

Is Paronomasia Curable?

I am a paronomasiac, that is, someone addicted to puns. I am like Star Trek...I see puns where no puns have gone before. I also have no friends. After one or two times with a new friend they suddenly stop calling, seem to cross the street to avoid me at least a block away. My children have stopped calling. My wife changes the lock on her office at least twice a month.

It started in grade school. I remember a spelling lesson where one of the words was "oyster." I announced to the class that *oyster* was a person who uses Yiddish expressions throughout their conversation. I flunked. In history when the teacher mentioned that there was an asterisk after a certain date because they weren't sure of the actual event, I said that he was wrong. He looked at me quizzically and said, "What do you think it means?" I said, "That was what Patrick Henry said: *I've got but one asterisk for my country.*" I got a "G" in History class because, my teacher said, "F" was too good for me. My mother was forced to put me in a different school the next semester after I said in debating class that *rebutta* wasn't a reply to a discussion point. I said, "It means to turn the other cheek again and an *argument* was a fierce discussion between pirates."

So I limped through school and college, always the same problem and got my first job. My boss seemed like a nice guy. Until, of course, I contradicted him in a department meeting. He said our new project was going to be very intense. I said "*Intense* is the correct conjugation of a verb." He raised his eyebrows, then turned to me and said "Why don't you prepare the financial spreadsheet for our next meeting, Don." I said with a straight face, "*Spreadshee* is the fertilization of farmland." Then I added, "The past tense is *spreadshat*." I was never invited to one of his meetings again. Eventually I was forced to find another job.

I became office manager at a hospital, but it didn't last long. When a surgeon indicated that a certain person in the office was offensively flatulent, I pointed out that *flatulence* is an emergency vehicle which picks up a person run over by a steamroller. That apparently made him angry and he mumbled "asinine" as he turned to leave. I said loudly, *asinine* is the posterior protuberance that comes just before 'ass-ten'." He never spoke to me again and I think managed to get me fired.

No matter, I quickly got a job in the office of a high school. I was dressed in a green suit so the principal, meaning to be amusing, said I looked like a leprechaun. Thinking he might be a fellow paronomasiac, I said, "A

leprechaun is a diseased Irish descendent of the great Genghis.” I guessed wrong. He slammed the door when he went into his office. When the secretary suggested I go for my lunch break, she said, “You know it’s not a good idea to be shackled here all day.” I told her, “*Shackled* is what happens when you are knocked on your posterior by a very large NBA basketball player and if you get it in the groin you’ve been *O’Neiled*,” she didn’t speak to me the rest of the day.

After a few weeks, I got some of the students hooked on puns. This did not endear me to the teachers, apparently. For example, when one of the kids told his biology teacher that “A *sphincter* is an ancient Egyptian proctologist,” he was sent to the office. I high-fived him to the annoyance of the school counselor who, I discovered later, had received the brunt of teacher complaints. He told the student never to have contact with me again. The kid said, “*Contact* is a very polite jailbird.” He sent the kid home and went into the principal’s office. I could hear a lot of yelling inside.

And so it went from job to job. My last boss told me that I vacillate too much. I told him, “*Vacillate* is indecision regarding tardy application of petroleum jelly on dry lips.” After I was laid off, I decided to retire to a little village in Mexico called Ajijic, which sounded to me like a pun or a giggle. I was right on target for losing my new friends, though. Finally I felt I had hit bottom, so I went to a twelve step addiction program called CRAP...Chronic Rehabilitation for Addicts of Puns.

My sponsor told me I had to go through the CRAP Twelve Steps, so I did with five other paronomasiacs. I was fine until we got to Step Five. It said we had to admit to God and another human being all...ALL...the puns we compiled in Step Four.

The other punsters stopped after, perhaps, eight or ten puns. Then it came to my turn. I started with *pandering*...sucking up to cute Aussi bears in a circular meeting. This elicited a collective group groan. Then came *justify*...Jack’s beanstalk giant getting Alzheimer’s and can’t remember “fee, fo and fum”.

One by one the others began to leave. After at least one hundred other terrific puns, I said, “*Rambunctious* is an exuberant smashing together of double-decker beds.” I wasn’t nearly done, but my sponsor got up slowly, rolling his eyeballs hugely and put his arm around me. He said, “Most of us, son, have an addiction. You, apparently, have a gift since you are WAAAAAY beyond us. There is no CRAP that can help you at all. Go and continue to sin more.” As

he left the room I thought I heard him mutter, “And stay the hell away from me.”

So here I am. Apparently in my case there is no cure for paronomasia. Those of you who won't have lunch with me any more? Well, who needs you? I will continue to seek out another with a similar gift. But make no mistake. In a paronomasia contest, I will always win.