The old mixed metaphor Col. #8

(Or) Yea ol' mixed metaphor Release Week Of: February 24, 2014

Words: 842

Last month 22-year-old Toronto Maple Leak rookie Jerry D'Amigo finally got his first NHL goal and you could tell he was greatly relieved. The wait to notch that first one had been distressing his friends and fans alike. All excited, D'Amigo said after the game: "It's a monkey off your back to get that off your chest."

Yeah, D'Amigo was under such stress even the monkey on his back couldn't take it anymore and relocated to the front. Or were there two monkeys? If so, who can concentrate on scoring goals with monkeys chattering over your shoulder all the time? Off the back, off the chest, D'Amigo scores and the monkey gets the assist. One of the reporters on hand was so surprised by D'Amigo's comment, well ... you could have knocked him over with a fender.

The ol' mixed metaphor, unintentional humour at its accidental best. None of us are immune and all of us it seems are going around talking about hearts as big as gold and a stitch in time is worth a pound of cure. Frankly it makes us sound like we're not exactly the brightest lights in the drawer.

For some reason English soccer players are very good at misplacing descriptive phrases. While trying to describe the dog-eat-dog atmosphere of professional soccer, Eric Cantona once said: "When the seagulls follow the trawler, it is because they think sardines will be thrown in the sea."

Manager Alex McLeish once described an eager player as "chomping at the door to get in the game."

Mick McCarthy explaining to fans why he had to miss a big game: "I was feeling as sick as the proverbial donkey." Wow! That's like four maybe five times as sick as your average dog.

Glenn Hoddle in predicting that Manchester would take chances in their game plan said: "United

will break caution to the wind." Don't anybody light a match near the goal mouth.

Tony Brow on a fading opponent: "They've got their tails between their teeth." Yeah, and after the game they're going to have to floss with hemp rope to get all that fur out.

Actors knit common phrases together in a curious way but nobody in Hollywood was a better mixer of metaphors than the legendary producer and co-founder of MGM, Sam Goldwyn.

"I don't think anybody should write their autobiography," Goldwyn advised, "until after they're dead."

"I don't want any yes-men around me," he once shouted to his staff. "I want everybody to tell me the truth even if it costs them their jobs."

Sam Goldwyn routinely dropped pearls of wisdom like: "A verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on." And "Anyone who goes to a psychiatrist ought to have his head examined." Still, he wasn't intentionally trying to be funny.

"When I see the horror pictures they play in that theatre," he said of the Arthur Mayer Radio Theatre in New York, "it makes the hair stand on the edge of my seat." Sorry, but for the sheer butchery of descriptive language that one deserved an Oscar.

Politicians seem to thrive on taking two perfectly good metaphors and turning them into a literal car accident. Al Gore once said: "A leopard can't change his stripes." No more than a tiger can get rid of his spots, not even with a powerful stain remover.

President Barack Obama has been quoted as saying: "As we consider the road that unfolds before us ..." Hey, we all know the country's infrastructure is falling apart but a road unfolding before our very eyes. That's a bridge we need to blow up once we cross it.

But the grand master of the ass-backward grammatical phrasing has to be former President George W. Bush. Trying to inspire young people, he said: "We ought to make the pie higher." Did he mean "bigger" or "set the bar" higher or "set the chocolate bar and the pie higher so the kids can't reach them?"

Nobody is quite sure what the topic was when President Bush said: "I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully." Yeah, as long as we all learn to hold our breath for long periods of time.

Speaking about terrorists he said: It's in our country's interest to find those who would do harm to us and get them out of harm's way." Yeah, the way President Obama took bin Laden out ... of harm's way. And then, had him coexisting with fish.

My personal favourite was his scolding of fellow Republican John McCain: "... he can't have it both ways. He can't take the high horse and then claim the low road." No, that would be like riding a hobby horse down that path that's badly unfolding in front of us.

Mixed metaphors - some are as funny as a screen door on a submarine while others come with good advice. Like the latest saying sweeping Colorado: "People who live in glass houses shouldn't get stoned." Cause the neighbours can see you bumping into the furniture all the time.

For comments, ideas and

copies of *The True Story*

*of Wainfleet*, go to

www.williamthomas.ca