

The K.F. Stone Weekly

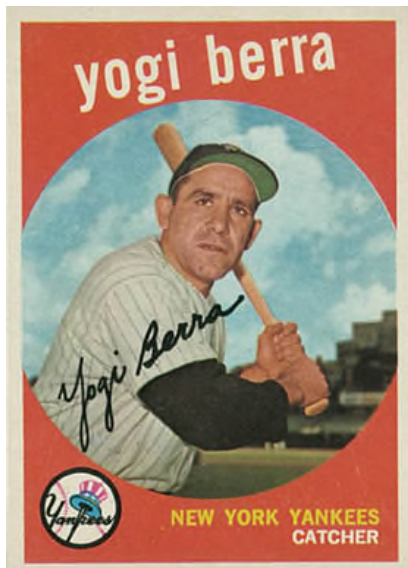
(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



October 04, 2015

DEFINITELY NOT READY FOR PRIME TIME

Like many, I was saddened to learn of the recent passing of baseball legend Yogi Berra at age 90. Although largely known nowadays for his Goldwynesque malapropisms, Berra was, simply stated, one of the greatest ballplayers of all time. A squat,



uneducated, roly-poly kid from an Italian neighborhood in St. Louis, Berra had both the fortune and misfortune of replacing future Hall of Famer Bill Dickey, who at the time (1946) was universally considered the greatest catcher in the history of the game. By the time Yogi hung up *his* spikes in 1965, he had achieved the impossible: he had turned his mentor into the *second* best catcher of all time. To the best of my knowledge it was the first of but two occasions in which one Hall of Famer was replaced by another (the other being Ted Williams/Carl Yastrzemski).

Of course, in addition to being the ultimate winner (Berra was a 3-time MVP who wound playing on 13 World Series championship teams), Yogi was well known for his improbable, head-scratching use of the

English language. A couple of his more memorable "Yogi-isms" include:

- "You can observe a lot by watching."
- "Always go to other people's funerals; otherwise they won't go to yours."
- "Nobody goes there anymore; it's too crowded."
- "When you get to a fork in the road, take it."
- "90% of life is half mental," and of course,
- "It ain't over till it's over."

No one knows for sure whether Yogi was in truth the author of everything he said. Indeed, one of his nine books was entitled *The Yogi Book: I Really Didn't Say Everything I Said* (1998). But it really doesn't matter -- any more than it matters whether Sam Goldwyn was responsible for such howls as:

- "A verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on."
- "I don't think anyone should write his autobiography until after he's dead."
- "Anybody who goes to see a psychiatrist ought to have his head examined," and
- "Include me out."

Despite their mutual mangling of the English language, Berra and Goldwyn were a whole lot smarter than they chose to sound. In a sense, what both these men -- the catcher and the motion picture producer - what they had in common was the fact that at root, they were entertainers. And while it's fine and dandy - not to mention diverting - for athletes and movie folks to be masters of the malaprop, it is truly unsettling when that parody of literacy isn't trying to be funny and -- even worse -- is potentially the second most powerful politician in Washington, D.C. And here we are referring to California Representative Kevin McCarthy (photo at right), the man who likely will become the next Speaker of the House. McCarthy, not to be confused with the actor of the same name who starred in one of my all-time favorite movies, the 1956 classic *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, was first elected to the House in November 2006. From all appearances, McCarthy is a highly likable, engaging, non-threatening member of the House. A run-of-the-mill, non-ideological conservative, McCarthy, who has served as Majority Leader for a little over a year, will never be mistaken for a policy wonk or legislative giant. During his 8 years in the House, the now 50 year old McCarthy has passed precisely three bills:



1. [H.J. Res. 129](#) (113th Congress) *Appointing the day for the convening of the 113th Congress;*
2. [H.R. 667](#) (113th Congress) *To redesignate the Dryden Flight Research Center as the Neil A. Armstrong Flight Research Center, and*
3. [H.R. 1384](#) (110th Congress) *To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 118 Minner St in Bakersfield, California as the "Buck Owens Post Office."*

Within hours of Speaker Boehner's surprise announcement that he was resigning his seat, McCarthy announced his candidacy. In order to build up his foreign policy credentials, McCarthy spoke before reporters at the headquarters of the ["John Hay](#)

[Initiative](#)," a resource for Republicans who need to sound like they know what they're talking about when it comes to Europe, Russia, the Middle East and the rest of the world. During his rambling chat with the press, McCarthy made several statements which, to say the least, were mindbogglingly confusing and grammatically idiotic. (The following statements are all *sic erat scriptum*, namely verbatim):

- *It defies belief that the President would allow the ban on Iranian oil exports to be lifted and also stands by a Russia blackmails an entire continent – all the while keeping the place of the band on America.*
- **Speaking on Veterans' Issues:** *Those who return home are being disrespected by the VA that can't keep the simple promise to all of our heroes to the need when they need it most."*
- *We must engage this war of radical Islam if our life depended on it. Because it does.*
- *Unlike during the surge in Iraq when Petraus and Crocker had an effective politically strategy to match the military strategy. We have isolated Israel while bolding places like Iran. The absence of leadership over the past six years has had a horrific consequences all across the globe.*
- *In the past few years alone I have visited Poland, Hungria, Estonia, Russia and Georgia.*
- *It had to be hundreds of thousands of grandchildren to make that decision. We don't have the same as difficult decision, but this White House is managing the decline in putting us in tough decisions for the future.*

But what has drawn the greatest amount of attention in the past several days have been McCarthy's comments about the interminable hearings on Benghazi. Throwing political caution to the wind, McCarthy told Fox News' Sean Hannity that indeed, the hearings have been a political maneuver whose aim has always been about one thing and one thing only: bringing down Hillary Clinton. In answer to Hannity's question "How are you going to be different from John Boehner?" McCarthy, unbelievably said:

What you're going to see is a conservative Speaker that takes a conservative Congress that puts a strategy to fight and win. And let me give you one example: Everybody thought Hillary Clinton was unbeatable, right? But we put together a Benghazi special committee, a select committee. What are her numbers today? Her numbers are dropping. Why? Because she's untrustable. But no one would have known any of that had happened, had we not fought and made that happen.

"Untrustable?" Where did he come up with that? Oh well, never forget that it was President Warren G. Harding who gave us the word "normalcy." Must be something in the Republican gene pool. No matter what one thinks of Kevin McCarthy, one must give him credit for one thing: being honest to the point of political suicide. His comments about the Special Committee on Benghazi (which now holds the record for the longest congressional investigation in American history) bring to mind a *bon mot* of the late great George Orwell: "*In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.*" Needless to say, McCarthy's honesty - or brain cramp, take your pick - drew the

ire of many of his Republican colleagues. To the party's most conservative members,



McCarthy is no better than an establishment cog; someone who doesn't see government as being *the* problem and even worse, might actually be willing to work with Democrats in order to get something done. To the party's more responsible wing, he doesn't have the chops to unify an increasingly divided and unwieldy Republican caucus. It is reported that conservative Representative Jason Chaffetz (R-UT), chair of the House Oversight and Government Affairs Committee is making plans to challenge McCarthy for Speaker. Chaffetz (photo at left) called

on McCarthy to apologize for his comments on the political nature of the Benghazi hearings. "That's an absolutely inappropriate comment," Chaffetz said. "I think it's an absolutely terrible statement. ... I think he should apologize. I think he should withdraw it."

It would seem that Kevin McCarthy simply is not ready for prime time. He can't speak, makes little sense and has no grasp for legislation; he possesses neither the spine nor the heft to corral an increasingly fractionated Republican caucus. The party's establishment wing cannot get the ultra-conservatives to go along with anything; by the same token, the ultra-conservatives don't have the numbers to take over the caucus. Which means that the next Speaker - whether it be McCarthy, Chaffetz or anyone else - is going to have as difficult and frustrating a time as John Boehner when it comes to getting anything done. Which, if you're a Democrat is just fine and dandy.

Indeed, it is a confusing situation. Who knows what the future of American politics will be? Perhaps the best answers comes from . . . who else . . . Yogi Berra:

The future ain't what it used to be, and

You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you are going, because you might not get there.

Copyright©2015 Kurt F. Stone