

LOOSE CANONS

Media Mistakes and Curiosities Provoke Wry Ripostes

DON HAUPTMAN
New York, New York
donhauptman@nyc.rr.com

Below, more amusing errors and oddities followed by arch responses, assembled for a book in progress. Contributions of blooper sightings, to the above address, are welcome.

The New York Times, September 3, 2009:

“A whopping 97 percent of New York’s elementary and middle schools [earned] an A or B on the city’s annual report card. Yet [Schools] Chancellor Joel I. Klein was tempered in his praise. . . . ‘If you’re asking whether I would rather see less A’s, the answer is no.’”

Joel, stay after school and write 100 times on the blackboard: “fewer A’s.”

The Wall Street Journal, September 8, 2009:

“For many parents, Facebook and MySpace are helpful. . . . Just ask Cherie Miller [who] stays in touch via social-networking sites [including] her 21-year-old son’s page. . . . Her son couldn’t be reached for comment.”

Well, so much for that idea.

Village Voice, letter to editor, June 24, 2009:

“But none of these other artists created as rich a mixture of love story and hilarious comedy that we find in *Annie Hal*. . . .”

Wasn’t that Woody’s sequel to *2001: A Space Odyssey*?

The New York Times, book review, pull quote, June 10, 2009:

“How to make your own gunpowder and a canon to match.”

Still, violence won’t help you break into the literary establishment.

The Wall Street Journal, bar chart caption, June 3, 2009:

“European residents who are least likely to trust official statistics.”

“Zut alors! Zis facts eez chust not true!”

The New York Times, Corrections, June 7, 2008:

“A chart in some editions reversed instructions . . . for folding paper bills to help the blind identify them. The \$5 bill should be folded widthwise and the \$10 bill lengthwise, not vice versa.”

“Uh, yeah, sure it’s a ten. Can’t you tell?”

The Wall Street Journal, September 16, 2009:

“A secretive religious group . . . fought a long legal battle for the right to drink hallucinogenic tea in pursuit of spiritual growth. . . . [The sacramental brew] is quite bitter and often induces intense vomiting and diarrhea.”

My children, the path to enlightenment is indeed arduous.

The New York Times, Real Estate section, August 16, 2009:

“In her youth, when she was known as Baby Jane Holzer, she was a model, actress, and protégée of Andy Warhol. Today, she is an art collector and real estate developer with a penchant for buying and renovating luxury town houses.”

Kitschy coup!

The Wall Street Journal, November 8-9, 2008:

““This is the kind of development that has been driving the government cyber initiative,” said Scott Borg, director of the U.S. Cyber Consequences Unit, a think tank that advises government and companies.”

So do they call you. . . ?

The New York Times, July 8, 2009:

“Contaminated fresh eggs sickened thousands of people. . . . On Tuesday, the Obama Administration released a rule to deal with the nation’s egg problem. . . . ‘We are re-laying the foundation for our food safety system,’ said Scott Faber, vice president of the Grocery Manufacturers Association.”

“Cluck!”