

The Weekly Log, 4/24/09

by Joe Mulder

I can't say for sure, because I don't have the time or the inclination to do the research required, but I may have inadvertently discovered the origin of the phrase "dropping an f-bomb" as it pertains to saying the word "fuck."

"Sports Illustrated" recently (as far as I know) added tons and tons of articles (maybe all of them) to their online [archives](#) which, last I'd looked, only had a select few. So, obviously, I immediately went searching for articles that featured the Minnesota Twins teams of the late '80s and early '90s. I found one from 1989 called "[The Gospel and Gaetti](#)" that I actually remembered reading at the time; it focused on Twins All-Star third baseman (and future subject of countless old-guy jokes during his tenure with the 1998 Cubs) Gary Gaetti and his abrupt and total conversion to evangelical Christianity and how it affected the team as a whole, and Gaetti's relationship with best friend and Twins first baseman Kent Hrbek in particular. It's a good read for its own sake, but this section in particular stood out to me:

But now that a Bible is Gaetti's constant companion, Hrbek isn't. Hrbek, in fact, remains his old, profane self—"dropping F-bombs," as he puts it. The two are no longer roommates. Hrbek seems unable to understand the change in his old pal.

Now, I don't personally remember anyone using such phraseology until the mid-'90s at the absolute earliest; is it possible that Kent Hrbek actually started it? Can we add this to his almost inhumanly long list of great accomplishments, including, but not limited to:

Making the All-Star team as a rookie (not unheard of, but not easy)

Making a [spectacular](#), lying-down stab at a bad throw during the 1987 ALCS, then claiming that he wasn't stretching, but merely practicing for his "offseason job as a couch potato"

Hitting a grand slam to ice Game 6 of the 1987 World Series

Physically yanking Atlanta's Ron Gant off of first base during a pickoff attempt during Game 2 of the 1991 World Series, and then tagging him out, and then somehow actually getting the call

Declining to playfully needle former teammate and then-Twins staffer Kirby Puckett in a 1997 "Sports Illustrated" piece by saying, "Why should I give him heat for being an executive when he doesn't give me heat for being a load?"

Having a jersey hanging in a display case at the Baseball Hall of Fame, in a section devoted to the Twins' two World Series championship teams, and having the tag on that jersey

contain the phrase "extra body length," thus giving the world the greatest possible euphemism for "fat"

Now, as much as it quite literally physically pains me to have to type these words, Hrbek's career numbers probably aren't good enough to make him a Hall of Famer. But if in fact he coined the phrase "dropping an f-bomb," and you add that to his already stellar list of achievements, I think it's clear that he belongs in Cooperstown.

The TV pick of the week is "Chuck," and it may be your last chance. The chances of the show returning for a third season don't look great, and the Season 2 finale airs on Monday. It should be a good one, too; "Chuck" co-creator Chris Fedak has apparently said that if Monday's episode turns out to be the last one ever, fans of the show "will set their living rooms on fire."

"Chuck" may never become an all-time great show, but the last few episodes have been so good that they've entered that rarefied territory where after I watch one, I'm buzzing about it in my own head for most of the rest of the next day. Not many shows have ever gotten to that point; early "Simpsons," Season 3 of "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," some "24," "Arrested Development," early "Scrubs" and maybe one or two others, but that's about it. And as cute as I thought "Chuck" was, I never in a million years saw it reaching that level.

But reach that level it most certainly has. "Chuck" couldn't have handled the "They Will!" portion of the show's will-they-or-won't-they arc between dorky, inadvertent superspy Chuck and gorgeous actual superspy Sarah any better, and in the last few weeks they appear to have been phasing out the subplots involving Chuck's day job at the "Buy More" big box chain store, which, as nice a job as those actors do, is a good thing. They even added Scott Bakula and Chevy Chase to the mix in the last month or so; what more could they possibly do to get you to watch, huh? Have Kent Hrbek come on and start dropping f-bombs?

I realize that if you haven't watched "Chuck" by now you probably won't watch it on Monday, mainly because you don't know any of the characters and the episode probably wouldn't make a ton of sense to you. Do yourself a favor: catch up with the show later if you aren't watching it now (like I plan to do at some point with "Friday Night Lights"). You'll be glad you did.

Okay, feel free to stop reading now if you don't want me to get you all riled up about gay marriage. I tried to be as nice as I could, but, you know. Don't say you weren't warned.

Earlier this week the "nappy-headed hos" of the 2007 Rutgers women's basketball team were dethroned as the most famous runners-up of the century. That title (and perhaps that title only) now belongs to Miss California, Carrie Prejean, after she dared to express the opinion held by two-thirds of the country (including its current president) in response to a loaded political question about same-sex marriage.

"I think it's great that Americans are able to choose one or the other," she began. She continued, expressing the belief that "marriage should be between a man and a woman" and, in so doing, nearly caused the internet to explode. While people who (to use the immortal words of Fry from "Futurama") feel ways about stuff focused this week mostly on some torture memos that came out, or something, and may lead to World War III or whatever, the rest of us were consumed by Perez Hilton calling Prejean a dumb bitch, and by the media firestorm that the whole controversy produced. Honestly, between Miss California and "Britain's Got Talent's" Susan Boyle, I'm amazed there's any bandwidth left anywhere.

Now, I haven't written about same-sex marriage, because it's not an issue about which it's possible to change people's minds, but I'm going to go ahead and write about it a little bit now.

The level of intolerance among those who would redefine marriage has risen to the point that when my wife told a mutual acquaintance that I'd voted in favor of California's Proposition 8, the person said, "But Joe always seemed so nice." I've also been called a "fanatic" (whether it's even possible, by definition, for someone who's part of an overwhelming majority to be a "fanatic" is up for debate, as far as I'm concerned). And this by people I considered (and continue to consider) friends. And as Miss California could attest, simply stating a preference for traditional marriage in a public forum is a good way to make sure you're called every possible name the internet can come up with.

But I may have figured out a big part of the problem: I think most of the people who favor same-sex marriage see this as a civil rights issue. And while I can't speak for everyone who prefers traditional marriage, I think most of us don't think of it that way.

As I see it, a straight man and a gay man *currently* have identical rights when it comes to marriage; apart from blood relatives, each is free to marry whomever the other is free to marry. The state (and here I refer to any generic "state") will recognize as a "marriage" any union between either man and anybody he is eligible to marry, should either man choose to avail himself of the opportunity. The gay man can't marry a man, not because of any intolerance or bigotry but because such a union would not actually *be* a marriage, under the current definition of the institution. A gay man would likely

have no interest in marrying a woman, of course, but I don't see that as the state's business, nor to I see it as the state's problem.

So to frame it as a civil rights issue – specifically, for a court to take it upon itself to redefine marriage, as the Iowa Supreme Court recently did – either rights must be invented that do not constitutionally exist, or the constitution's equal protection clause must be interpreted as applying to couples as well as individuals, which, by its wording, it certainly doesn't seem to (although to be fair, I'm only referring to the United States constitution. I don't know the wording of the Iowa constitution's equal protection clause, and I'm only willing to do so much Googling).

So I don't see it as a civil rights issue. Obviously many do, and I've come to understand the vitriol, rage and mockery that's directed at those who want marriage to remain as it's always been. If I honestly believed that there continues to be (and has always been) institutionalized bigotry in this country in the form of denying basic civil rights to gays, of *course* I'd be outraged. Of *course* I'd assume anybody who thought differently simply had a problem with gays, or was a religious zealot. But please understand: plenty of us don't see it that way. If the rules regarding which relationships a state will recognize as "marriage" are exactly the same for everybody, gay or straight, then I don't see where anybody's being denied equal rights, at least by the letter of the law.

Is that fair? No. I think an honest person has to admit that it's not. But is fair the same as legal? Life's not fair. Lots of stuff isn't fair. If a society's only legislative or judicial goal is fairness, then the only possible future is a more realistic version of a "Harrison Bergeron" one in which – as *The Incredibles* put it – everyone is special, which means that no one is. Unfair isn't the same as illegal.

So if it's not a civil rights issue and does not fall under the jurisdiction of the courts (and I know plenty will still regard it that way, no matter what I say. The Iowa Supreme Court disagrees with me, obviously, and I'm forced to admit that they probably know more about it than I do), then we're left with the question of by whom, exactly, the nature of marriage, civilizations oldest and most integral institution*, ought to be defined. I submit that in a representative democracy, such a thing should be determined by the people of each state (or, by extension, by the people of each state though their elected representatives). Then a society can decide for itself where its priorities lie.

Personally, I believe that recognizing same-sex relationships as indistinguishable from opposite-sex relationships is tantamount to recognizing the sexes as indistinguishable, particularly as it pertains to marriage's role as the basis of the family. For me, to recognize same-sex couples as indistinguishable from opposite-sex couples is to officially endorse the notion that it is neither ideal nor important for children to have a father and a mother. I'm all for civil

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unions, and I certainly don't think gay couples should be prevented from having or adopting children. Obviously gay couples can make great parents, and straight couples can make horrible ones. But what can work on a case-by-case basis for individual families is not that same as what ideals a state should endorse, and I don't want the state endorsing the fallacy that having two dads is the same as having a dad and a mom. I think a society that willingly embraces such a fallacy is headed decidedly in the wrong direction, although I'm not apocalyptic about it; I think the damage to marriage has largely been done, so I don't regard same-sex marriage as the end of the world. But I still think marriage as it's presently constituted is sufficiently valuable to society that it should be preserved. That's where my priorities lie.

I can certainly see, however, how even a person who feels almost exactly the same as I feel could have different priorities, how they might not agree that recognizing same-sex marriage is the same as proclaiming that men and women are indistinguishable, or how they might feel that even if it is, their priorities lie with fairness, with recognizing as "married" any couple who wishes to be recognized as such. That's a logical, honorable position with which I just happen to disagree.

So this is America; let the people decide. This, above all, is what I believe when it comes to same-sex marriage. It's why the redefinition of marriage in Vermont, which came on the heels of the redefinition of marriage in Iowa, troubled me not a whit (at least not beyond my existing minimal concerns about the further damage same-sex marriage would do to the institution, concerns that might even turn out to be wrong. We'll see). The people of Vermont, through their elected representatives, defined marriage for themselves, and that's how it should be in each state. Whether the people define marriage how I want, or whether they don't.

*That might not be true but probably is, and anyway it sounds good.
