

Careless communicating causes blunders

When Theodore Roosevelt took his oath of office as President, newspapers rushed to report his inauguration on their front pages. A New York reporter hurried too fast and reported:

“It was a scene never to be forgotten when Roosevelt, before the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and a few witnesses, took his simple bath.”

Another famous Washington blooper occurred when a newly elected congressman made his first speech in the House of Representatives. He declaimed, “As Daniel Webster makes clear in his dictionary...”

But he was interrupted by: “Noah Webster wrote the dictionary.”

The congressman snorted, “Noah nothing! Noah built the ark!”

Some goofs are amusing

While Benjamin Franklin was an

American diplomat in Paris, he attended a meeting where pieces of French literature were read aloud. Franklin didn't understand French very well, but he didn't want to seem impolite. So he watched a lady nearby and clapped vigorously each time she applauded.

Franklin was accompanied by his grandson who did understand French. When the readings were finished, the youngster said, “But Grandpa, you always applauded louder than anyone else whenever they praised you.”

But mistakes can be tragic

Such harmless goofs can be funny. But garbled communications are often far from harmless or funny. They can cause serious financial losses or even cost lives.

One of the most tragic communication errors of all time happened October 25,

1854, during the Crimean War, when a British light cavalry brigade of 670 men was ordered to attack from the flanks at the battle of Balaclava. But muddled orders resulted in a frontal attack, and half the brigade was wiped out. Alfred Tennyson's epic poem, “The Charge of the Light Brigade,” recalls:

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”

Was there a man dismay'd?

Not though the soldier knew

Someone had blundered;

Theirs not to make reply,

Theirs not to reason why,

Theirs but to do and die.

Into the valley of death

Rode the six hundred.

Whenever you communicate with someone else, you can prevent costly mistakes by making sure that each of you clearly understands what is being said or written.

Curiosity Corner

The piano was originally called the pianoforte, which comes from two Italian words: piano, which means soft and forte, which means loud. So pianoforte actually means "soft-loud." It was the first keyboard instrument ever invented that could play both soft and loud.

The chemical that gives skunks its malodorous reputation is ethanethiol, a substance so pungent that less than one ten-trillionth (0.0000000000001) of an ounce can be detected by the human nose.

Rain actually keeps the earth dry. The process of rain takes moisture out of the air and gathers it in concentrated rain clouds. Otherwise, moisture would condense on every solid surface. All human beings would be constantly bathed in tepid perspiration, like others in a steam bath.

Notes & Reminders

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"Did I say we had to plant them
4 feet deep? I meant 4 inches."

Poor
communication
can mean deep
trouble.