. responsive	6. transitional	6. concept
7. synchronized	7. modular	7. capability
8. compatible	8. creative	8. guidelines
9. balanced	9. operational	9. window

When using the *Jargon Generator*, you will be amazed at the results.

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