

BOB CONSIDINE

On the Line



Words, those wondrous tools, come and go. As with other tools, they simply wear out and are thrown away. But some last forever, and find themselves in the company of imaginative new words designed to build and sparkle a changing world.

A spy who has been prying into the 1971 Addenda to Webster's Third New International Dictionary sends me a signal:

"Ben Franklin could never have used such words as 'grandiose' or 'rambunctious.' Abraham Lincoln could never have known 'polarize' or 'biodegradable' and even Franklin Roosevelt would not have known 'laser,' 'psychedelic' or 'cosmonaut.'

"Many old words never die, they simply fade away into other meanings. The word 'soul' has certainly taken on a new definition or two in the past few years. In 1806, Noah Webster listed 'gregarious' as 'going in flocks or herds,' while today we use it to mean someone who is social and enjoys company. And a word like 'consumer' adds an 'ism' and takes on an entirely new concept."

Right on, as we say.

Nobody nowadays uses such extinct words as "yesternight," "outdwell," "prolate," or "congrue." If you were living in the early 19th century you would have called an old lady a "drazel," an idler a "doodle," a buffoon a "kickshoe" and a meteor a "will-with-a-wisp." (Maybe I'll "chicken out" on that last statement.)

Old Noah ruled that a person having a fainting spell was suffering a "lipothymy," and that if the person got caught in a quagmire he was glued to a "mizzy." Noah's residence was a "commorance." He is not remembered as a wit, but if he felt he was he would have said he was possessed of "ingeny." Had she lived in those days, Betty Friedan would have resented being called "womanish." That, then, meant "suitable to a woman, delicate, soft."

"This generation especially is being hit broadside with many new ideas and concepts," says Dr. H. Bosley Woolf, editorial director for dictionaries at G & C Merriam. "The number of new words and the changes in so

many meanings reflect the cultural and scientific explosion of our times. Our language is being influenced by an increasingly urban society, space exploration, greater social freedoms, drugs, the Black experience, woman's liberation, the environment, the great liberal-conservative debates, the innovations on campus and much more.

"As recently as a few years ago, Americans had never heard of unisex, unflappable, urban sprawl, splashdown, soul food, skyjacker, snowmobiler, pop art, microimage, Afro, and antiballistic missile. Today we talk of a Jesus freak, of acidhead, freaking out, rapping and overkill. We speak of the nitty-gritty, of pizzazz, Middle America and moonwalk.

"Some areas such as computer technology, space and communications have spawned whole new vocabularies. We simply did not have the words for many of these new concepts, so new words had to be developed and old words changed."

Old Noah knew it was coming.

"A living language must keep pace with improvement in knowledge and with the multiplication of ideas," he wrote, "way back when." It is impossible to stop the progress of language."

He might have added that it sometimes also seems impossible to understand the words of language. For example, we obviously still don't quite understand that simple little combination of words: Love Thy Neighbor.

Hope that is not too nubilous.

ARCHBISHOP TO SPEAK

New York (RNS) — Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, retired bishop of Rochester, will be the featured speaker Nov. 10 at the Salvation Army's Friday evening series of evangelical meetings here. This is the 41st season of the Friday night meetings at the New York Temple in Greenwich Village, and the longest continuing evangelistic series in New York. Archbishop Sheen is the first Roman Catholic clergyman to participate in the series.

Baseball Starts with Religion

New York — The Brooklyn Atlantics and the Philadelphia Athletics vie for baseball's championship in the 1843 version of the World Series, as illustrated in a newspaper of that era.

While most Americans believe baseball was invented by an American named Abner Doubleday and first played

at Cooperstown, N.Y., in 1839, a history of baseball just published links the game with early religious rites and traces its forerunners back 3,500 years to ancient Egypt.

Irving Lietner in *Baseball: Diamond in the Rough* (Criterion Books) begins his history with a quotation from an American missionary to

Syria, the Rev. Henry Harris Jessup, who found Arab boys playing "Tabeh" or baseball at the same time that the early American amateur clubs were being organized. Scholars in recent years have discovered that many games involving a ball played throughout the world have their roots in primitive religious rites. (RNS)

A Pat on Back for Ethnics

Wake Forest, N.C. (RNS) — A Catholic sociologist has characterized U.S. Catholic "ethnics" as people with a "potential for openness, movement and growth," and challenged the idea that they are "super-patriots," "racist" and "hawks" who cannot bring themselves to criticize their country.

Said Father Andrew Greeley:

"The ethnics like the United States of America. The flag, the Star Spangled Banner, the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence . . . all of these are admired symbols which together sum up the gratitude the ethnic feels for what the U.S. made pos-

sible . . . freedom, dignity, comfort, security . . ."

The sociologist noted that with respect to social ills, racial equality, and social change "the ethnics are if anything substantially more 'liberal' than the average American."

Father Greeley, who heads the Center for the Study of American Pluralism at the University of Chicago, spoke to a group of theologians and sociologists attending a colloquium on "Civil Religion in America," at the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest.

The colloquium was sponsored by the seminary and the Inter-

religious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee, New York.

Observing that the term "ethnic" is merely a euphemism for "Catholic" when most people use it, Father Greeley criticized most commentators on ethnicity and middle America because they "have not been in the neighborhood for a hell of a long time, if ever."

He said he did not wish to "romanticize the ethnics," adding that they are not "angels or saints, folk heroes or a new messianic people. They are human beings like the rest of us, and they deserve to be understood in their full complexity . . ."

Father Greeley said that like many Americans, the ethnics "have not despaired of American society" and that the assumption among the "elites" that the ethnics are alienated is not confirmed by information available.

Declaring that there are strong "residual forces in the civil religion of ethnics which . . . make them sympathetic to social change," the priest asserted that ethnics have a strong conviction about individual freedom and dignity, rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

"In addition, I would argue that abhorrence of social injustice, again drawn directly from the Yahwistic tradition, is very much a part of the civil religion of ethnics." He added that "ethnics have higher scores on integration scales" than the American average, even in the North.

Father Koob Hurt in Fall

Washington, D.C. (RNS) — Father C. Albert Koob, O. Praem., president of the National Catholic Educational Association and a leading Catholic educator, remained in critical condition at Georgetown University Hospital as a result of injuries suffered in a fall at a shopping center here Oct. 28.

Father Koob fell about 30 feet when a grate he stepped on outside a store in the Jennifer Mall gave way.

A hospital spokesman said there had been some improvement in the priest's condition and that it was not "life-threatening." He added, however, that doctors expressed some fear that the injuries to Father Koob could be "crippling."

The 52-year-old priest was placed in the intensive care ward at the hospital. A spokesman said he suffered a brain contusion, a broken left shoulder, a broken knee cap, a fractured cheekbone, broken bones in his feet and multiple lacerations of the head and face.

Father Koob has been with the NCEA since 1961 when he took the post of associate secretary of its secondary school department. From 1948 to 1961, he was vice-principal and principal of Bishop Neumann High School in Philadelphia. In 1966, he was named interim executive secretary of the NCEA and executive secretary in 1967. He held that title until 1969 when it was changed to president.

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