

THE POWER OF THE WORD

Sometimes, we can become so pragmatic that we fail to be effective. Here is a case in point:

Years ago, the editor of the *Dallas Morning News* pointed out to the sportswriters that *Bill* was not a suitable substitute for *William*, and *Charlie* was not a suitable substitute for *Charles*.

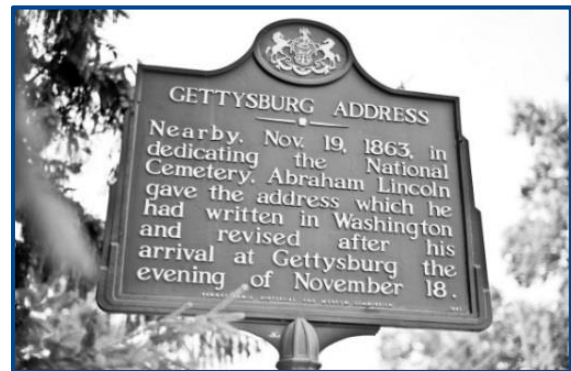
Taking him literally, one of the sportswriters, in the heyday of Doak Walker – a halfback on the football team at Southern Methodist University and winner of the Heisman Trophy in 1948 – wrote about an important game.

In his story, he pointed out that in the third quarter, Walker had left the game with a “Charles horse.” You’ll probably agree that the story lost some meaning with the use of “Charles.”

Perhaps the ultimate absurdity occurred in an article in a national publication when the writer set up the computer to analyze Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Incidentally, that speech contains 272 words, and 75 percent of them are one syllable. It is simple and direct, but powerful and effective.

The computer, however, made some recommendations about how the speech really should have been given.

For example, instead of saying, “Four score and seven years,” the computer deemed that approach too wordy and suggested “Eighty-seven years.” The efficiency in the reduction is obvious, but the loss of effectiveness, power, drama and passion is even more obvious.



When Lincoln said, “Now we are engaged in a great civil war,” the computer questioned whether the word “great” was justified. This, despite the fact that our nation suffered 646,392 casualties.

The computer stated that the sentences were too long, and it criticized the statement that we could never forget what happened at Gettysburg as being negative.

It has been proven time and again that eloquence and drama, combined with passion, logic, and common sense, are far more effective in inspiring people to do great things than technical correctness.

Think about it. Knowing their power, use your words carefully. You’ll be a greater contributor to your associates, your acquaintances, and to humankind in general.

– Beecher Hunter