Running Amok—The WORD escapes (again), Defies (still) all reason in a troubled world

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ST. GEORGE’S LIGHTHOUSE, California—It had been a quiet summer on the remote rock that supports the maximum security tower of St. Mumbles Home for the Terminally Verbose.

Too quiet, as it turns out.

The crash of waves and barking of sea lions in the late-August pre-dawn calm at the foot of the formidable St. George’s Reef Light, eight miles off Crescent City, Calif., was suddenly split today by the wail of sirens.

Yup. For the 19th straight time, Today’s WORD on Journalism concluded its summer hammocktime by escaping the unescapable maximum security sanitarium for whackos from the world of words.

“God %^*()(*&^%!!!!!!! No, no no no NO!!” observed St. Mumbles Director of Syntax Dr. Con Jugate, all in a furious lather not unlike the seafoam bubbling around the base of the grim tower where the WORD and some of the worse hard-case cast-offs of America’s newsrooms and journalism departments have been incarcerated.

According to a thin-lipped report from Jugate’s spokesman, delivered after the unhappy lexicographer had flung himself into the surf, the WORD apparently spent the summer on the St. George’s veranda knitting a rubber Zodiac-style raft, and made a 6-horsepower outboard in the arts and crafts therapy program.

“No one noticed,” watch commander Mia Opia said as attendants rescued a burbling sanitarium director from the froth. “He said he was knitting an afghan for his Twitter editor.”

The WORD, whose daily doses of “wisdom” on matters journalistic, political, social and cultural have afflicted decent folk on five continents since 1995, had been a, er, “guest” at St. Mumbles since May, when white-jacketed attendants collected the blathering serial quoter and the contents of his office from Utah State University.

He spent the summer convalescing at the remote coastal rest home, a dark tower where Chas. Addams once vacationed, studying up on the 5,000 new words in the Scrabble dictionary, lounging on the porch and secretly collecting new quotes on the press to torment a troubled media world.

The WORD was first admitted and first escaped from St. Mumbles in 1995 after his opening season quoting wise guys on journalism. Since then, the WORD’s, um, “influence” has spread worldwide, and last year the International Bloviaters League and Tribune of Hairbrained Editors & Reporters (IBLaTHER) honored the serial email pest with its coveted Electronic Junkmail Award.

Anyway, the WORD is out again, gentle and unsuspecting readers. Brace yourselves.

As usual, we launch this season with the ever-useful wisdom of the genial former colonial Royal High Pontentate of the Virginia Colony, whose high regard for both education and the press rings with an increasingly popular fervor today. New WORDs begin tomorrow, and will continue through the 2014-2015 season, or until you come to your senses. Enjoy!

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