

Grammar Police reporting for duty

By Parker Knox

I understand totally that correcting anyone's lousy grammar these days leaves a person open to being considered stuffy, stodgy and a bit of a high-brow. After all, if the listener understands what you're saying and knows what you mean, it's good enough, right? Wrong!

Now I've been a Tim Tebow fan since his college football days at Florida. He is undoubtedly an admirable, respectable, respectful, clean-living role model, the likes of which we can only hope a few more professional athletes emulate. (Besides that, he beat the Steelers in the playoffs, and that is always a good thing.)

That being said, at his press conference at the Jets training facility after the trade from Denver this spring, Tebow was asked the status of his relationship with Mark Sanchez, the starting quarterback whose spot on the field he would like to fill. "Me and Mark have a great relationship," Tebow said. What did you say, Tim? "Me and Mark?" Really? Is there anybody else out there, in addition to my colleagues who are also former English teachers, who cringes when a speaker starts a sentence with an objective pronoun such as "me"? Does anyone else automatically think less of a person who speaks that way and doesn't realize there is anything wrong with it?

Hey, Tim, on the day of your wedding when the pastor asks, "Do you take this woman to be your bride," are you going to answer, "Me does"? The same principle applies here, man.

But our fellow Tebow is, by no means, alone in desecrating the English language. A winning candidate in the recent Sioux Falls school board election, describing how he and his daughters kept track of the election returns by computer, boldly exclaimed, "Me and my girls hit 'refresh' every few seconds."

Kentucky basketball coach John Calipari embarrassed himself the other day (though, I'm sure, he doesn't realize it and doesn't much care). Recalling his Memphis team's demise against Kansas in the 2008 national title game, he actually said aloud, "Everything that could have went wrong went wrong." "Could have went"? Yes, friends, he actually uttered those words. I'm not hinting here that

people with athletic connections can't, don't or won't speak correctly, but here's another example that exploded out of the radio the other night.

The Twins' radio color guy, Dan Gladden, a former ballplayer, was describing a play where second-baseman Alexi Casilla bobbled a potential double-play ball at second base. I screamed aloud, and nobody except my dog Oliver heard me after Dan had the audacity to say aloud that Casilla's bobble "might have threw his timing off."

"Might have threw"? The same day somebody passed along on the Facebook circuits a cartoon showing a man pointing his finger at his dog and saying, "Lay down." The dog had one of those thought bubbles over his head, and the pooch was saying, "It's 'lie down,' stupid."

There are those people who try to over-compensate for bad grammar by saying things that sound weird but which therefore must be correct, all the while thinking to themselves, "See! I can speak with correct grammar!" No, you can't. Example: The sports guy on the radio the other day who was comparing a pair of possible NFL draft picks as he explained "the difference between he and Trent Richardson." "Between he"? Does that really sound more correct than "between him and Richardson"?

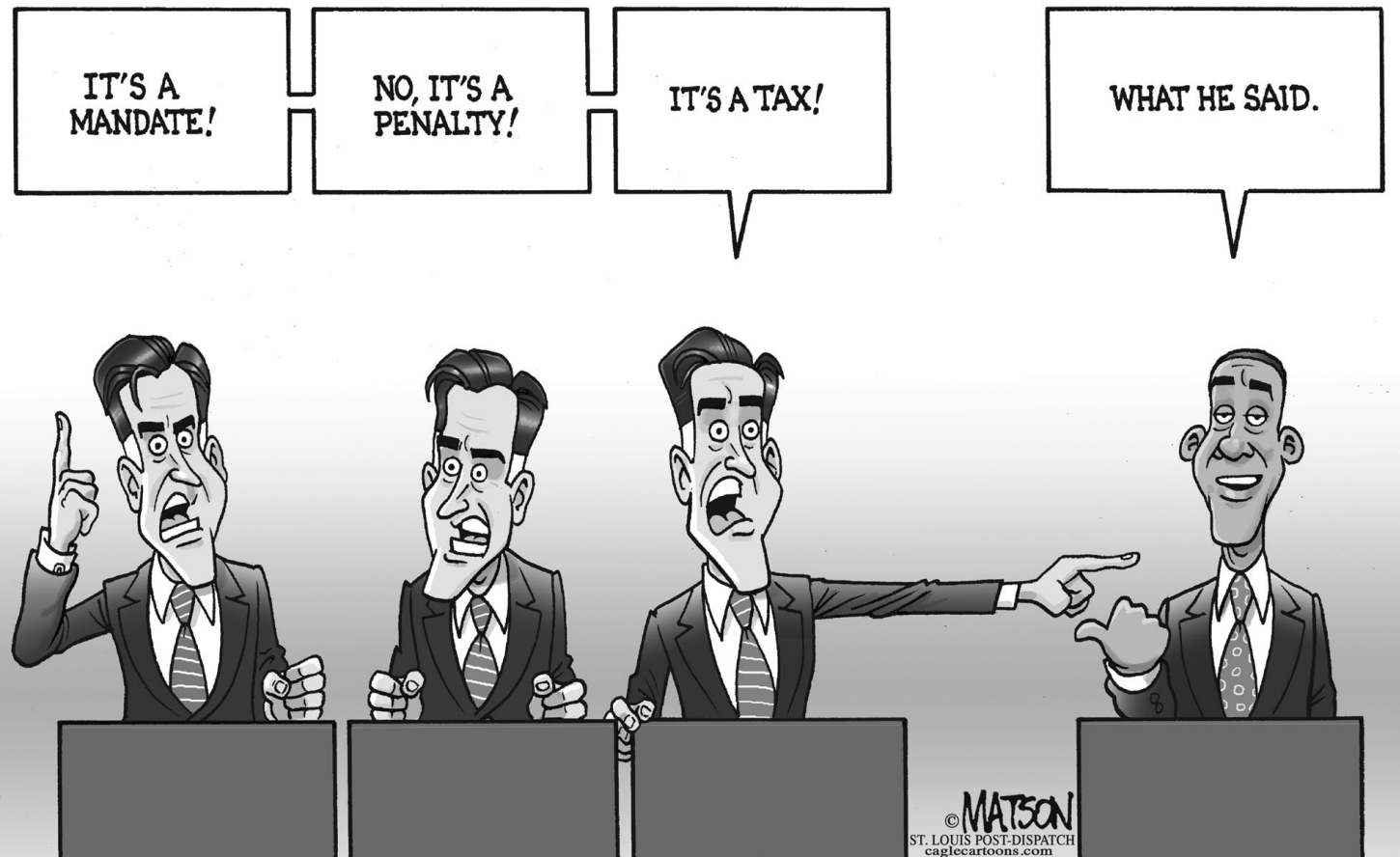
Let's welcome Andrew Luck to our club today. You know him, the No. 1 pick in the recent NFL draft by the Colts, soon to be a Stanford graduate with a GPA in the clouds up above 3.90, an athlete who went to class, stayed four years, earned a degree. It's hard to criticize such a chap, so I will simply chide him gently for explaining why he shuns publicity and hates disruption to fellow students which his celebrity status sometimes causes. He said it this way: "I like to lay low."

Perhaps you do, lucky Mr. Luck, but you should have said, "I like to lie low." Oh, well. Enjoy your millions and good luck (no pun intended) in filling Peyton Manning's shoes.

Me doesn't have the energy or space to pursue this topic further, but us can continue it some other day when me and you get together on these pages. Meanwhile, I think I'll go lay down.

Honestly it makes me nauseous just to type that previous paragraph. If you don't immediately realize four reasons why, there is no point in our continuing this conversation.

DEBATING ROMNEYCARE AND OBAMACARE



We fixed a shed out back

"Only Southerners know the term 'fixin' can be used as a noun, a verb or an adverb." - Author unknown

When chatting recently with a woman from Memphis, TN, on a flight from Minneapolis to Portland, I sensed somewhat of a language barrier.

As we began conversing, she asked me to repeat what I was saying since, she explained, "I don't understand a word you're saying. You see, I'm from the South, and we speak differently down there."

In other words, I talk funny. And all along, I thought it was the Southern accents that were so difficult to understand.

As we continued swapping stories 30,000 feet above the Earth, crossing over South Dakota, Wyoming, Idaho and finally to the Washington-Oregon border, she used a couple of terms that threw me.

You see, Southerners tend to draw out their words, emphasizing the first syllable. Pecan is pee-can. Cement sounds like ceem-ment. Often is off-ten. On is own. Veteran is Vet-er-in. Pen is pin, and so on. In the South, "Y'all" is singular and "All y'all" is plural. And they have sayings like, "Would you raise that winder (window) down?" that put your head in knots.

Not only did the woman and I sound odd to one another, we had different expressions and uses of the language.

Originally from a small town in Arkansas, she described her birthplace as being so tiny it was nothing but a "wide spot in the road." Such a quaint and definitive term, I thought.

Later in our conversation, we got to talking about our pets. I learned that she and her husband now have a tiny indoor dog that

pretty much rules the roost. But years ago, she said they had a large outdoor dog for which they had "fixed a shed outback."

Fixed? The term didn't register at first, and then it hit me. She and her husband had "constructed" a doghouse for their canine friend. Fixed.

Constructed. OK, I got it. The more I thought about her use of the word fixed and the general definition - to repair, I realized we really don't use the term much these days, let alone actually practice it.

We have become a throw-away society. Used to be when something broke, we'd fix it or take it in for repair.

Even so, my sensibilities about break-fix haven't kept up with the times. When something breaks, the first thing I think about is how to fix it.

Take, for example, the zipper on my purse, which came apart on my flight from Omaha to Minneapolis. At first, I was fit to be tied. Most women these days simply would have headed for the nearest airport gift shop to buy a new one.

Instead, I impulsively spent the entire flight trying to figure out how I'd temporarily fix my purse for the remainder of my travels.

I took a piece of hot pink Duct Tape, my favorite fix-it tool, which I had used to hold down my hot rollers so they wouldn't escape my carry on bag, and fastened it on the weak

point of the zipper. Later, I would swap out the Duct Tape with a heavy-duty safety pin. My fix-it mentality didn't end there but continued in hyper-drive, troubleshooting how I'd permanently repair my purse after my travels.

And then, I remembered the broken zipper on my favorite jean shorts, which I didn't have time to deal with before my trip. After arriving home, I made a beeline to the fabric store and purchased a six-inch jean zipper to replace the broken one.

Now, if you were born after 1970, you're probably wondering why all the wasted time and energy. Pop a button, buy a new shirt. Rip trousers, shop for a new pair. Break a few dishes, look for a new set. Fall out of love, find a new beau.

For those of us rooted in the dark ages of mid-20th Century, to fix what's broken makes the most sense - it is second nature.

We came by it honestly, so bear with us while we repair our broken furniture, plaster our cracked walls, stitch our torn clothing, sew on our popped buttons, mend our broken relationships and try to fix anything that is repairable.

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SOUTH DAKOTA EDITORIAL ROUNDUP

The Associated Press

Rapid City Journal: July 1, 2012 Governor should follow health care law

Now that the U.S. Supreme Court has found the federal health care law constitutional, now what? South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard said he was disappointed with the decision and would not act to implement provisions in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act until after the November election, when President Obama faces re-election.

"We don't intend to implement any part of this legislation this year," Daugaard said. "My hope is the new people in Washington will repeal this legislation. It's something I don't believe this nation can afford, and I don't believe it's something the state can afford."

Daugaard said state officials will study the law and act to "minimize the damage" the law could do to the state's health care and insurance industries.

For the time being, Daugaard said he would not establish insurance exchanges that will allow individuals and small businesses to purchase health insurance that the federal law mandates. South Dakota has received \$5.8 million from the federal government to create the insurance pools.

We believe the governor is making a mistake by not creating the health insurance exchanges that are required by the law and delaying action until after the November election.

The presumptive Republican

presidential candidate Mitt Romney said he would repeal the federal health care law if he is elected president, and the Republican Governors Association has urged its members, including Daugaard, to delay implementing the law.

Our biggest complaint about the law is how partisan the debate over the issue of health care has become since the law's passage. Congress passed the Affordable Care Act without a single Republican vote, largely because Democrats shut their GOP colleagues out of creating the legislation.

The recent Supreme Court decision was based on a challenge that included 26 states, including South Dakota, headed by Republican governors and attorneys general.

Reaction to the decision fell largely on party lines: Democrats cheered the ruling, while Republicans were dismayed.

Daugaard's decision not to implement the federal health care law adds to the partisanship that is making it difficult to solve the nation's soaring health care costs and lack of access to affordable care.

We also believe that, before the November election, the Obama administration will accelerate adopting more of the Affordable Care Act's provisions - many of which have yet to be written - that may require state cooperation, or the federal government will act without state participation. What results may not be to South Dakota's liking.

In our view, the governor should go ahead and create the insurance

exchange in anticipation of Obama's re-election or a possible Republican free-market alternative.

In November, the American people will decide between Obama and Romney based, in part, on their opposing visions for health care. Until then, Daugaard should put partisanship aside and act to improve access to affordable health care for all South Dakotans.

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls: June 30, 2012 Yearlong teacher training worth support

Hands-on is often the most effective way to learn.

It makes some sense then that those learning to be teachers would benefit from additional time in the classroom before graduating and taking their first teaching jobs. If assorted details and hurdles can be overcome, South Dakota likely will see more teacher candidates teaching for longer amounts of time before they are hired as certified educators.

Last year, 10 college seniors co-taught in Sioux Falls elementary schools in the first year of a grant-funded pilot program aimed at increasing their experience in the classroom beyond the traditional partial-year student teaching. When it was over, educators liked it, and seven of the 10 were hired for first-year jobs in the Sioux Falls district.

The effort is a recognition that the setting in which teachers learn should change from the college classroom to the elementary, middle and high school classrooms. Being an educator in today's

technical world with increasingly complex standards and measurements can be a challenge. A number of teachers quit the profession within the first five years. In addition to preparing and actually teaching a classroom of children, teachers also face more and more black and white measurements of whether they are doing their jobs effectively.

Despite all of the stresses, many educators love teaching. They are fulfilled, and they are good at it. Strong classroom preparation can help more young teachers build their confidence and skills.

In general, the yearlong hands-on training makes sense. But those who run education programs at our universities and those who hire new teachers should put their heads together and think of ways to overcome some road-blocks.

Like other great ideas in our state, this switch in training needs money. If it's a good program, we need to pay for it. Students who spend their days working deserve compensation in addition to experience. Time in the classroom often means they don't have time to work other jobs, yet they still have the expenses of paying for their college credits.

It might take creative thinking, but educators need to come up with a way to compensate the student teachers. Lower costs for those credits? A stipend? Outside financial support through grants or corporate backing?

While the Board of Regents hasn't taken action on any proposal that has potential teachers spending three years

on campus and one in a school district classroom, the concept seems worthy. We urge the university system to work out the details.

Watertown Public Opinion: July 5, 2012 Living with the heat

Man, is it hot out there. If you haven't said or heard that in the past week or so, chances are you've been inside with little or no contact with those who have ventured out into the heat. Temperatures like we've been experiencing are not unusual during the summer, but they are unusual this early. Generally, sustained temps in the 90s and 100s happen later in July or in August.

So what's the deal? Since at least 1988, scientists have warned that climate change would bring, in general, increased heat waves, more droughts, more sudden downpours, more widespread wildfires and worsening storms. In the United States, those extremes have been happening for several weeks. More than 2.1 million acres have burned in wildfires, more than 113 million people in the U.S. were recently in areas under extreme heat advisories, two-thirds of the country is experiencing drought, and earlier in June, deluges flooded Minnesota, Florida and other states.

Does that mean we are in the grips of a climate change? Does it mean global warming is a reality? Or is it just a variable freak thing that happens from time to time at the whim of Mother Nature?

We don't know and at this point it