

CODSWALLOP AND GODWOTTERY

By Fred Hobbs

Despite a widely proffered notion that, unlike sticks and stones, words can never hurt, they can and they often do. Also, they can comfort, inform, command, question, declare...and amuse. Words can be fun to manipulate (such as using a play on words and creating pun) or simply funny standing alone.

Which words are funny? Like so many questions of that sort, the answer varies based on a person's taste, sense of humor and, for whatever reason "what tickles your funny bone." Nonetheless, a college professor has compiled a list of what he considers the 100 funniest words in the English language. What is particularly funny in this case is that the academic researcher and writer, Dr. Robert Beard (aka Dr. Goodword) of Bucknell University, teaches Russian language and linguistics.

Dr. Goodword's list can be found on *Google* by "googling" funny words. And isn't it fun to "google," realizing that most folks would think of Google only as an example of a 21st century catchy, but also funny name in the communications world. Actually, the word is not new. Those familiar with comic strips and funny songs of yesteryear, may remember "Barney Google with his goo, goo, googly eyes." Strangely, Google is not on Dr. Goodword's choices of 100 funniest words, possibly because it was drawn up before the computer-based enterprise of that name launched its service or maybe the professor just doesn't deem it *that* funny.

Many of the words that did make the top 100 are fairly common in conversation today:

- cantankerous (meaning testy or grumpy)
- klutz (an awkward or stupid person)
- skedaddle (to hurry somewhere)
- malarkey (nonsense)
- pratfall (a fall on one's rear)

And, several of the professor's words are lesser known, but bring smiles or maybe even chuckles when observed in print or, better yet, read out loud:

- snollygoster (a person who can't be trusted)
- collywobbles (butterflies in the stomach)
- mumpsimus (outdated or unreasonable position on an issue)
- argle-bargle (a loud row or quarrel)
- oocephalus (an egg head)

It should be noted that nothing is construed as pettifoggery or as fatuous in the creation of this tome. Nor was an attempt made to lollygag in its preparation or flummox the reader. Definitions of all 100 words, including those, may be found in Dr. Beard's/Goodword's work on the alphaDictionary.com website.

And it is sincerely hoped that no one will find this article as simply codswallop or godwottery!