Afflicting the comfortable since 1995 | Journalism

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Today’s WORD on Journalism
Afflicting the comfortable since 1995
Monday, August 31, 2015
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SOMEWHERE OFF THE NORTHERN CALIFORNIA COAST — “Are you freakin’ KIDDING ME!!?!?!?” The security chief’s scream melted the guard’s iPhone6 and left ear hairs within 15 feet smoking.

“WHAT THE $%^&*(&^%$!!$$%^&*^£¢#§¶•ª¶§#£@!??!?!?!”

(Editor’s note: AP style is mixed on how/whether to report this kind of exchange. We err on the side of full disclosure to permit the reader to decide for herself. That’s how the WORD has always worked. Sorry about that.)

Yes, unbe-$%^&*(&^%ing-lievable, but true: For the 20th straight year, despite measures that have made Chief of Verbosity Containment Phil O’Shaddup, the disgraced former Guantanamo interrogation chief, reshuffle his size-14 regulation golf shoes in discomfort, The WORD is out. Again.

The WORD — formally “Today’s WORD on Journalism” — a pesky and recidivist quoter (some say misquoter) of pithy phrases on journalism and the “lamestream press,” language, politics, and the role of public engagement in an informed civil society (OK, OK, perfesser, move it along . . . !), today did what Homeland Security Boss Jeh Johnson and thousands of crack TSA staff have said was impossible. Since 1995, The WORD has tormented an already uneasy planet with statements on the press. Since first apprehended, edited and sent in to the feared hammock-strewn and Scrabble-laden maximum security facility, St. Mumbles Home for the Terminally Verbose, in 1996, The WORD today celebrated the new school year by slipping away (again. did we mention this is the 20th year?) from the remote sanitarium (or is that sanitorium?) on a remote luxury rock miles out in the Pacific Ocean 350 miles north of San Francisco.

“We really thought we had clamped down on the SOB this time,” observed St. Mumbles High Censor (or Censer?) and Comma Queen Mary Norris. Brought aboard after the embarrassing 2014 escape, apparently involving friendly borking sea lions, that it became Norris’s (or is that Norris’? or Norrises’s?) job to keep The WORD “in his goddam hammock,” as Johnson said in May.

“Apparently, there, were, Oxford, commas, involved” in this year’s escape, Norris said. While some in the Obama Administration (or should that be lowercase?) weasled — “Could be bad, but maybe not,” an earnest spokesman intoned — many in the larger WORD community, which has swelled to nearly 2,000 worldwide in recent years, cheered.

“YAY!!” yelled misguided 13-year WORD subscriber Conn Jugate of Haybale, Iowa. “We’ve lost Colbair and Jon Stewie. How can we have a presidential embarrassment without good old WORDie?”

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

“He said he was knitting an afghan for his Twitter editor,” said watch commander Mia Opia as attendants rescued a burbling sanitarium director from the froth. “Like anyone edits Twitter.”

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 1996 after a ground-breaking 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 Potentate 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 2015-2016 season, or until you come to your senses. Enjoy!