

FAMILIAR MISQUOTATIONS

We all remember Vince Lombardi's immortal words: "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing." Except that they weren't his. That comment was actually made by Henry "Red" Sanders while UCLA football coach in the early Fifties. Lombardi later expressed some similar sentiments, but, realizing the value of a good legend, never bothered to correct the record. So he got the line as part of a great tradition in which public

figures are awarded words better than any they ever came up with as a bonus for their renown. To wit:

"Let them eat cake" (Marie Antoinette). This suggestion for peasants who lacked bread is supposed to have been made by France's queen in 1770, four years after Rousseau attributed the same words to another princess in his *Confessions*.

"Give me liberty or give me death" (Patrick Henry). This phrase was "recalled" 40 years later by old men who had heard a speech given by Henry. Historians are dubious.

"The Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton" (the first Duke of Wellington). The seventh Duke of Wellington once offered a reward for the origin of these words never uttered by his ancestor. The winning entry: Wellington once commented during a visit to his alma mater, "It is here that the Battle of Waterloo was won."

"Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door" (Ralph Waldo Emerson). Emerson did say that a "hard-beaten road" would be found leading to the house of a man with "good corn, or wood, or boards, or pigs . . ." but neglected to mention mousetraps.



"War is hell" (General William T. Sherman). What he really said was, "War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it."

"Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it" (Mark Twain). This thought first appeared in an unsigned *Hartford Courant* editorial of 1897. Since the *Courant* was edited by a friend of Twain's, these words were attributed to Twain, who denied authorship.

"Lafayette, we are here" (General John J. Pershing). The words we want Pershing to have said as he arrived in France in 1917 belonged, by Pershing's testimony, to his chief disbursing officer, Colonel Charles E. Stanton.

"You dirty rat" (James Cagney). Cagney recently denied ever saying any such thing in any of his 71 movies.

"I want to be alone" (Greta Garbo). What Garbo actually said was, "I want to be let alone." There's a difference.

"On the whole, I'd rather be in Philadelphia" (W. C. Fields). Fields's supposed epitaph is not to be found on the vault housing his ashes. According to Tom Burnam's *Dictionary of Misinformation*, the line began as a *Vanity Fair* sight gag in the Twenties.

"Play it again, Sam" (Humphrey Bogart). As any real Bogartian knows, the actual line in *Casablanca* is, "Play it, Sam," and it's said by Ilsa, not Rick.

"Jerry Ford is so dumb he can't walk and chew gum at the same time" (Lyndon B. Johnson). Johnson's real words were, "Jerry Ford is so dumb he can't fart and chew gum at the same time."

—RALPH KEYES