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....Turns 80 Years of Age

THE IDLE AMERICAN

When 'Tangs' Get 'Tongueled'....

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

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When our tongues get tangled, rarely are we able to make effective retreats. Once spoken, they're gone, sometimes because we speak before our brains are in gear. Sometimes, our tongues become inexplicably entangled.

None of us is immuned. And getting out of verbal messes can be as difficult as sticking quills back into the goose.

Some folks of national renown are known for their misspoken words, particularly when they too often open their mouths only to change feet....

The sports world is awash in examples. Two of them--both worthy of researching to find hundreds of verbal “goofs” that are sure to add laughter to kick-start our day--are the late Casey Stengel and Yogi Berra, both known for their tangling of tongues.

They were colorful figures in professional baseball. One of Berra’s best lines was about a popular restaurant. “Nobody goes there anymore,” he said. “It’s too crowded.”....

Many similar “goofs” are found in the world of sports, certainly not limited to baseball. They continue today; a couple are worthy of revisiting, even though one may have been intentional, but probably ill-advised.

Only days separated laughs by NFL TV analysts in Dallas and Philadelphia. Perhaps weary of watching the Dallas Cowboys’ meek surrender to the Philadelphia Eagles, veteran sportscaster Jim Nantz said it appeared that “the Keystone Cops had taken over.” (Sometimes too much truth is spoken. Remarks like this not only irk fans of the Cowboys, but could ignite team owner Jerry Jones. He might order Nantz to find the nearest exit and take it, or the next train, and be under it.)....

A few nights later in Philadelphia, another veteran announcer, Al Michaels, mentioned the crack in the “Liberty Bowl.” Huh? Millions of viewers probably wondered if they heard him correctly, but seconds later, he said it again: “Liberty Bowl.”

There was no mistaking the gaffe.

To his credit, a few minutes later he asked, “Did I say ‘Liberty Bowl’? I meant ‘Liberty Bell’.” Apology accepted....

Some professional athletes are remembered more for what they say to reporters than how they perform in games.

One baseballer said he could bat effectively from either side of the plate. “I can bat left-handed and I can bat right-handed,” he bragged. “Thank God I’m amphibious.”

Another claimed that he has “overcome a lot of diversity.”....

Many “goofs,” of course, never make national headlines, but still are enjoyed greatly by locals.

Years ago, a young lady from the news department of an Abilene TV station “filled in” for the sports guy. When she reported the baseball scores, fans of the game quickly realized that she wasn’t.

She said something like, “New York beat Cleveland, four points to three points, Chicago topped Houston, six points to three points, and Philadelphia won over Atlanta, one point to no points.”

During my growing-up years in Brownwood, twins Jimmy and Eddie Farren, best known for “pickin’ and singin’” around the area, owned Radio Station KEAN.

Remote broadcasting--then called “telephonic reporting”--had just begun when Jimmy “covered” the dedication of a colorful spraying water fountain at the old traffic circle. His voice sparkled with excitement as he described the first gushes from the fountain.

“Folks, if you can possibly do so, come on down here,” he invited. “I’ve just never seen such colorful spewers spewing, and some of the spewers are spewing higher than the other spewers are spewing.” (Okay, so maybe he was a better fiddle player than radio guy.)...

I don’t intend to exempt myself from classic blunders. I had a daily sports show on the other radio station KBWD, during college.

At the close of each broadcast, I said, “Don Newbury reminding that if you can’t play a sport, you can be one.”

One New Year’s eve, I added to the usual closure: “And a happy NEWBURY to one and all.”

Dr. Newbury, longtime university president, continues to speak and write. The Idle American, begun in 2003, is one of the nation's longest-running syndicated humor columns. Contact: 817-447-3872. Email: newbury@speakerdoc.com. Website: www.speakerdoc.com.