

COMMENTARY

Ways to identify the 'Ole Razzle Dazzle'

Give Em the Ole Razzle Dazzle: A Favorite of Adolescents and Politicians is the fourth installment of "The Citizen's Survival Guide to Sound Reasoning." It should help us plebes recognize when candidates are committing stinking thinking.



Kevin Ryan

In the film "Best Little Whorehouse In Texas" the governor is besieged in the capitol rotunda by a narcissistic, media-pandering TV preacher demanding the closing of the "Chicken Ranch," a revered bordello. Knowing votes are in the balance, the governor breaks into the boot-clicking, thigh-slapping song "I love to dance the little side step, now they see me now they don't and then I'm gone." He disappears leaving throngs of media dancing, singing and absolutely clueless as to what he said.

True, most of us don't envision Hillary, Rudy, or any of our local politicians "yee-hawing" off to their offices after dispatching a challenging question. Nonetheless, a movies' satirical power is its piercing look at the truth while leaving us with a knowing smile. Thus, it remains crucial to recognize when the ole "Razzle Dazzle" is in town.

Jargon is a common Razzle Dazzle technique where a politician uses frisky phrases and other clever hoo-hah that Vulcan mind-melds the brain to the point of not knowing what was asked, or what was said. The "euphemism" is a type of jar-

gon that tries to obscure meaning by using vague words, such as "civilian casualties" being called "collateral damages."

Candidates may also demand an all or none position or allegiance, with no room for gray. For example, "America, love it or leave it." This is called the "false dichotomy." What about, "America; study it, nurture, constructively criticize, grow, or educate it." When politicians polarize by their religious-like ranting, is it they who should be sucking tepid global warming sea water instead of disappearing polar bears?

The "filibuster" is a Dazzle common to adolescents and politicians wherein they go into such great depth or duration you would rather have a needle in your eye than endure another word. "The Clintonian Variation" is restating any question or its terms with such length or silliness that one needs a seeing-eye dog and a compass to find one's way back home, depending on your definition of find or home.

Guilt inflicting mammas and politicians alike use the Razzle known as the "closed end question" such as, "When did you stop beating your wife?"

Similarly, we have the "Obaman Reversal" where you echo any question back or ask, with an intellectual and spookily calm air, "What do you think the answer to your question is?" If you buy into this gambit, before you know it you

may be sliced and diced with such surgical precision that you might as well turn your head, cough and say ah!

We have already seen the local and national field of candidates employ the "straw man." This is a Dazzle where you destroy an opponent by turning their arguments into a man of straw by distortion, misrepresentation or simply crowing crap publicly. Its kissing cousin, the "straw man mouthpiece" is when politicians use others who are prone to flap their gums publicly to write in blogs, advertising endorsements or letters to the editor what they dare not personally champion. It's sort of like a clone army of idiots' thing.

The "Eat My Dust Eddie Maneuver" is perhaps the most entertaining grand Dazzle where political gymnasts of jive, boogey the brethren down a totally unrelated path from what was intended. For example, Question: "So, what do you think of MoveOn.org's portrayal of General Petraeus as a betrayer of America?" Answer: "Ah yes, well move on is exactly what my campaign is all about; so when I am elected."

So before another political Fast Eddie leaves you in a trail of political pixie dust and pooh, be ready to put the frazzle in their attempts at the "Ole Razzle Dazzle."

Kevin Ryan is a retired Colonel, physician, musician and author who lives in Fairfield. Reach him at ryan_k@comcast.net.