

WORST CASE? CURSED WASTE! A Passel of New Spoonerisms

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As I write these words, almost-presidential-candidate Romney is under fire for ostentatiously displaying his wealth, a questionable move that seasoned pundits contend is likely to irritate beleaguered middle-class voters. If such behavior continues, he may soon be dubbed “Posh Mitt.”

And in related election news: Last fall, Newt Gingrich was widely ridiculed for his proposal that children perform janitorial tasks in schools in order to acquire a work ethic. The idea suggests a reality series: *America's Next Mop Toddler*.

Before we proceed, a word on originality. In the late 1980s, when I began researching my quasi-definitive spoonerism book, *Cruel and Unusual Puns*, I discovered that it was difficult to be certain that someone else hadn't thought of that great play on words before I did.

Today, of course, one can search the Internet to obtain at least some confirmation of originality—or find antecedents. I routinely Google each creation—first the phrase within quotation marks, then without, then a few logical variations. Most often, “No results found” appears. Whew!

Occasionally, however, a few links come up, usually without the perfect context or setup to make the pun work. But when it's clear that someone has beaten me to it, I don't use it. For example, while writing this article, I was confident that I had invented (among others) *Cheer up and stand* and *Fifty grades of shea*. That is, until Googling proved that dozens of others got there first!

With the above disclaimers out of the way, below are more new (I hope) spoonerisms, transpositions, and chiasmic puns.

- New York City mayor's flip response to subway crowding complaints: *The cramped don't die*
- Fur industry combats declining sales with ad campaign: *Mink . . . and you bliss it*
- Shouts of war-weary crowds in ancient Rome: *We don't heed another Nero!*
- Maxim for politicians and executives: *It is better to press your beliefs than to believe your press*

- Corporate bean counters crack down on employee auto-repair reimbursements: *Expense no spare*
- When publicists get married: *Flack Bride Day*
- Studio's affectionate name for Shirley Temple: *Our little Warner of the curled*
- Aphorism for financiers: *It is better to trust one's gut than to gut one's trust*
- Reaction to birth announcement: *Duly noted, newly doted*
- Minoxidil for women: *Girly Pates*
- Appropriate headline for many electoral contests: *Surge in polls, purge in souls*

Now a bunch that call for more detailed exegeses:

- Allan Dwan (1885-1981) was a prolific early movie director, whose films are now mostly forgotten. During the Great Depression, ticket sales declined precipitously. A writer interviewed the director about prospects for the industry, then filed this gloomy report: "When will Hollywood rebound? 'After many a summer,' sighs the Dwan."
- In 1917, Samuel Rosen arrived at Ellis Island, fresh off the boat from Eastern Europe. The immigration officer asked if he had a job lined up, but he did not. "Well," said the officer, consulting the forms. "You say that your relatives work in the garment industry. Would you be willing to that?" The man shrugged and replied indifferently: "Rosen like a frock."
- In a thriller novel set during the Cold War, a secret agent is about to sneak into the Soviet Union. A smuggled message supplies vital information about his undercover contact: "The border is porous; the porter is Boris."
- In the next Indiana Jones film, two classic villains join forces in an attempt to conquer the world: Dracula and a certain merciless planetary emperor. The movie will be titled *In the Hall of the Count 'n' Ming*.
- As a calorie-burning exercise with a built-in incentive, a new diet book recommends swimming with sharks. The title: *Cast Your Weight to the Finned*.
- This season's surprise hit Broadway musical, *Newsies*, was inspired by a real event: the 1899 strike by New York City paperboys against Hearst and Pulitzer. But the show doesn't mention that the moguls retaliated by hauling the strike leader into court. This legal maneuver was musicalized earlier in the popular song "If You Sue Newsie. . . ."