

GolfNotes

August 2020

Pleasant Hill(s) Golf Course

Born 1949; Died 2018

RIP



She was my friend with benefits

By Allan Grim

Notes from the Bench on No. 6 Tee

If you wondered what you would do when that rainy day ever came when you would catch up to all the things you've left undone or that you dreamed of doing when you finally had ample time, well the Coronavirus gave you that rainy day. In fact, it rained for you many days and months now. Our bluffs were called. How many of us really looked forward for one of those days and then got the thing done we were always wanting to do? Shame on us. But it's not over yet. So seize the day and the moment.

Life rarely rhymes, even in the best of times.

The pandemic is bad for our mental outlook and our physical health. But think about what our parents and grandparents suffered through for a long period of time. In 1929 the Great Depression began it and continued until 1941 when our country was thrust into World War II on two fronts. That's one long bout of anxiety for twelve years and then two of them together battered our families until 1945, when the War ended and the Great Depression did too.

The only thing golfers need is more daylight. *Ben Hogan*



Young people can now reflect on why they should never commit a serious crime. If they've thought that the coronavirus created an intolerable prison for their young existence, they should be confined to a real prison where they can do only so many things and have no right to leave the premises. And they would spend their time looking over their shoulders for many bad people ready to do them harm at a moment's notice and then having to keep dealing with them for as long as you are there and they are too.

Singer Willie Nelson is a dedicated golfer. He owns a Nine-Hole golf course, Padernales Country Club, in Driftwood, Texas. A sign in front of the ramshackle clubhouse says, "No more than 12 in your foursome." Another says, "No shoes, no shirt, no problem."

Gary Player, renowned world-traveling golfer, now lives in **Schwenksville, Pa.** in his daughter's home. What golf courses does he play? In Pennsylvania for the moment, only Cedarbrook CC. Elsewhere he plays Galloway National at the shore and Pine Valley in Central New Jersey .●

Pleasant Hill(s) Golf Course

My friend with benefits

Born 1949; Died 2018 Cause of death? The course was last purchased in 1995 by Robert “Skip” Harwi and his wife Nina. He died October 24, 2016. She died later that year on Christmas Day. It remained open till 2018. Family elected to close it and sell the land and equipment. It was first listed for sale at \$2,500,000 and didn’t sell. A public auction was held on September 20, 2019, where it sold for \$926,000. It was bought by the Burkholders, a nearby Amish family from Richmond Township. They are growing corn, soybeans, and wheat, not rye grass and rough.

We never could get it straight: Was there an s after Hill? We always seemed to call it Pleasant Hill. Never even shortened it to The Hill. We ignored the scorecard name. I didn’t recall a street or other public sign for the course. On the front of the last scorecard the name is on the front with an s. But it gives it as its corporate structure, “Pleasant Hills Golf Course, Inc.” It seemed easier to say it without an s. One less letter to cover in dragging it out. But it slid easily from the l’s to that s. Not as though it was another syllable. A hint of clarity: On the last scorecard, underneath the name is the address—“Pleasant Hill Road.” Ah, the officially recognized spelling from those who probably never

played it. How long those official signs have been there, I don’t know. Maybe most important is that it had more than one hill. But you knew that even if you never roamed its summer blanket of greenery.

Is this all a tempest in a tee shot? Of course. But now you’ve already read it. So savor it, or spit it out. It’ll be the hottest aspect to this nostalgia about this country fixture of my golfing past. Set this canapé down upon your napkin and behold the entrée.

PH was a bombed drive west off Route 222, a few miles outside of Kutztown heading to Reading. From Route 222 you could see the clubhouse on a hill. The course was in Maiden Creek

Township and backed up against a village called Molltown. It’s actual post office was Fleetwood, a borough about four miles southeast as the Kro-Flites. The course wasn’t an Executive layout nor a full 18-holer. A hybrid at par 66 and at 4800 yards from the white tees. In the midst of Berks County’s noted rolling hills, it had many hills rolling and pleasant among its 102 acres. Some were even steep, but I won’t fuss about it. With its





The closed PH Clubhouse in 2019. It's inside included an integrated dwelling in the back. Photo from Reading Eagle

par 66, the course had eight par 3's, and a par 5 on each nine. Odd for a public course, no par 4's between 340 and 400 yards from the White tees. PH had some of the tiniest greens I've ever played. They had moderate rolls, so pleasant hills there too.

The first hill was not pleasant. It wasn't even on the course. That was the one just to get from your car to the clubhouse. You parked and hiked up a steep incline to the spare clubhouse, tight against the road on the left and close to the last hole's green, a 125-yard par 3 to the right. It was a beginner's course but I always enjoyed playing it as a, how should I put this, non-beginner. It was wide open, except for the left side of the former back nine. It threatened a hooker with OB

along its property line to the 18th tee. Three of those holes stared at another friendly foe public course, Rich Maiden. Hookers from each course would often trespass their wayward shots to their neighbor. Rich Maiden would have closed during the Great Depression, except that our father, as a lawyer and an avid golfer then, helped to save it. He was awarded a lifetime free pass. Despite playing there often, he paid his way.

We deemed it fun and easy. Until recent years, The

Hill, which we never called it, nor Pleasant either, had no sand traps. The few obstacles were trees, mostly arbor vitae, and mostly random. The only water was in a pond basin that had served a farm. A barn turned into a maintenance building was right behind it on the right at the old No. 10 Hole. Only a terrible slice would reach them.

Despite the open concept, the greens were tiny and hard to hit. Yes, there were shallow depressions around some of the greens where traps had been, long filled with grass. Then in the 1980's a few traps were installed along with modest ridges astride some greens. Although it had ladies tees since the start, it had no blue tees until recent years. It also installed a second green on the downhill welcoming No. 14, par 3 120-yard hole. The new green, a sunken birthday cake, was back left of the first green and played to a decent uphill 175 yards. Motor carts and a driving range were added only in recent decades.

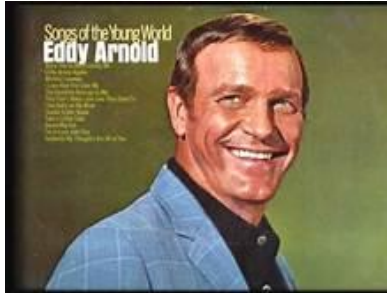
I played the course often in the late 1950's to late-1960's. In 1962 I worked

Aerial view of next-door Rich Maiden Golf Course



one summer for a battery manufacturer in Laureldale above Reading. Another summer I worked at a Holiday Inn on Route 222 heading into Reading. I did room service and go-fering, which made the day interesting. I even picked up celebrities performing at nearby venues and staying at the Inn. After I pulled up to the Inn with Country star Eddie Arnold, I lifted his bags from the Inn's wagon to carry them in. He grabbed them from me and said he was "much obliged." I was empty-handed and taken aback.

Iwould drive from Laureldale and play PH on the way home to Kutztown. In the early Sixties sometimes older brother Jim, a medical student at Saint Joseph's Hospital in Reading, would join me. If no one was ahead of me, I could traverse the course in two and a half hours without rushing. We mostly carried our sticks then. This was before courses got crowded, tee times filled the mornings, and leagues swarmed the first tee after work. With Palmer and Nicklaus and TV rousing interest during that decade, golf surged from country clubs onto public courses. This included PH.



We would carry our sticks over the 18 holes. Pull carts and soon golf cars now relieved our shoulders and our legs and our cash on hand. They were a bonus in revenue for the courses. PH was slow to get them. You paid with cash on the counter. In the early Sixties I recall a greens fee at the odd figure of \$1.65. Except for that Roman guy with the silver helmet, credit cards were yet to appear anywhere. You also got no written receipt for your

This is a proof photo of me for my 1962 Dickinson College yearbook. You can make out a big red X at the bottom, presumably to deter me from using it as a good photo somewhere. Why I'm smiling I don't know.



greens fee. In those days public courses were all fairways. As a Pennsylvania Dutch-owned layout they mowed constantly and to a buzz cut. PH had a veteran maintenance guy, burly, blond, white tee shirt, but missing an arm, from what I never found out. We weren't spoiled with the challenge of rough until the 1980's. They also lacked irrigation, except around greens and tees. The whole layout would dry out in July and August and we'd gripe about how hard the turf got for our Converse-covered feet. The color would fade to dying straw and the weeds and crabgrass would sneak in and help snuff out the lush green grass of spring. At least we enjoyed the roll our drives would get and the extra bounces of our paltry irons plopping short of the greens. Our divots would shorten and scatter as we launched puffs of fleeing dirt that seemed to morph into clay. The tees didn't survive the droughts at most public courses then. They looked like Hiroshima the next day. I didn't mind the rough texture of the ground because you could always find a bare spot to stick your short white tee into. During the spring when the ground was soft and



Par 3 No. 5 Hole at Moselem Springs, one of the four golf courses within three miles of each other and all southeast of Kutztown. It's also the youngest. It opened in 1964 and in 1968 already held a US Women's Open Championship.

full of grass the tees were so uneven and thick that no place was good for sticking your tee's landing. At least with early mushy soil you could pierce the turf without a fight. In high summer when the grass gasped for water, trying to get that wooden tee in that same bladeless area required a sturdy drill. Otherwise you broke your wrist or the split wooden tee shrieked. You often would try other spots before a deep puncture was achieved. It's good they invented the golf ball first. Otherwise, we would never get the wooden tees into the concrete of those parched summers. You always grabbed the ball and the tee in one hand.

Somehow our father breached this practical step. He would tee everything up without the tee under the ball. Why, I never was forward enough to ask.

For those sultry summer afternoons PH had no water on the course for drinking either. You had to get it from a glass-bottled Coke at the turn. Hopefully it was cold. Plastic water bottles and metal soda cans were a few years away. No one brought anything else to the course either. All we had were those large jugs that you took on a picnic. Your old Roy Rogers lunch box and thermos for school? You'd be too embarrassed to take it or couldn't find it or your younger brother had it. It didn't matter anyway. We would just go and play. Water and serious health practices were decades away.

I tried valiantly to shoot, not my age, but the 60's Decade itself. I could never get my score below 72, which I shot a few times. Nor after. But I did have my Magic-in-a-Bottle, Black

Swan, outlier, No Way! round of my life at PH finally in the 1990's. I was playing with my stepfather Roger Leestma and my Uncle Mark in late spring. I hadn't played there that year. Then I played the course only once a year, if that. The weather was calm but dreary and a drizzly. Somehow I shot a 68. I have no idea how it happened. I wasn't playing well. I know this how now? Because I kept a golf diary recording every score I and my partners had from 1979 on. And I still record them. (*I wrote about the diaries in GolfNotes December 2011*) I had shot a 108 at nearby Berkleigh CC a week or so before. I had three birdies



and missed a curling downhill 1 1/2 foot putt on the par 3 14th Hole. I also hit every drive reasonably long and straight. The 108 at Berkleigh was shocking too. I would shoot in low to mid-90's there in good times. Are you not dying to know what I shot for my next round? I was too. I played it at Limekiln Golf Club below Doylestown. It's a typical public course in somewhat

open and not too long and fun to play. (In the bottom right corner is a scorecard for this layout owned for a long time by Robin Roberts and Curt Simmons, great Phillies pitchers in the 1950's. It just closed last fall.) I shot an ordinary average summer score for me, 87. Back to the earth from Hell at BCC and Heaven at PH. It is more common to shoot radically different nines. Less so for consecutive 18-hole rounds.

I don't know if a golf record exists for this category. It must be some kind of record for the difference in strokes between consecutive rounds, especially where the second score is as low as it was. Someone not very good can shoot 141 one round and then a 100 the next, especially someone who wasn't trying hard the first round. I was trying hard, as I always do, in both rounds. Of course Berkleigh is a standard size course, tough and tree-lined, where I never broke 85 and Pleasant Hill is a hybrid, short, open and easy. But still.

The course is part of a quad of courses a few miles southwest of Kutztown. The other courses are Berkleigh CC, next-door Rich Maiden, and the latest from 1964, Moselem Springs CC, site of the 1968 US Women's Open.



Berkleigh Golf Club's clubhouse shown here from behind the left bunker on the 9th Green. When I played there in the 1990's it was still a country club and the 9th hole was the 18th hole.

Sometime in the mid-60's I wrote down all the golf courses I had played in my life. I included the estimated number of times I played them too. I would revise the numbers every so often. They were written in pencil, so no problem. When I left Berks County in 1971 to live in Bucks County, the number was 130, the most of any course except for the Indiana University course, which I got to play a lot in three years of law school there (1965-68). I estimated 180 rounds there. The third most and way down the list is Rich Maiden.

Humble PH was actually the site of a round of the Grim Open. In its second year, 1961, the four Grim brothers played the longest tournament ever—72 holes, the conventional men's length. What was

unique is that we played it over four different courses. The initial round was PH. What was significant is that George, only 14, shot a 100. The three of us arbitrarily and worse, after the round, declared that he had to shoot a 99 to qualify for the rest of the tournament. The unkindest and

unfairest cut for a golf tournament. Not sure why we did at all, let alone after the round, except that George hadn't developed into his later renown at that moment and had no chance of winning. His odds of winning were maybe 100-1. There you go. The vexing fact is that brother Bob, 17, shot a teetering 99. Not sure if he was in on the scam.

The other three rounds were played at Allentown Municipal, Twin Lakes above



Allentown, and the finale at Galen Hall, near Wernersville. The winner was oldest brother Jim, 23, with a total of 357, an average of just over 89 strokes per round. I was second at 365, and Bob at 371.

In the 1960's after we had watched the last round of a US Open, brother Jim and I were eager to play some golf. We rushed out to PH, about fifteen minutes as the car rumbled then. Knowing it was too late to play 18, we pulled into the parking lot, got our clubs from the trunk, but we didn't hike up that severe hill to check in and pay. We sauntered to the par 3 18th tee, a few yards from the parking lot at the bottom of the hill. We mortared our short irons up the incline to the green near the clubhouse "as if we were finishing up on this then 18th hole." After that we would maybe "play a few extra holes," or "go around again till it got dark." As we putted out, the owner Jim Wertz (listed on the scorecard as "Prop.") stormed out of the clubhouse to nip our round in the bud and send our sorry butts back to our car. The engine was still warm and shocked to see us. We were excited to play. Not many golfers were likely there since the US Open had been on TV. We stood out like General Custer and his Cavalry dropping by an Indian camp

Reflecting, I suppose PH was mostly my good friend with benefits during the 60's and my some-time, next-year visits ever since. She was cheap, close, welcoming, open, and thus obliging to my golfing frailties, and a quick pleasure for this golfer's, um, soul. All the while you pursued more challenging courses and maybe you would find a satisfying country club to settle down with for the duration. But you would never forget PH and you would always return for some brief satisfying round. ●

The five men of the Kutztown Grim Family posing for Mother Grim at the Ocean City, NJ, beach, probably in 1961. (Only known photo with just the men of the family) This is the summer when we were all fervent golfers and had the time and the enthusiasm to play our longest Grim Open, 72 holes over four different courses, including Pleasant Hill. Where I got those pinkish, heart-shaped shades? My guess is that they were our sister Gini's, age 9. I also wonder where I got that impish grin. Probably I had just donned the specs knowing a photo was about to be taken.





Sloping to Sleepland

Have you driven by Pleasant Hills lately? It is so weird to see it look like fields. For a while the greens were visible while everything was overgrown.

Sometimes when I can't sleep I'll slope to the first forward tee. You probably never noticed that tee because it was rarely mowed and was just an afterthought to the "men's" tee. My drive always went right toward the barn. It must have been because I was trying to avoid hitting the road on the left and losing my ball. Then I'd still have to hit over that hazard of the dirt road accessing the barn. By the time I hit the green I'd be asleep.

Virginia Grim Follweiler



Killing the King's English

We've slid a long way to verbal ruin

When I was in high school studying for the SAT, a portion was vocabulary words. Some were multiple choice, some stuck in analogies, and some arrayed among passages of "Reading Comprehension." They were the kind of words I would spy occasionally as I read *A Tale of Two Cities* or *The New Yorker* (Yes, really).

Somehow you knew you should learn them and use them in your speech and write them in your blue book themes and insert them into the letters you wrote to your best girl. This is what an educated person knows and deploys in a democracy of a civilized nation, you gathered, if not told directly by your teachers. Like many then, our intact family of



four boys and a girl and two live-in parents subscribed to Reader's Digest, a popular monthly that survives only as a dim lantern of our Rockwell-Disney-Elvis culture. The magazine published several articles borrowed from other magazines. Interspersed were smaller features, such as *Life in These United States*, and *Laughter, the Best Medicine*, displaying anecdotes usually ending in moral lessons or droll punchlines.

show our learning prowess to our peers and authorities. Along with knowing they glistened as emeralds in refined literature, you could now grasp their meaning, thus better appreciating what you were reading. You also knew they would aid us to be articulate and elegantly expressive. Digesting them in your brain and then using them in your themes or term papers or hopefully your everyday speech—these were the hard parts.

when we ran into them with a head-shaking sigh. After we heard or read them, the mere thought of long, hazy, and unfamiliar terms glazed our innocent eyes. Their weight encumbered us throughout our education. They especially plagued us in college where the text's font shrank, the words got longer, and the pictures lost their colors and faded from sight. Words like cause and effect pummeled us like a left and a right in the boxing ring. We just sat there and took them. We had no choice. Others uppercut our tender jaws from everywhere: logic, existential, syllogism, entropy, philosophical, and metaphysical. Even ego, synthesis, empiricism, and dogma. The really heavy ones were simple but loomed among distant clouds in our skulls, like the words "truth" or "theory."



Another section was *It Pays to Increase Your Word Power*. It was a multiple-choice quiz of about 15 or so words where you had to guess the word's meaning. They were words similar to those you had to study for the SAT. If you were lucky, some high schools did and still do teach many of these. We called them vocabulary words. They're gone from the SAT, I hear, except for appearing here and there in the reading comprehension section. These confirmed the message that these were words you should learn to be an educated person. Inside we believed they would at least

Everything teachers tried to instill in us about the worth of school seemed abstract, a world we little understood. If they didn't utter some of those vocab words, our textbooks did. Our virginal brains were jarred

We thought we would never digest those lumpy, obscure words. Maybe college would improve our lot. It just batted us around without



mercy. Actually we weren't that innocent of these obscure words. Most of us belonged to an organized church as Protestants or Catholics, who pounded us each Sunday and during the

week with their own profound nightmares with evangelical, Holy Spirit, forgiveness, communion, transubstantiation, and, at least they are short, soul and grace.

Where is our American society today with these words and others? We have not had them instilled in us. If they have been, we've lost them. Are we fully educated with them? No. I think we have sunk to a disgustingly low level that already has had long-term effects for our society. Let me explain by first breaking down the universe of words to demonstrate the basis for my concern. I choose to classify three levels of words. In the first and lowest level dwell the cliché, obvious, well-known, pervasive, sloppy, argot, crude, casual, often slang, words spoken and written too often and too widely. They have become our verbal junk food, the kind that is too close by, our go-to selections too readily available for immediate use. Most of the time we eat them although we know they are unhealthy for us all. I use "eat" to mean "deploy" or "accept" to sustain my metaphor on the levels of word refinement.

Sometimes we pause for some serious thinking and find the discipline to select a more refined set of

words. These are the second and a higher level I choose. They are words from the Word Power-SAT words. Call them vocab words or vocabs. Or continuing my metaphor—now we are eating healthy food. They are all formal



words you should learn and use all the time. Here are ten examples of them. Droll, cull, adverse, intrepid, brazen, foment, ardent, wanton, inane, flout. They are usually no more than two syllables. They often display a degree of something, rather than a definite lack or superlative amount. A person who is educated should perceive life

and express themselves in gray most of the time, not black or white because gray is what reality is. They are also more specific, not vague or ambiguous, than the mediocre words we dwell with. These words are rarely used and it is regretful. They are often called proper words, formal words, or the King's English.

Our forebears would use them in discourse they fought for our independence. They even used them later when we fought each other in The Civil War. You can read them in diaries and letters from men and women in the 1860's, even those who had little education. They hardly used any slang or other primitive words. They ate from the healthy group or above. Of course letter writing by hand and keeping diaries were huge in both the



Revolutionary and the Civil War periods. They respected and were taught the correct words to employ. They also lacked much of the media we have today to corrupt them.

The third and highest level of words are those that are often too long, hard to pronounce, and so tough and abstract that only the highest of brows would learn them, let alone use them. I don't insist that anyone learn them to be considered educated. Or to pull us out of the swampy mire our verbal discourse has slipped into. They should be avoided most of the time. Here are ten of these words: vicissitudes, ameliorate, antithesis, propinquity, inexorable, culminate, salubrious, calumny and lugubrious. In most cases there are even shorter, more digestible words to replace them as effectively. Vicissitudes (changes), ameliorate (correct), antithesis (opposite),

propinquity (nearness), supercilious (haughty), inexorable (relentless), culminate (climax), salubrious (healthy), calumny (slur), lugubrious (sad).

Unfortunately, when you hear or read them, you think the writer or speaker is an intellectual snob, pretentious and not interested in meeting you and for sure not having a dialogue with you. Regretfully, you will have to look up the meaning of most of these third tier words. The first level is those who eat junk food, the second level is the healthy items, which enrich our discourse and creates few calories to fatten and render lazy our minds. This third level is the gourmet-vegan-elitest. You can say this is the superior reach of the educated person and it's hard to argue with that. You just don't need to learn these word monsters.

Few of us are at the gourmet level and it's not necessary or important to be there. Plenty of formal, easier words are around to sustain the second level of healthy food words. And the rest of us won't need to run to our dictionaries to inquire what on earth they meant by that word. When you read or hear one of those third-tier words, they explode like a firecracker. You are bothered but not embarrassed by your ignorance. More likely, you roll your disbelieving eyes that someone actually used it. It doesn't shimmer as an ideal. It only identifies the highest level of words that we must count because the words are there. I guess there is a purpose for them. Some of our erudite citizens deploy them. We can't trash their use but I can't applaud them either. If they want to eat only vegetables and disdain dairy too, go for it. Enjoy it with your cabal of cultured friends. But some at this level will eat

beef and other questionable foods. As gourmets, they know how to prepare them to to be so superior to the food from the two lower tiers.





Book TV on weekends with CSpan 2 and CSpan3 feature non-fiction authors of notable recent books standing at

So, Bon appétit!

This scourge of junk food, the first level, is fed to us mainly from a source that we can't live without. Television features many people who preside over a variety of shows. You get high and low brow cultural programs. PBS and the documentaries you expect will yield a high level of expression. The pervasive news shows engage in much opinion as a part of them all, some subtle, the rest blatant. With the growth of cable channels, along with tech devices in recent decades, and the rise of far left and far right advocates along with them, we often watch news and opinion programs in our roles as citizen in a democracy. This has increased dramatically in recent years and now even more so in a pandemic and presidential election year.

You expect that the hosts and expert guests will present their words at a lofty level. At least the healthy food level. That's all we need and should ask for. No, their

speech content is appalling. It often slinks into junk food. In this advanced democracy we deserve better and they should do better. Too often they use slang, casual, informal English, pocked with clichés and street lingo. They serve healthy words very little, here and there. I don't insist on healthy always, but you see it only as much as robins in late February. I would accept gourmet, the top tier, if it would propel them from their repulsive descent into junk food. It might even elevate many of us too. When you do hear them use a vocab word, it is so jolting that it arouses you to



ponder the word, appreciate its appearance, and then try to fathom its meaning. And wonder why it hasn't appeared before somewhere else. Meanwhile, you forget what point they were trying to express.

lecterns or sitting across from interviewers, some without audiences. Where there is an audience, they listen and at the end are allowed to ask questions. Authors should be better wordsmiths than the rest of us and even better than TV newspeople and commentators.

Some of these authors who've been around a while don't express themselves well orally either. Although they employ admirable vocabs in their books, in person they serve too much junk food. I recognize speaking spontaneously gives them less time to think and edit their comments. Thus, they will slip much into junk food. Many of these authors address the audiences with prepared remarks. I'm astounded how unrefined their verbiage is. These are wordsmiths with time to think and write and edit their own pitch to the audience and the swell of viewers on TV. Despite the time to prepare, they offer too much junk food with occasional servings of healthy.

These TV talking heads invade our lives altering our speech manner and content. Their words have been gushing out of their flapping mouths faster and faster in recent decades. Now we all talk fast too, and that includes me. Maybe they got it from the rest of us. Does it matter now? I'm always fighting it and losing the daunting battle. It is contagious. When we are passionate about some topic, we get emotional, which triggers us to talk faster.

In the evolution of TV's opinion portions, we've sunk from mostly moderate commentators to a glut of extremes in progressives and conservatives. Go back to TV people in the old days of the fifties and sixties. They didn't talk as fast, as the pace of life was slower and their political views were more centered. Most of us got our news from newspapers and weekly magazines, the print media. Maybe just as important is that most were moderate left or right. Far left and far right advocates were deemed fringe. The radical views of left and right were mostly William Buckley (*shown above*) on PBS. Opinion shows and segments were few among the Big Three networks. Cable TV was just beginning and Educational TV was the beginning of PBS.. Today they dominate the airwaves if not the populace. The more extreme the views,



the stronger the beliefs. And the deeper the emotions tied to them. Defending these radical viewpoints triggers a faster and higher-pitched voice.

The show's producers have worsened the overall visual look of their programs too. TV has sped up the images we see. How many separate images during commercials we see, most flashing after only a moment? Those for upcoming TV shows are worse. For one program you will see several flashes of scenes. This also impels us to talk faster, which leads to our taking less time to consider what we want to say. Your mouth struggles to keep up with your own blistered brain. So your spontaneous speech gets even more quick and

undisciplined as it gushes from your mouth. You default to that junk food verbiage: slang, clichés, crude street talk, domestic vulgarities, the dusty, cruddy, and slimy words on the lowest shelf of your word inventory. You lose your ability to channel the great vocab words to express yourself with clarity, force, and eloquence. Rhetoric becomes roteric. Junk food is served too well on a rancid platter. The healthy is chucked or remains in the freezer of your waning word account. Gourmet and Vegan are always available but only



the highest of brows will deign to deploy it.

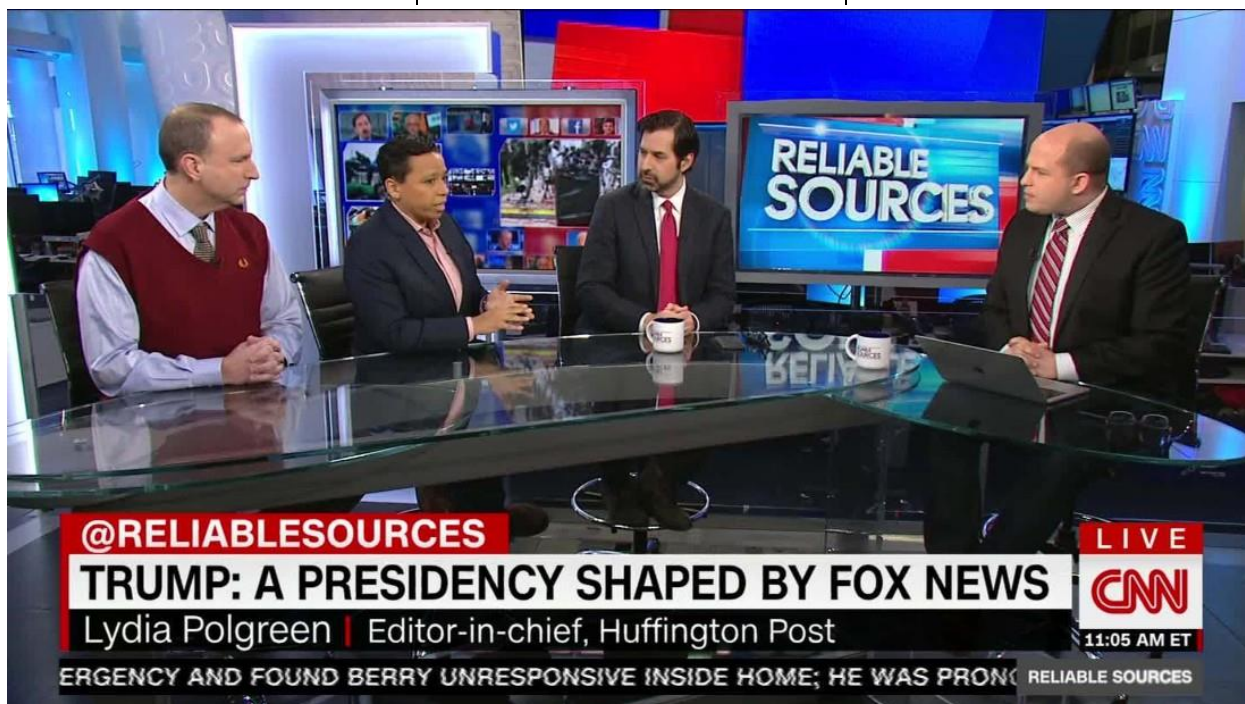
I suppose one of the causes of the poor verbiage for media types, especially those on TV, is their having to meet short deadlines. They have time for only first drafts or quick second ones. They're also hamstrung by the short time spans in program content disrupted by commercial breaks, especially what they call "hard breaks," where an ad will begin no matter the status of their discussion.

One troubling effect of the media's breakdown is what I call a pandemic by theft of word expressions. A commentator will begin using a few words that you've never heard before. It will be a creative metaphor that delivers a sweet and ripe instant image to illustrate their argument. Examples are

putting his thumb on the scale, low-hanging fruit, that train has left the station, the elephant in the room, get out of jail free card, and cherry-picking. You always wonder where they came from. Who deserves the copyright? Whoever, they should make a stack of money. They were colorful and clever when coined. Most expressions are much older than you think and the person most famous for saying them probably borrowed-stole, take your pick, them from an earlier sage. If they merely borrow them, they don't return them. Couldn't they at least attribute them? A word or two may change, but they go way back and the essence is retained. Anyway, someone adopts the wise, imaging words on one show and soon the expression is heard on



another station, then another. Some might use the virus pandemic metaphor to explain them. Others would use the cancer metaphor to explain this theft with that medical term "metastasize." That itself is a third-tier word, which is too long and abstract. How about transferred, migrated, or expanded? Spread I preferable to the eye-glazing metastasize, It's fate is similar to that third tier word stolen and passed around in the last few years when something like cancer has gotten worse: exacerbate. How about



worsen? These are the exceptions to the media's use of junk food. These words leapfrog over the healthy diet to the highest level of gourmet food. Another glaring example is the use of nefarious. Many simple and replacement words exist: improper, sinful, wrongful, wrong, improper, wicked, evil, immoral, etc. The TV commentators seems stuck in their usage of this word. It's sad. No, pathetic.



questions. Think of how much time we've wasted in our lives by uttering that feckless word in any thoughtful dialogue, especially as the prelude to answering a question. TV has infected us with

this word whose only purpose is to buy time to think what to say. And we can't help it now either. We've adopted it with formal papers and we will never disown it. But it is a trifling side show that does display the problem for the new century's expression of our language.

Too many people interject their insecure voicings with the words "You know." Mostly they don't seem to realize they are uttering it as an almost knee-jerk response when they can't seem to convey what they really mean. It's annoying and it comes off as a verbal tic.

Another action is much worse and its's not verbal, but physical. In expressing their hasty opinions the TV types have corralled their arms and

expressed. Take the word "pushback." This is so lame and lifeless. "Pelosi pushed back on the charge that she was delaying passage of the stimulus bill." How about, "Pelosi retorted, answered, responded, countered or disagreed, contended, asserted, or refuted or maintained that she wasn't." The one that has been around too long and may be the most heinous from its frequency is "He threw him under the bus." Anyone still using this expression should be...no, I won't say it. But they should. How about blamed, criticized, scapegoated, betrayed, disrespected, harmed, disdained, punished?

Some minor items I must deplore in our descent to verbal decay. One is the word "well" before most answers to media



As we used to not say, "Get your own words." It exposes how lazy, uncreative and uncultivated the media is. Is this what is called herd mentality? The stolen words and phrases become a media meme that everyone of us consumers and viewers begin using to hasten the decline in our civil dialogue. It also reveals that these media types spend much time watching their fellow talking heads and reading their print colleagues. Many of these pilfered words can be shortened. If you're too lazy yourself, go back to the old way they were



hands to help their vocal expression. And it's getting worse. Their arms flail so often and wildly they look as if they're leading the Philadelphia Orchestra in an overture. They do it because they are insecure in their ability to convey their points. I wonder how often these same people utilize this tactic on radio. They are speaking across the table to the interviewer host and his staff. What do they do when they're speaking to someone on the phone who can't see them? That's absurd to picture. On TV this gesturing says to the host, "Look, I know I can't effectively communicate with the force of my words in this point to you and your viewers. It I'm debating someone, I desperately want to outduel them. So please direct your eyes to my hands, which are assisting me to make you understand what my mouth and words fail to convey adequately."

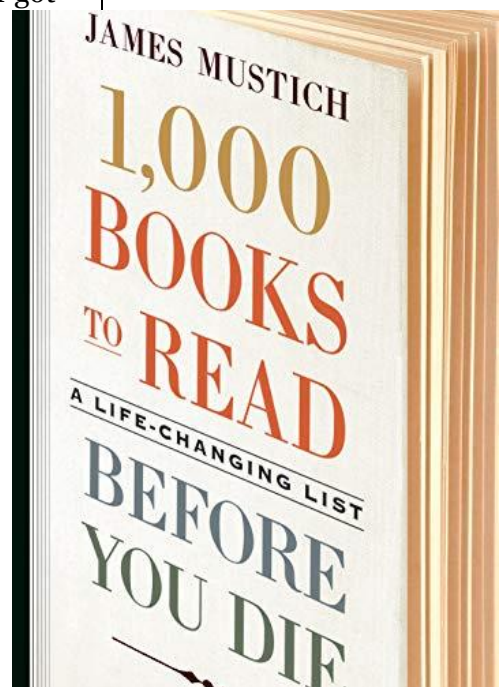
Maybe the TV camera should be lowered each time to ensure it picks up the speaker's hands and arms. This frenzy propels me to rush to the screen, punch a hole, reach in, grab their hands, and, like a good cop, pull them behind their backs and handcuff them. But I restrain myself. I don't want to break my hand and I mislaid my handcuffs. I'm sure many TV commentators would recoil from my impulsive act. Unnerved to be

deprived of their desperate use of their hands to help them, they would shake and feel nausea, unable to proceed without intense focus.

It's worse for our younger people. I recall a young woman author being interviewed by another young woman, both likely in their late 20's. It was an alleged intellectual program of CSpan 2. The interviewer sat there with her left arm raised and mostly closed, pointing at the author. She looked like a priest in a cathedral flinging holy water at their parishioner. By the end of the session the author would have been drenched if she had remained in the edifice to God. I recently saw the author of a volume on the *1,000 Books You Should Read Before You Die*. He was elderly and must have been a great intellect, but never got out much, if he was properly prepared and was serious about his book's purpose. When he spoke, he stuck his left hand out toward his interviewer and snapped it constantly. It seemed like a vain attempt to cast a spell. It gave me one. I felt one of disgust and disappointment.

The youngest of our adults gesture the most. We elderly the least.

I know that some people, who are otherwise secure in conveying their thoughts, do it to emphasize their point. That's when you see the index finger stick out and the hand do a chop. Or a straight flat hand pointed to audience waves up and down. But that may be giving them too much credit. Let your words be forceful and lucid. Bernie Sanders has been preaching similar policies in running for president for the last two elections and for years before. He could convey his points in his sleep standing on his head and doing pushups. He still would need to do that arm-extended, finger-point slice. It rises while extended out to his right. It's not extreme; in fact, it's mild. He's 78 years old. Still, he should rein himself in. He's secure in his beliefs, but seems insecure





that the audiences won't accept them.

The more liberal and the younger the speaker, the more sprightly the verbal conductor. Maybe it's really more frantic their attempts. Is that because a conservative is more likely speaking soberly from the head from being better informed, spending more time reading about their subjects? Is it because the liberal reaches into his heart for his views and spouts them more with other liberals. Yes, I know

that I should give the political candidate speaking to a crowd and gesturing more leeway. Okay, they want to show they are certain of their beliefs; they want to convince you to take them seriously; and they want to save the country from disaster. But their gestures diminish all of that.

I think most people either don't react to them or aren't distracted by them. Are they so common now that they are ignored? It seems so. Or they are no more than what we are doing when we speak to others too. I'm not demanding a retreat into Strunk and White (*The Elements of Style*) formality and precision. I thought we were getting better educated. Schools are emphasizing more reading and writing, I

thought. If you read letters and general quotes from not just Founding Fathers with thoughtful, formal King's English trying to scorn him and form their own country, you are impressed with their use of formal English. They served fewer Big Macs than we do today. In fact, you don't read many slang words or other casual words or phrases. Even the lesser educated then did better than many of our educated today. And the populace of Colonial America didn't have formal schooling until the 19th Century was roaring along. Do the same with our fellow Americans fighting over what kind of nation we should have in the 1860's. They show an ability to use good, formal English.



I've spelled out some of the factors that have coarsened our language despite our supposedly improved educational systems. The key aspect is that life has quickened its pace over the several decades since WWII, greased by the rise of more media. Some other causes: Radio, more newspapers and magazines with snappier stories, TV with its explosion of talk shows and frequent brief images, movies with their sprinting previews and shouting audios, and of course music

in its faster and louder forms from rocknroll and thereafter and peaking in speed with rap and other offshoots.

Here is a chart of the three groups. The first level is what we are doing too much of. These are examples of some of the cliché memes that are lazy, uncultivated commentators are using. The second group is what we used to say or what we should say if we displayed decent, formal English. The highest and third level is what only the intellectual elite will use and

none of us need aspire to. Healthy is good enough for general exchanges. I've even added a special group of outliers where I list some examples of word memes that are being used that belong in the gourmet category but are being flung at us by the talking heads on TV. They are in reverse of the normal use. Somehow they have memed their way into a laughable cliché and the intelligentsia can't avoid them. Now the rest of us are infected and no cure exists. ●

Cherry picking used to be about picking cherries. Not anymore.



Junk Food Words: slang, casual, argot, crude, jargon	Healthy Food Words: Mostly short, respectable, formal Words to replace Junk Food Words	Gourmet, including Vegan and Dairy, for those who desire the ultimate highbrow words, typically longer and more obscure
diss	Insult; offend; upset	Antagonize; disrespect
troll	Provoke; malign; upset; enflame;	Excoriate;
throw under the bus	Betray; undermine; deflect blame; disavow;	Dissociate
pushback	Fight, contend; refute; answer; respond; reply; counter;	Rejoinder; counterattack
cherry pick	Select; favor; prefer; cull; choose, -and ignore	Micromanage
It sucks	It's: appalling; dreadful; awful; atrocious; terrible	Egregious; abysmal
a ton of reasons (ton is a weight, not a quality or a quantity of non-objects)	Several; many; a stack; numerous;	Multitude; superabundance
It's not a one-size-fits-all situation	Each situation is different; No solution works everywhere; Each circumstance is unique; No single way is right	
Get out of jail free card	This will avoid his problem; this will make his hurt disappear	
the elephant in the room	The obvious issue; the problem being avoided; the embarrassing aspect.	

Word Outliers

There is another phenomenon that has evolved by theft throughout the media. They've adopted some Gourmet words into their Junk Food inventory of words, creating the opposite situation. These I call the **Outliers**. They should merely be using the Healthy version of synonyms. They use mostly Junk. Instead they have inexplicably adopted the pretentious upper level of these word examples:

Gourmet version of word used by Media	Healthy Version of Word
Counter-intuitive	Unwise; obtuse; foolish; imprudent; careless; ill-advised
Disingenuous	Deceitful; devious; misleading; insincere; fake; specious; dishonest; pretending
Nefarious	Improper; unlawful; immoral; wicked; evil; despicable; perverse; unsavory
Exacerbate	Worsen; aggravate; weaken; decay; drop; wane; decrease

Verbal Tics

Another group lingering and growing within junk food is the brief words and phrases that refuse to stop annoying us. I call them verbal tics. Their importance is light as Kleenex and valuable to discourse as an inkless pen. Here are some of them: **So** at the head of a sentence, a recent meme mostly puked by young people; **sort of** or **kind of** as omnipresent weasel words for those who fear making declarative statements. And the almost silent plague we all seem to have embraced for no good reason. It appears at the head of a sentence and has no important roll to fill other than to buy time: **well**. It always shows up when a wise person begins his answer to a question. And plenty of times otherwise by the rest of us. It's now officially part of our verbal DNA, I fear. Oh, well. Finally, the words "**You know**" peppered throughout too many speakers' unsure sentences incites me to say, "No, I don't know." each time they squirt it at me, mostly unconsciously.



GET TO KNOW

Virginia Grim Follweiler

IN 50 COMPLETION QUESTIONS

She is the youngest and the only girl sibling of the Kutztown Grims. About fifteen years ago, she made it unanimous that they are all avid golfers . Is her desire as keen as her devoted brothers? No. Although she does play several times a year, she enjoys the exercise and the social links it gives her. Would you like to know what she really thinks about a lot of topics? Read these 50 items that reveal much about our charming sister.

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1. **I wish I could** – *be satisfied with my limitations.*
 2. **The best part of high school was** – *when girls were allowed to wear pants.*
 3. **When I was a youngster I thought** – *I was the star of my own movie.*
 4. **Two public courses in Southeastern Pa I would play a lot are** – *gone. One is converted to a warehouse [Perry near Hamburg has closed] and the other is corn fields [Pleasant Hill closed too].*
 5. **Ever since I can remember** – *I have loved petting and playing with dogs, climbing trees and standing in the shallow part of the ocean on a sandy beach.*
 6. **I think I'm really good at** – *anticipating.*
 7. **Music I detest is** – *turned down whenever possible.*
 8. **I don't give a royal rip about** – *concealing secrets about myself, at this time in my life.*
 9. **My first summer job taught me** – *how to flirt. [Snack bar at Berkleigh CC]*
 10. **My most memorable golf round was** – *unmemorable.*
 11. **I have a secret longing to** – *tell people that they stink with BO, mouth odor, and the like.*
 12. **I'm not very proud of** – *my president.*
 13. **I wish I had been living when** – *my parents got married and witnessed them and their times together.*
 14. **I still get steamed that** – *people intentionally kill other people.*

15. **When I was in elementary school** – *Kennedy was shot.*
16. **A TV show I hate to admit I enjoyed** – *is Hoarders.*
17. **I'd really like to own** – *an ocean home that I didn't have to take care of.*
18. **I can't believe they still** – *make ga- guzzling cars.*
19. **When I was in Middle School** – *all of my friends and I got our periods, sometimes on our skirts or dresses. Embarrassing.*
20. **The part of me I like least** – *are my triceps. I inherited them from my mother.*
21. **My big regret about college is** – *not taking classes at Huxley College, an environmental college on the campus of Western Washington University. I may have gone in a different direction career-wise. Field trips through Huxley in western Washington would've been a more exciting classroom than getting clinical hours doing speech therapy in a tiny room.*
22. **You'll never catch me** – *eating grapefruit, mincemeat, hot peppers or voting for right wing racists and misogynists.*
23. **I'd like the NFL to** – *go away.*
24. **I think that God** – *was created by us, not discovered as a real being.*
25. **Three people from history I would enjoy dinner with are** – *Queen Elizabeth (the first one) and my maternal grandmothers.*
26. **Golf is** – *exercise.*
27. **If life gave you do-overs, I would have** – *used a different form of birth control.*
28. **I'm better than you think at** – *being modest.*

29. **I really like my** – *height.*
30. **I hate to admit that** - *I text while driving.*
31. **For my last supper on death row serve me** – *Salmon and CMP's unlimited.*
32. **The part of a man or a woman I will gaze at first is** – *their eyes.*
33. **My first car was** – *a 1971 Datsun 510. I bought it in January 1974. I needed it for my first job as a speech therapist. I lived in Bellingham, Washington and commuted to British Columbia for the work.*
34. **I'd really like to take a trip to** – *Nova Scotia.*
35. **Why don't they do something about** – *eliminating the causes of cancer?*
36. **I'd like to play a round of golf at** – *Page, Arizona. It's a little town on the shore of shrinking Lake Powell with the kind of golf course seen on golf calendars. It's in the dessert, so if you don't stay on the irrigated fairways the rough is a sand trap. There's one hole where you tee off from the edge of a high plateau aiming at a green far below with sand all around it. The balls go farther because you're at a higher elevation.*
37. **My job is** – *nearing its end. [Audiologist]*
38. **In the near future I would like** – *to be vaccinated against the Covid virus.*
39. **A movie that really sticks with me is** – *Hamilton.*
40. **Sometimes, to fall asleep I will** – *play golf at Capon Springs in my head.*
41. **Someday I would like to** – *try to retire.*
42. **When I'm driving in my car I** – *like to avoid an accident.*

- 43. The worst part of my golf game is** – *the 13th hole, when I'm ready to stop because it's taking too long and I'm tired.*
- 44. I'm afraid I'm not that good at** – *directions, ever since GPS.*
- 45. My hometown is** – *just Topton without Kutztown University.*
- 46. If you want to make me comfortable** – *just give me time, attention, some creature comforts like chocolate and good health.*
- 47. When I first get out of bed in the morning** – *you know what I do.*
- 48. The dumbest things are done by** – *cats.*
- 49. I can never understand why** – *we haven't already had a woman president.*
- 50. I'm sure that someday** – *I won't eat sugar for an entire week. ●*
-