

**Yakity Yak, Yakity Yak,
Yakity Yak, Yakity Yak,
Yakity Yak, Yakity Yak,
Yakity Yak, Yakity Yak...**

**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**This and That
Overuse of Words and Gestures**

This and That

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No Problem This, No Problem That, No Problem Ad Nauseum

A few years ago, this was a typical exchange between two humans:

“Thank you.”

“It was my pleasure to serve you.”

Or:

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

Perhaps:

“Thank you.”

“My pleasure.”

And other pleasantries to keep our encounters with others, however cursory, as pleasant as possible.

Today:

“Thank you.”

“No problem.”

I do not recall the exact date---I was a customer in a restaurant--- but the first time I first heard, “No problem,” in response to my “Thank you,” I did a double take.

I said, “Excuse me?”

He responded, “I said, no problem.”

I thought the person was venting his hostility. His intonation of the words did not come out of his mouth as anything close to a friendly, “You are welcome.” It came out as a passive-aggressive answer, his indirect way of expressing hostility.

Besides, he was the person who should have been doing the thanking, but I am accustomed to thanking waiters before they thank me. It is part of my empathy for their fate in life of waiting tables, as I was once a waiter myself.

Anyway, for this episode, the “No problem” waiter received “No tip.”

Nowadays, “No problem” is the accepted expression used in response to, “Thank you.” We rarely hear, “You’re welcome,” anymore. It is no problem this, no problem that, no problem ad nauseum.

The expression is so common, it has replaced former responses to “Thank you.” It has become embedded into our social behavior, reinforced by abbreviated texting on social media.

Consequently, I no longer interpret a “No problem,” response to me as having a violent passive-aggressive undertone.

But I draw the line with “No problem, dude.”

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110% this, 110% that, 110% Ad Nauseum

Frank promises, "I'll give it all I've got, coach!" What coach could ask for anything more?

That declaration of effort used to be the way a player committed himself to the game.

Later, the allegiance to the cause was expressed as, "I'll give it 100%, coach!" That promise showed the same devotion and enthusiasm. After all, "100%" was "all." No more could be forthcoming.

Not quite, along came, "I'll give it 110%, coach!" A coach would be ecstatic with such a player and his zest to excel. The player was saying, "I'll give more than I've got."

Not one to parse words, but I wonder where this player was going to obtain ten percent more of effort? Maybe from his teammate, Jack.

"Hey, Jack, can I borrow ten percent of your effort? I made a promise to the coach."

"Dude, I'd lose ten percent of my own effort. I can't say, 'I'll give 90%, coach!'"

Go find ten percent of effort from someone else...maybe that laggard, Harold. He's always playing with less than 100%. He won't miss ten more."

"Jack, that's a 110% idea."

How often do we hear "110%" tossed around in our conversations? Some of the time? All the time? 110% of the time? It's 110% this, 110% that, 110% ad nauseum.

I surfed the Net for: "110%." Here are some examples, with side comments in brackets.

- A Philadelphia Eagles football player says. "It's eleven guys playing defense out there, each guy has to give 110% effort," [With eleven players to a team, and ten percent of effort above their mathematical capacity to produce effort: $10 \times 11 = 110$. That's equivalent to one extra player...giving 110 % no less! Anyway, too many men, not to mention too much effort on the field. The ref throws the penalty flag.]
- A soccer team is preparing for a tournament. A player offers this observation about the upcoming matches: "All players are going to be giving it 110 %, but we'll be prepared for that." [He and his team are going to be prepared by giving...not 100%, not 110%, but 120%.]

Apparently, there is no limit to the level of effort and commitment we can make to an endeavor. That is how Superman leaps over tall buildings: extra percentages of effort.

A professional boxer announces he is going to annihilate his opponent, "I'm giving it 200%." That is twice as much effort than all the effort that can be brought to bear by *both* men in this fight. The prospects for his man's challenger do not look promising.

In closing, here are a few more examples of the use of 110%, taken from quotes I found on the Internet.

- "I've done a lot of crazy things, but when I fall in love with someone, I will give 110%." [Not quite. 110% is not crazy. In today's world, it is ordinary. But loving someone by giving 200%? That's a crazy thing to do. In these modern times, never say you love someone enough to give them 110%. That is not enough. They will end up walking down

that aisle of marital bliss with someone who gives 200%.

- “Where it goes from here is out of our hands, but we will give 110% like we always do for the team.” [Impressive, all with no hands.]
- “I think the healthiest dancer is the one who can give 110% at work, but then leave it behind when they go home and come back with a fresh outlook the next day.” [Leaving behind her 110% at work leaves 0% for her loving family. Oh well, they are likely brimming over with %s, so she can borrow some from them.]

That’s it from here. I remain 110% yours,
Uyless

Honey This, Sweetie That, Dear Ad Nauseum

Honey

In the past, it was common practice to call someone of the opposite sex, *Honey*. Women called men, *Honey*. Men called women, *Honey*. It was often a same-sex utterance, as women often called other women, *Honey*. But a man calling another man, *Honey*, was unusual, perhaps risky, depending on the circumstances at the time the remark was made.

I use the past tense above, but *Honey* is still widely bandied about, although it appears to be diminishing in use. Shortly, I will explain why.

Using the word *Honey* when addressing a person has both positive and negative connotations. “I love you, Honey,” is obviously a positive remark, whereas, “Get lost, Honey,” is not meant to engender feel-good vibes in the Honey who is the target of the request.

Some people, generally known as pedants, never employ the word in their vocabulary. They consider uttering *Honey* beneath them, a slight to their elevated elocution abilities.

I disagree with these language nitpickers. Using the word, *Honey*, enriches conversations. Just consider when you refer to someone as “Honey,” you imply fanciful illusions, such as “A Taste of Honey,” ... “The Land of Milk and Honey,” ... “Honey Bun,” ... “Honey Pot,” ... Okay, forget the last one, but I think I made my point.

Another point is that calling most everyone *Honey* is a lazy way to communicate. Honey, this, Honey, that...it becomes tiresome saying it over and over, much less being around someone who voices it every other sentence.

An example: A waitress is speaking to a lusty looking customer. She says to him, “Don’t get your hopes up, Honey. I call everybody, Honey.”

And so does everyone else...except for those chin-wagging language nitpickers.

But as mentioned, the use of the word, *Honey*, has diminished. And not just recently. Legend has it that its demise began in 1942 with the release of the movie, *Casablanca*.¹ Humphrey Bogart was the hero in the film and was scripted to recite pithy lines reflecting his cool, detached demeanor.

He attempted to impress his lady love, Ingrid Bergman, with, “Here’s looking at you, Honey.”

It did not work. In those days everyone spouted-out, Honey.

So, Bogart’s line was changed to, “Here’s looking at you, Kid.” It caught the fancy of the film bosses so much that the line is spoken four times in the movie.

It also caught the fancy of the public. Soon, the word, *Kid*, was replacing the word, *Honey*. “I love you, Kid.”... “Get lost, Kid,” has more pizzaz than their honey counterparts.

That’s enough about Honey. Here’s another overused word of affection.

Sweetie

This past month or so...okay, maybe this past year or so, I have been called *Sweetie* three times by members of the opposite sex. Living in North Idaho, it would be unusual if a member of the same sex called me, *Sweetie*. This part of America is not noted for its citizens emitting terms of endearment to one another...unless they are fellow members of The White Aryan Nations.²

¹ “Legend,” as in myth, as in a social media “fact.” ...As in, do not believe a word of it, but I wanted to put something in this piece about one of my favorite words: kid...and I’m not kidding.

² I make light, but the citizens of this part of north Idaho were instrumental in dislodging and defeating the formal, pervasive presence of this cult.

Anyway, being way over the hill, I was flattered by any woman referring to me as Sweetie. These women were pretty young, and pretty pretty. But I would have been content to have an equally aged person (female only, please) pass a term of endearment to me...such as Sweetie.

Granted, two of the women were waitresses for my tables, and they had yet to receive my tips. And at this time in my life, it is reasonable to suspect a woman I do not know calling me Sweetie might have ulterior motives.

Like the word, *honey*, is the word *sweetie* being overused? Probably, but I don't care. Someone...anyone...can call me, Sweetie, and I'll answer every time.

Dear

The word, *Dear*, has been, by far, my least favorite term of endearment. Blondie calls Dagwood, *Dear*, at the drop of a hat. So do millions of others. I reached my limit of "Dear this and Dear that" watching TV shows, such as "Leave it to Beaver" and "The Waltons."

Dear is not a term of endearment. The grocery store cashier calls me, *Dear*. So does the UPS store clerk. They are not dear to me, and I am not dear to them. And I am not dear to myself, either. You will never hear me say, "Dear me."

Last week, a McDonald's waitress asked, "What'll you have, Dear?" After I paid for my Big Mac, she said, "Thank you, Dear."

Okay, she did not ask, "What'll you have, Dude?" ... or "What'll you have, Man?" Given today's assault on the mother tongue, I am gradually growing to like being called *Dear*.

Besides, I like to think I have an endearing face, despite its 80-some-year-old crevices and crannies.

By the way, you may have noticed that Blondie has taken to calling Dagwood, *Sweetheart*. Next up off Blondie's tongue? It is foreordained: *Honey*.

Hug This, Hug That, Hug Ad Nauseum

Whatever happened to handshakes?

One of my friend's relatives recently attended a religious service held in a church he was visiting for the first time. As he was exiting the church, he extended his hand to the pastor, who was at the door bidding goodbye to the parishioners. The pastor did not take the man's hand. Instead, he hugged him.

The pastor had not been hugging anyone else. Maybe he hugged strangers to encourage them to get right with the Lord. After all, if they were unknown to the pastor, they might be foreigners to places of worship.

Yesterday, I watched an NFL playoff game on television. The pre-game warmups showed several members of the two teams hugging their opponents. After the pre-game coin toss, they shook hands and prepared for the kickoff.

After the game, there was more hugging, including the two coaches and their assistants. The two teams mingled on the football field, "Nice game, your playing was great," as they hugged and patted asses.

If I had been one of those football players, after the game I would have headed for the cheerleaders---either side would do. "Nice game, your cheering was great," as I hugged and patted asses.

Just a joke. We males *never* think of a cheerleader's anatomy when she is leading cheers, only the rhythm of her...eh, cheers. By the way, for the life of me, I cannot understand the reason for having male cheerleaders. What good do they do? Female cheerleaders can do cartwheels and flips as well as males.

Jokes aside, my habit of handshaking is not in alignment with today's practice of hugging instead of shaking hands. That is the point of this article: *Hugging should be a gesture of friendship and affection*. Yet it is now used so often its meaning has been trivialized. It's hug this, hug that, hug ad nauseum.

Recently, Holly and I attended a party at our friends' home. We knew a few of the guests, but not many. We were greeted at the door by the hostess, who received us with hugs. They were appropriate and welcome. The host hugged Holly, but he did not hug me. He shook my hand. Again, an appropriate and welcome gesture.

Why not a hug from the host? Why a handshake instead? I think it is because he comes from the old school, one to which this writer belongs. Speaking of the old school, let's go back in time a few decades:

Did you ever see John Wayne hug another man? How about Clint Eastwood? Liberace hugged anyone, but that was Liberace. I saw Liberace perform in Las Vegas, where he displayed his picturesque talent and his love for hugging anyone and everything on the stage, including his diamond-studded cape. (If I had owned a diamond-studded cape, I would been tempted to do some cape hugging myself.)

Going further back in time, did you ever see Roy Rogers hug Dale Evans? No. His hugging partner was Trigger, his horse. Roy even had Trigger stuffed by a taxidermist, so the King of Cowboys could have Trigger's presence around him all the time.³

But Roy never had Dale stuffed, which demonstrates the close relationship between affection, hugging, and taxidermy.

I grew-up in a culture in which men never hugged anyone but a relative, and only a special relative, such as a mother, a father, or their mothers and fathers. Maybe a long-lost, returning kinfolk. I cannot recall my dad hugging anyone or anything but his horses and a prized bull (the latter during non-mating season). Mom was a loving woman, but she did not hug very much.

Hugging in the part of the southwest where I came from was not part of everyday protocol, because it entailed embracing, if only for a second or so. Embracing another man was too close to behaving in a non-manly manner.

We live in a hugging society. But we are not alone. We are just late coming to the hugging party. Take the French, for example. They have been hugging one another for a very long time. In addition, some of those Middle Eastern men, and the rough-looking dudes living in the Balkans, not only hug, they kiss one another's cheeks. Both sides of the face!

Nonetheless, these foreigners are circumspect about hugging. I doubt you will watch a film made in their country with a lot of hugging scenes in the movie. Which leads to another point about hugging in America: It is overused to the point of being comical. Here are three examples of hugging overkill in our touchy-feely society:

- TV talk show hosts hug many of their guests. Although they rarely hug guests who are politicians.
- Shark Tank sharks routinely hug the contestants who have accepted a shark's investment offer. Instant friendship and smiles abound, all accentuated with hugs. The contestants have already done most of the work to make the product viable in the marketplace. No wonder the sharks are hugging and smiling.
- The first time someone meets someone else, if the people are men, handshakes usually take place. If one person is a woman, hugs are sometimes substituted for handshakes. Sometimes, there is a moment of hesitancy during this greeting: The man thinks: *If I offer a hugging gesture toward this woman...opening my arms and all...she might think I am making a disguised sexual lunge. ...No way! She's even uglier than my wife.* The woman thinks: *I can't hug his man. He might think I find him attractive. No way! He's even uglier than my husband.*

These scenarios, once unheard of before hugging replaced handshakes, have seeped into our culture. On the other hand:

³ Bischoff's Taxidermy in Los Angeles was hired to preserve and mount Trigger. The hide was stretched over a foam sculpture of the horse, and in 1967, put on display at the Roy Rogers-Dale Evans Museum in Apple Valley. Later, in 1976, Trigger was moved to Victorville, California, then to Branson, Missouri in 2003.

- I was hugged by a woman who was an employee at the local UPS store. I had been working with her for over ten years. She identified with the products I shipped, mainly my books. She did trouble-shooting of delivery problems, often on her own initiative. Granted, her Christmas bonus was generous, but that was not why, on her last day of employment before retirement, she came from behind the counter and said, “Uyless, I want to give you a hug.” That hug was a heart melter.
- Once, I encountered a couple in the grocery store line in front of me who could not pay for all their groceries. The cashier asked them to remove items from their selection until their available funds matched an inventory of groceries. I offered to pay the balance, which the couple accepted. After I had paid my grocery bill, and the cashier had placed my bags in the cart, she came around the counter and gave me a hug. I did not mind a hug from this stranger. I welcomed it.

To set the record straight, even though I grew up in a handshaking, non-hugging culture, I hug without reservation with people whom I wish to express friendship or affection. I do not like hugging a stranger, especially in these pandemic times. Plus, it seems a pretentious gesture to hug an unknown person.

I hope I never witness this scene: A referee is giving instructions to two boxers before they fight for a championship. During the referee’s briefing the men, the antagonists perform the requisite scowls and growls while they glare at each other.

Introductions are nearly complete. To finish the opening ritual before a semi-slaughter begins, the two boxers touch gloves, then give each other a hug.

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F*** This, F*** That, F*** Ad Nauseum

The scene is from the 1939 movie, *Gone with the Wind*. Rhett Butler, having had enough of Scarlett O'Hara, bids her farewell with, "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn."

In those days, a lot of people raised their eyebrows. The word *damn* being uttered in a movie was shocking. Saying *damn* on film was even more alarming than saying *hell*.

Damn was too offensive to be uttered publicly. In private, saying damn was another matter, but people spurned reading words of profanity in papers or hearing them in movies.

One of my friends told me, as a teenager, her parents forbade her from seeing the movie. She and a girlfriend sneaked-off to the theater and saw it anyway. She was astonished by Rhett's declaration.

Legend has it that the big-wigs making the movie were fined for using the word. That did not happen. In 1939, the Motion Picture Association (MPA, responsible for providing directions on screen content) proclaimed in its Production Code that the words *damn* or *hell* were forbidden to be used in movies except on occasions when their use "shall be essential and required for portrayal, in proper historical context, of any scene of dialogue based on historical fact or folklore...or a quotation from a literary work, provided that no such use shall be permitted which is intrinsically objectionable or offends good taste."⁴

Rhett's line stayed in the film.

Recently, I tuned-in to a Netflix film, *Bloodline*. It is a three-season program about a well-to-do family who own a fancy resort hotel on the Florida Keys. The movie is full of angst, replete with complex plots, and lots of mayhem. Ingredients for a great thriller series.

I watched the first season of 13 episodes, started the second, then switched channels. I have not returned to watch any more of the program.

Why? Because the dialogues used the word f*** so often it offended my ears, which are usually profanity-deaf. Even diminutive and shy Sissy Spacek spouted out f*** on occasion. For some of the other actors' dialogues, f*** was in every few sentences. In each scene, rarely was f*** *not* spoken by one or more of the actors.

My father could have been considered a profane man in his day (mid-20th century). His curse words, not voiced often, were *hell* and *goddamn*, sprinkled with an occasional s***. Some of his friends were profanity-free, so dad might have fit the bill for being a curser, at least in those times.

Our hired hands taught me to curse. At the ripe age of eight, I made them laugh by shouting out, "Damn!" and "Hell fire!" But that was the extent of their lessons: two curse words.

The men sometimes shouted s***! when they were surprised or injured. But I was not permitted to add this word to my vocabulary. Not once did I hear them, or my dad, utter the F word. Compare those days with today. We cut to 2023:

The MPA Production Code is gone with the wind. The bar for acceptable language in humans' daily discourse has been lowered to the point where "f*** this" and "f*** that" are so common, we take the change for granted. The popular TV series, "Yellowstone," uses f*** as a common word so many times, we forget it need not be used to make a point.

⁴ Key into your browser: Motion Picture Association Production Code.

Some examples (not all from “Yellowstone”): “Get the f*** out of here.” ... “What the f*** are you doing?” ... “I f***ing mean what I f***ing say.” ... “I wish the f*** I had a drink.”

On and on. The inherent aggression in these expressions would put my cursing sailors---the men under my watch when I was in the Navy---to shame.

Aggression? I believe that to be the case, which is one reason I am writing this essay. Taking the word f*** out of its slang use for sex and applying it to the sentences above connotes aggression...often belligerent aggression.

Then what is lacking in the following altered sentences? After all, they mean the same as their counterparts quoted above:

“Get out of here.” ... “What are you doing?” ... “I mean what I say.” ... “I wish I had a drink.” The answer: With the F word missing, they are not aggressive or threatening enough to warrant serious consideration.

An assertive but vulnerable woman in “Yellowstone” tries to put some defense barriers around her by stating, “I’ll break your f***ing jaw,” to a bunch of lusty wranglers. Her threat gets their attention, and they leave her alone. In real life, “I’ll break your jaw,” would not cut it. She would come across as too weak.

One of my friends who read a draft of this article took issue with my emphasis on the aggressive way the F word is used. That is a good point, and some people use the word without any aggressive intent; casually, from habit. She wrote to me:

I don’t think the use of f*** as being aggressive, so much as being ignorant. The speaker has no knowledge or understanding of the richness of the English language in which there are many other scathing, colorful, and erudite ways to state their displeasure. On the part of professional writers, it shows laziness. ...Ugly words reflect ugly people.

Well spoken. But I do not waver from my belief that f*** is quite frequently used aggressively and with violent intent. Also, about her comment of, “Ugly words reflect ugly people,” I have known several people during my life who were beautiful beings, who would not intentionally offend, much less harm anyone. Yet, they cursed like my sailors, unconsciously lacing their talk with f***, s***, and goddamn almost incessantly.

To each their own. That is my philosophy about living and living with others. But once, and only once, I asked a person (one of my dearest friends) if he was aware of how much he cursed. He looked at me blankly for a few seconds, then answered, “No, never thought about it.”

I had overstepped my rule about “live and let live.” I never mentioned this subject to him again. About fifty years later, he brought up the subject. Fifty years. He said he had decided to stop swearing. I asked if he recalled our talk those many years ago. He said, no, that this change had come about because of other circumstances in his life, circumstances that led him to change aspects of his behavior.

I was glad he had not hung on to something I said to him a long time ago. Something that was his business and not mine. Still, his ongoing conversations, even his demeanor, became less strident, more easy-going. I believe part of this change came about because he was “talking” differently. ...Leaving this personal experience, and returning to the general theme of this piece:

Like other aspects of our modern ways of living, ways declining in taste and consideration for others, our abuse of the mother tongue is also under assault.

But those in the media business, such as TV and film, defend their relentless use of f*** by claiming their plots and associated dialogues are simply chronicling reality, documenting the world as it exists.

Their self-serving hypocritical defenses are rationalizations to the extreme. With rare exceptions, their plots are no closer to reality than *The Flying Nun*. The reality they understand: “I’ll break your f*** jaw,” sells. “I’ll break your jaw,” does not.

The friends I have, my family, my business colleagues...do not utter f*** as part of their discourse, at least not to my face. Nonetheless, Holly and I wonder if we live in a world that makes us unaware of an existing netherworld whose inhabitants cannot speak a sentence unless it is laced with aggressive profanity. Perhaps, despite their unrealistic plots, the TV and movie moguls are trying to teach Holly and me about another realistic world, a netherworld.

Then why have Sissy Spacek, who is playing the role of an elegant matriarch in “Bloodline,” blurt-out f*** in front of her children? Why have all the white-collar actors in the movie utter f*** so often that it numbs a viewer’s senses?

The use of certain words in our language, such as f***, is debasing the mother tongue and our tongues as well. To many people, aggressive profanity has become an unconscious habit, cemented into their everyday speech...like my friend of fifty years ago. It is making segments of our society linguistically and intellectually lazy.

The scene is from a 2023 remake of the movie, *Gone with the Wind*. Rhett Butler, having had enough of Scarlett O’Hara, bids her farewell with, “Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a fuck.”

In these days, no one raises an eyebrow.

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I Love This, I Love That, I Love Ad Nauseum

A noted sports commentator and former star NFL player says, “Those Seahawks gotta love the first half!” He also offers, “I loved that play.” And, “I love that formation.” ...Not one word about his love of CBS, which is paying him for loving everything on the football field.

A TV guest of a renown talk show host, “I love you, and I love your show.” To which the host responds, “I love having you here,” but professes no love for a stranger.

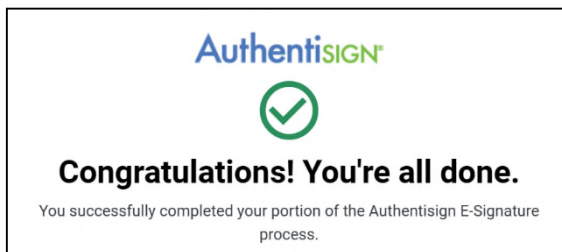
A Shark Tank shark watches the presentation of a contestant. She then responds that she would “love” to participate in funding the contestant’s product, “because I love you, but I’m out.” (An example of tough love.)

Netflix uses a system allowing a viewer to rate a presentation. Three choices, accompanied by thumbs-up or thumbs-down, are shown on the TV screen, as seen below.

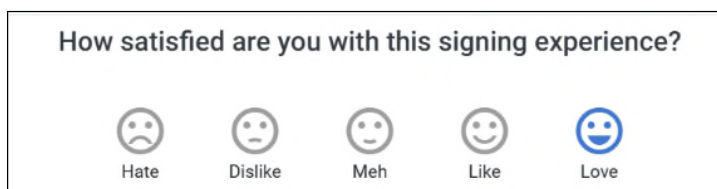


Two thumbs-up if we love the program. I give this system two thumbs-down. First, it is not detailed enough for us to accurately reflect our opinion. A scale of, say, 1-10 would be better. Second, if we really like the show, we are corralled into proclaiming, “I love this!” with an exclamation point to demonstrate our enthusiasm and sincerity.

The company, Authentisign, offers an app that supports its user signing an electronic document and sending it through the Internet. No paper or US stamps required, it is simple, fast, and user friendly. Recently, after I signed a document and sent it to a business associate, I received an email from Authentisign congratulating me on successfully signing my name electronically and asking me to evaluate their product. The top part of the message is shown here:



I do not hesitate to let vendors know about my reaction to their product. Consumers’ feedback help merchants improve their offerings. However, upon viewing the bottom part of Authentisign’s evaluation request, I was tempted to click on their “Hate” icon; not because I hated the product, but because of the blue smiley face and the “Love” notation.



The word *love*, as documented above, has been misused and overused so often that its meaning has been trivialized. In my youth, and into my early adult years, the phrase, “I love you.” was spoken rarely and only toward someone with whom a person had a “feeling of deep affection,” which is the primary dictionary definition of the word.

Of course, the word has other, less personally intense meanings. A second dictionary definition is, “Having a great interest and pleasure in something.”

Considering those statements above, love has nothing to do with either definition of the word: A Tank Shark host proclaims love for a stranger? A commentator loves a football formation? A talk show guest loves the host, a person she has never met?

We have become a society fixated on the word *love*. It’s I love this, I love that, I love ad nauseum.

Do not mistake my comments about the word *love* to mean it should not be used for anything but romance or an intense loyalty to something. After all, there is Biblical love, which came along well before our intonations of love of football, fast food, and fast cars. In 1 John 4:16, it is written, “God is love.” In 1 John 4:18: “There is no fear in love.”

There are different kinds of love, erotic, religious, and so on. We should embrace them all, for they make us better people.

My point is that we should not spout-out our love of something---animate or inanimate---indiscriminately. Expressing love of someone or something should not be arbitrary or happenstance.

As another example: How many times have we sat in the movie theater, watching a film, and said, “I love buttered popcorn.”? ...Okay, poor example.

Anyway, let’s be honest with ourselves and others when we utter the word *love*. Perhaps be a bit more circumspect. Try it, you may grow to love it.

Cowboys This, Cowboys That, Cowboys Ad Nauseum

In season 1 of the television series, “Yellowstone,” a tinhorn has recently been hired to work on the Yellowstone Ranch. He is subject to mostly good-natured hazing from the other men, who are veterans at the ranch.

The tinhorn must learn about horses, including how to ride them. But he does not know a saddle from a bridle. Nonetheless, the hired hands hoist him up onto a saddle that is mounted on a horse that has not been broken.

Sensing someone or something on his back, which untamed horses somewhat dislike, the steed immediately commences to buck violently, rearing up forward then backwards, while jumping throughout the corral. Parallel processing on display.

This is not the tinhorn’s first attempt to ride an unbroken horse. Time and again, he has been bucked-off, ending up lying in the corral, embarrassed before the seasoned wranglers, who hee-haw at his ineptitude.

However, on this occasion, the ranch hands, schooled in Bronc Busting 101, tie the tinhorn’s hands to the saddle horn. And off he and the wild stallion go, round and round the corral. The binding of the tinhorn’s hands to the saddle keeps him on the bronc.

The wranglers stop the show, untie the tinhorn from the saddle horn, and help him to the ground. He walks, quite gingerly, to the gate of the corral, keeping the very sore inner thighs of his two legs a safe distance from each other.

As he slowly makes his bow-legged exit, one of the wranglers says, “He’s starting to walk like a cowboy.”

To which this writer, having grown up on a cattle/horse ranch in southeast New Mexico, offers this cowboy-like observation about that wrangler’s comment: *Bullshit*.

No self-respecting ranch hand would ever make such a remark.

But that’s “Yellowstone” for you. The actors in the series use the word *cowboy* so often to describe themselves and their buddies in glowing, self-serving ways that the dialogue could lead one to suspect the screen writers have watched too many John Wayne movies. And giving them their due, some of the actors are adept horsemen. Besides, they did not write the script they must recite.

But for god’s sake, the “Yellowstone” series is “Cowboy this, Cowboy that,” so many times that the show becomes *cowboy ad nauseum*.

For the “Yellowstone” fans reading thus far, take heart. I am not going to write this article in a completely negative light about the television series. I am into season 2, and I am enjoying it. As I watch more episodes, I am coming to appreciate the screen writers’ skillful development of the main characters.

And I have been a big fan of Kevin Costner, playing the main character in the program (John Dutton), for a long time. I also like the movie in which he tries to dance with wild wolves. Of course, the idea is preposterous, but after all, it is a movie.

Nonetheless, as much as I like “Yellowstone,” try as I do, I find myself shouting “Bullshit!” so often that it is best I am watching the program with only my dog in the room. And she has grown inattentive to my frequent outbursts.

Obviously, this article's focus is on the use of the word *cowboy* in the series. Here's why:

When I was growing up on a cattle ranch in the 1950s, the use of the word *cowboy* was so rare it was almost unheard of. Knowing my memory may have lost recollections of the word being bandied about, I asked my brother, a former steer wrestler, and my editor, a former rodeo coach, if they recalled cowboys calling themselves or others cowboys?

They said no. My bother stated the occasion when the word might be used was in a threatening way, as, "You better watch what you say, cowboy."

That said, why should I care if "Yellowstone" overuses the word? The answer: to set the record straight; to clarify that the cowboys I knew (and still know, although they are dying-off) would not glorify their stoicism and physical prowess with the following statements, taken from seasons 1 and 2 of the show:

A wrangler offers an observation about being successful in Yellowstone ranch life: "If you cowboy your way into this outfit, you're already cursed." I can guarantee you, the cowboys in my life would never utter such drivel.

An improbable situation (at least it was decades ago, during my times on a ranch): A female is admitted as a "horse groomer" to take up permanent residence in the bunkhouse of hired hands, about six of them. A female in a bunkhouse full of males? Well, it is the 2020s of gender equality, and not my old-fashioned recollections of cowboy life in the 1950s.

She asks where a spare bed is. The surprised men point to an empty bunk. She had already let everyone on the ranch know, "One of the cowboys gets randy, I'll break his f***ing jaw." To challenge (?)...tempt (?) the cowboys, she then proceeds to strip down to her skivvies before their eyes.

But the ranch hands remain seated while the woman does a strip tease in front of them. Maybe her comment about giving them a broken jaw stemmed their flow of testosterone.

Imagine: a female living permanently in a ranch bunkhouse full of horny men: The Yellowstone owner, Kevin Costner, being a feminist at heart, warns them, "You treat her like a cowboy. Know what I mean?"

Enough.

Okay, one more...with several more seasons to go of "Yellowstone": A black man saunters onto the ranch, a spread the size of Rhode Island, from who knows where? The nearest town is many miles away from the Yellowstone ranch headquarters. Nonetheless, the man has made this trek carrying his saddle, bridle, blankets, and a rolled-up pack. Trust me, even for a strong person, carrying this gear across a semi-desert for many miles is, once again, Hollywood taking license with reality.

I recognize I might be coming across as a curmudgeon, and the series is entertaining, if a bit fanciful about some aspects of cowboy life. But the camera shots of roping and bronc riding are impressive. The branding scenes are, too.

I am not sure about the scene in which the cowboys are trying to separate the bulls from the cows, both loose in the same pasture. We kept the bulls in a separate pasture, except during breeding times. The corrals, as best I could see, had no water troughs in them. But overall, small stuff in comparison to the overall depiction of ranching in the film.

Granted, branding the hired hands' chests with a "Y" to brand their loyalty to the Yellowstone Range was way over the top. But the idea added drama and entertainment for the audience. Many years ago, I held the legs of calves---smelling the burning hair and scorching

flesh---while they were being branded. As I watched the branding scene, I could almost smell the singeing that was depicted in the film.

The equestrian skills of some of the actors and the creator/director of the series (Taylor Sheridan) are impressive and laudable. So is the preparation of the main female actor in the program (Beth, played by Kelly Reilly). She had to master a southwest drawl to disguise a British accent. Unless she has a stand-in for the riding scenes, which appears she does not, Reilly also demonstrates she is an experienced horse rider.

Let's finish the episode of the black cowboy trekking across a landscape the size of a small state. It is a fitting way to make another point about this cowboy word nonsense.

He is directed to Kevin. He enquires if the ranch could use some day-time help. I wondered why day-time? If hired, where is he going to sleep at night? No matter, it's Hollywood. Kevin directs the man to his son, Kayce (played by Luke Grimes), who appears to be taking over from his dad.

He approaches Kayce and says, "Howdy."

Kayce, being from the new school of wranglers, responds, "Hi."

The man then introduces himself, "They call me, *cowboy*."

With one more particularly loud outburst, that even wakes my dog, I shout, "Bullshit!" and change the channel.

But I am sticking with the show. I want to pick-up on other inane uses of the word, *cowboy*...if nothing else, to keep my perpetually dozy puppy somewhat awake with my loud howls. And I suspect you also agree that the examples cited in this report are pretty funny. So, I will be back tomorrow watching the next episode of "Yellowstone."