

OPINION

IT'S OUR TURN

Favorite words are disappearing

I love words. It's one of reasons I decided to pursue a journalism degree in college. I like the challenge of putting words together in sentences and I like finding just the right word or phrase to convey what I'm thinking – and yes, even if that means using an occasional cliché or pun.

But gee willikers, some of my favorite expressions are disappearing. Like gee willikers. No one uses them anymore.

They've become lost – pushed aside by more hip phrases, emojis and millennials.

A friend of mine shared a post he came across on Facebook about these disappearing words. The original author wasn't listed – otherwise I'd give him or her credit for some snappy writing – but the essay was titled, "Lost Words from Our Childhood."

How many of these words do you recognize? (Danger – you may feel very old after reading some of these or out-of-the-loop if you're still wet behind the ears.)

For starters, there's Murgatroyd – as in "Heavens to Murgatroyd." It was a funny expression used in the Yogi Bear cartoons in the 1960s, which hardly anyone remembers these days – especially if you're not smarter than the average bear.

Another common word – jalopy – is riding off into the sunset. I quizzed a few of my coworkers if they knew what it meant. Those over 40 knew it referred to an old car in need of repair but it was Greek to anyone in their 20s and early 30s. Someone thought it was a type of food. That made me, at 58, feel ancient. Heck, I used jalopy in editorials a few years back to describe the condition of the Douglas County Courthouse building.

Some phrases listed in the Facebook post are defunct nowadays because they didn't keep up with the times – "don't touch that dial," "carbon copy," "you sound like a broken record" and "hung out to dry." If you remember them, it's likely you're over 40. If you still use them, you probably get a lot of "huh?" thrown your way.

Another word that is dangerously close to going away like the dodo bird is "swell." I liked that word. It was versatile. You could use it to describe joy – "that's swell!" – and it

had just the right tone for expressing sarcasm, like when you get your second flat tire in one day – "Well, isn't that just swell."

Here's a quiz, using some of the lost words mentioned in that Facebook post. Give yourself a point for any of these 10 phrases you recognize:

Straighten up and fly right.

Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! Well, I'll be a monkey's uncle.

This is a fine kettle of fish. Hey! It's your nickel.

Knee high to a grasshopper.

Well, fiddlesticks! Going like sixty.

I'll see you in the funny papers.

Don't take any wooden nickels.

Congratulations if you remember all 10. Your mind is still sharp as a tack.

Here's an idea: Share the list with the younger ones in your family or your circle of friends. Try to bridge that gap between the lost words of yesterday with today's cray cray obsession with acronyms and shortened phrases. OMG – you may actually communicate on a level that goes beyond staring at screens. Gee willikers, wouldn't that be swell?

"It's Our Turn" is a weekly column that rotates among members of the Echo Press editorial staff.

LETTERS

Be wary of those who have found the truth

To the editor:
There are 488 million Buddhists in the world, including 4 million who live in the United States. People often think of Buddhism as a "religion" when, in fact, Buddha described himself only as an enlightened person. He was not a prophet, or a god, and he was not in desire of being "worshipped." He did not teach about God. He taught only about a "path" or way of living that brings peace, harmony and tranquility. One of the guiding teachings of Buddhism is called "The Not-knowing Mind," sometimes referred to as "The Beginner's Mind." This teaching encourages us to awaken each day being mindful that we don't know everything. A Beginner's Mind keeps us

humble and open. We approach life like we are beginners and, as such, we ask important questions. If you want to be a better person, ask lots of questions. Be curious. Don't settle for superficial answers. Look closely. Dig deep. Approach your questioning with enthusiasm for finding the truth rather than to denigrate another person or to "win."

Keep in mind that all of us are heavily biased and we have huge blind spots in our awareness of self. We can never be entirely certain of our beliefs, especially those we hold most strongly. Trust those who are earnestly seeking the truth. Be very wary of those who say they've found it. Those who are certain often are dangerous.

**Jon Koll
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COMMENTARY

Questions about 'Green New Deal'

By DuWayne Paul, Alexandria, MN
The Democrats recently announced efforts to regulate (meaning taxation) methane gases and the sources of those gases in an effort to reduce gas emissions. One of the main targets of their efforts is the dairy and beef industry. It comes despite falling methane emissions across the economy since 1990 (reference EPA tracking of emissions).

Why the dairy and beef industry? Some of the methane emissions (about 9 percent) come from cow flatulence and belching. Yes, that's right. Because cows fart and belch, Democrats believe this should be a target for reaching goals of reducing methane gas emissions. Hmm. I think I have some questions and comments about that.

To begin with, how is this being measured? Are there research scientists standing behind and in front of cows somewhere in America with belching and farting measuring devices? If so, who are they and how much are we paying them to do this? Who developed the measurement tools and software to analyze the results? Is there a university research scientist somewhere devoted to the science of analyzing what comes out of the mouths and rear ends of cows? This is serious stuff folks, and we should demand some answers!

Further, how will the dairy and beef industry be regulated and taxed for this monumental and aggravated attack on humanity? Will it be by the liter of gases emitted? And if that is the case, how will we understand it because we are not on the metric system? Once it is determined that poor Bossie in the cow yard is farting and belching too much, what will be her (or his) punishment and regulatory efforts. Will each cow be strapped with "methane

collection containers" and the gas then stored to be burned elsewhere? Wouldn't that create carbon emissions that would harm the atmosphere? Oh wait! That creates a "secondary taxing effort" for Democrats to go after whoever is burning the methane gases collected. I'm beginning to see a pattern here!

So, how then will the dairy and beef industry change their feeding processes to reduce the belching and farting in the cow yard? What can be fed to cows so they won't heep this pollution on humanity? Maybe some tofu, rice cakes, and seaweed. I wonder how the meat and milk will taste with that kind of diet.

Let's take this one step further. There are over 5 billion humans on planet earth. I am quite sure that is more than the population of cows. What's next? Will the EPA come after us for farting and belching? How will that be regulated? See suggestions above. If we exceed the allowable amount, how would we be punished? You guessed it – a tax.

I can see it now. We would have to fill out a special form on our tax return that details what we eat. From that and our particular body mass, a calculation would be made of how much methane gas we are emitting into the environment. A tax would then be calculated so we all pay our fair share for expanding global warming. Oh, wait a minute. What about those who do not file or pay income taxes? How will they participate? I guess those folks would have to submit to an annual farting/belching exam and pay a fee.

The challenges of a clean environment should inspire more creative resources and solutions than methane emissions from cattle or dairy cows that fart and belch!



Celeste Edenloff / Echo Press

Brooke Houska points the way to go in "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Jr." while other cast members look on. The other members are (back, left to right) Sydney Bock, Emily Staples, Sailor Peterson, Ben Cook, (front, left to right) Jayme O'Brien and Adison Newman.

THUMBS UP/ THUMBS DOWN

VIEWS BY THE ECHO PRESS

A play to remember

Thumbs up: If you haven't had the chance to see "Chitty Chitty Bang Junior" at the Andria Theatre yet, you should make plans to watch it this weekend – Friday and Saturday at 7:30 p.m. or the Sunday matinee at 2 p.m. The cast, who range in age from 8 to 18, put their hearts into the performance and it shows. They had three of their rehearsals cancelled because of the bad weather but they persevered, getting together on weekends to not only memorize their lines but also to polish singing and dancing numbers. The result is a goofy, funny, different, imaginative and toe-tapping production. You'll leave with catchy musical numbers running through your mind and an appreciation for the young actors who brought new energy and enthusiasm to a play based on the film released 51 years ago.

Safe state for seniors

Thumbs up: Here's some good news for senior citizens in the state: Minnesota ranked fourth in a new study that ranks the safest states for seniors. The U.S. has a record number of people 65 and older, nearly 50 million. The golden years should be filled with safety and security but that is not the reality for many, according to TheSeniorList.com that released the study. It cited a New York Times story that reported a record number of seniors over 65 have filed for bankruptcy because people live longer and recessions have caused retirement accounts to vanish. Also, too many seniors are living in poverty and are victims of fraud and violence. The new safety rankings analyzed the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau in five categories for those 65 and older. Here's how Minnesota stacked up (lower numbers correlate to lower risk): fraud – 11th (434 per 100,000 people), monthly housing cost – 27th (\$906), percentage living in poverty – 4th (7 percent), violent injury death rate – 9th (12.5 per 100,000 people) and living alone – 25th (4.08 percent).

Awesome job on the roads

Thumbs up: An Alexandria resident gives a thumbs up to all the hard-working snow removal crews. "They have done an awesome job of keeping our roadways and parking lots clean this season," the resident said. "Yes, there may be some slick spots but with limiting the use of salt to keep the surfaces ice free, they are doing an outstanding job of keeping the roadways passable. Please give the crews room to work, they

are trying to make the commute safe for all travelers."

DOT scam

Thumbs down: Here's another scam to take note of. We're not aware of any incidents in Douglas County yet, but several Stearns County residents contacted their sheriff's office about suspicious mailings and phone calls they received on Feb. 13. The residents reported getting letters in the mail from "DotService.com" regarding DOT (Department of Transportation) numbers. The letter is informing the recipient their DOT number is "PAST DUE" and they need to complete their "Biennial Update." The letter also indicated failure to renew may result in the DOT number deactivation and a civil penalty of \$1,000 per day, not to exceed \$10,000. The Department of Motor Vehicle Services is aware of this mailing and confirmed with the state that this letter is a scam, noted the Stearns County Sheriff's Office. Residents are urged not to respond to the letter or provide personal information if contacted by phone regarding this request.

Taking action on deadly problem

Thumbs up: U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar, D-Minnesota, and John Hoeven, R-North Dakota, deserve credit for taking action against a deadly problem – carbon monoxide poisoning. They introduced bipartisan legislation, the Nicholas and Zachary Burt Memorial Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act, named for two young brothers from Kimball who died from carbon monoxide poisoning. It would empower the Consumer Product Safety Commission to encourage tougher standards to help ensure carbon monoxide detectors are safe and reliable. "With better, common-sense safeguards in place, we can address the danger of accidental death by carbon monoxide poisoning," Klobuchar said. "This bipartisan legislation will give families in Minnesota and across the country peace of mind knowing that they are protected from this deadly poison." According to the Center for Disease Control, at least 430 people in the U.S. die each year from carbon monoxide poisoning and approximately 50,000 people are forced to seek medical attention for accidental CO poisoning.

If you have a suggestion for a Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down, email it to aedenloff@echopress.com or mail it to Echo Press, P.O. Box 549, Alexandria, MN 56308.

Submitting letters to the editor:

The Echo Press encourages readers to voice their opinions through letters to the editor. Please, however, keep your letters brief and to the point. Letters of more than 300 words or excessively long letters may be edited to a shorter form by the newspaper staff. Personal attacks against private individuals will not be printed. All letters must be signed and include the writer's address and telephone number. Letters published will include the writer's name and the city of residence only. Writers are limited to publishing one letter every 30 days. Submissions can be emailed to aedenloff@echopress.com or submitted to the Echo Press office at 225 7th Ave. E., Alexandria, MN 56308. For information, call (320) 763-3133.