

YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING ME

By Fred Hobbs

How many times have you heard the expression “You Gotta Be Kidding Me”? Although you might think the exclamation is typically American, its roots extend as far back as 1200 A.D. It derived from the noun “kid” meaning “the offspring of a goat.” In the nineteenth century “kid” took on a verb form morphing into “to coax, hoax or humbug” and eventually came to mean “tease playfully, talk jokingly” as a child might; which led to the commonly used synonym for children, “kids.”Go

Today, when friends, family or associates say “You Gotta Be Kidding Me”, they are most often registering a sign of disbelief or astonishment, though they may be assuming that what you are telling them is really humbug or a joke.

This little linguistic history brief is a prelude to the citation of a couple of current or reasonably recent examples of events or statements that could very well elicit a cry of “You Gotta Be Kidding Me.”

The political scene, as always, is full of possibilities. Of course we remember such gems as “I am not a crook.” or “I didn’t inhale” or “Saddam Hussein has hidden weapons of mass destruction.” In the current headlines, we have heard or read about wild and generally unsubstantiated stories aimed at would-be presidential candidates and the man who already has the job. Sadly, that kind of behavior is not new. In politics, it’s a phenomenon that has been with us for quite a long time and only seems to get worse.

Perhaps the most glaring current example of appropriate use of the “Kidding Me” line emerges, not from politics, but from the story of a man named Francesco Schettino. You may not recognize his name, but you’ll surely be familiar with his deed. Schettino is captain of the ocean liner “Costa Concordia.” On January 13, the luxury liner with 4,200 passengers and crew aboard struck a reef just off the coast of Tuscany. Thirty-two people were killed. No safety drill was held before the cruise ship left port. As the ship hit the reef, the crew was reportedly very disorganized and confused about how to handle the very serious situation.

Injuries and lost belongings not to mention mental anguish and considerable discomfort still plague survivors. Families of victims and survivors are impacted in many ways. Just this week dozens of additional survivors filed lawsuits totaling 528 million dollars in damages. For its part, the Carnival Corporation, in charge of the cruise operations, is declining comment.

Captain Schettino reportedly claims that the ship’s charts were faulty and did not reflect the presence of the reef. He is accused of steering the ship off course and waiting too long before giving the order to evacuate. Schettino is facing charges of gross negligence, manslaughter and abandoning the ship ahead of its passengers.

He is quoted as saying that he left the crippled ship only after he slipped and fell...just happening to land...in a lifeboat!

You’ve Gotta Be Kidding Me!