

SOAP BOX TIME

Up until now I have been able to suppress the urge to try to set the world right on the proper use of our language. When I heard once again, from a renowned media reporter, the phrase "diametrically opposed," I went over the edge. Rather than hurl a shoe through our flat screen TV, I decided to write instead. A trip to any garden variety dictionary will disclose that "diametrical" means "exact opposite." So if someone is diametrically opposed that must mean he is then oppositely opposed, thus putting him in the same corner. I don't make this stuff up - it just comes out that way. Much like travelling "across the globe." Are journalists and media wonks the only ones on this globe who do not know that it is round, and that one must go around it, not across it?

The more subtle, and more common, error is "try and." They missed the grammar school session that taught us to say "try to," not "try and." Equally offensive, at least to me, is the phrase "can't seem." I hear this one much too often. How about replacing it with "seems unable?" The phrase "can't seem" doesn't even make sense to any thinking person, but of course much of the media are not included in this group.

Reading sagas of hunting exploits I often encounter the phrase "shot him in the front shoulder," at which point I think "Good grief, the guy shot a centipede!" Unless I am badly adrift, all four-legged creatures have shoulders only on their front ends. These words appear in highly accredited journals, which is sad commentary on the editing skills of those who publish these type things. These same journals will refer to a binocular using the plural form, or worse yet, refer to a "pair of binoculars." I happen to be a proud owner of a pair of binoculars - one is a Leica and the other is a Swarovski. I carry only one binocular at a time, however, and never ever mistakenly refer to it in a plural form.

And here is one that gets by almost everyone - Calling a "strait" the "straits."
You have undoubtedly heard it hundreds of times - Formosa Straits, Tsugaru Straits, Straits of Gibraltar, Magellan Straits, Sunda Straits The list goes on, and all this time there is only one Strait of Gibraltar, one Magellan Strait, one Taiwan Strait (since Formosa became Taiwan), and one Sunda Strait.

Maybe you are able to read or hear this incorrect usage of our language and be unaffected by it. I cannot. Upon hearing or reading any misuse, I immediately don my judge's robes, declare the author stupid, and move on to something else.

It gets worse - Whatever happened to words like "believe" and "think?" My favorite news anchor almost caused me to regurgitate my meal when he asked an interviewee how he **FEELS** about this. Our forefathers had far more conviction in their language and did NOT say "We feel these truths are self-evident." I don't know about you but I do not care how someone feels about anything. I want to know what he believes - what he thinks. The business of knowing how anyone feels belongs to the medical profession. Using the word "feel" to describe ones beliefs connotes wishy-washy insincerity. If you tell me how you **feel** about a new city ordinance, a newly posted speed limit, or any other subject, I proudly make this guarantee: You will be judged and you will be found to be weak on conviction.

**Freedom Is Not Free
Frenchy Sends with Warm Regards**

Submitted by CAPT R. Claude Corbeille, USN RET