

Other Than Editing

by Jennifer Ann Hutt

Lorraine Loviglio: Watching More Than Words



Lorraine Loviglio

With binoculars in hand, retired editor and former *Science Editor* columnist Lorraine Loviglio spots a red-tailed hawk circling and diving through the air near her Concord, Massachusetts, home. Readers may remember her as “The Word Watcher”, but Loviglio is a bird enthusiast and enjoys watching much more than words.

Before she retired in 1998, Loviglio was manager of manuscript editing at the *New England Journal of Medicine*. As she copyedited and rewrote material for the journal, many amusing grammar and usage errors crossed her desk. The most egregious examples she collected “for their entertainment value”. After speaking at a couple of CSE annual meetings, Loviglio concluded that she would rather write than speak in public. She decided to write a column that would address some common problems in scientific writing but would be entertaining and avoid even a hint of “dry-as-dust grammar lessons”. She hoped the column would arm editors with confidence and encourage them to stand up for their editorial expertise. And, she said, it would give her an excuse to gripe about irritating language issues.

The lively column, “The Word Watcher”, appeared in *Science Editor* (and previously *CBE Views*) from 1996 to 2000 with such titles as “Begging the Question,

Begging the Language” and “Titular Follies”. Loviglio ended the column a couple of years after retiring from the *New England Journal of Medicine* because, she said, most of her column ideas originated in manuscripts she saw at work. “After I retired, I ran out of material”, she said.

But Loviglio certainly hasn’t run out of things to do. Retirement has given her the opportunity to spend more time with her four grandsons and to indulge her interest in nature. For example, at home she enjoys watching from her kitchen window as birds, deer, and other wildlife visit the open fields behind her house.

Her interest in birds has taken her well beyond the fields near her home. With a birding group, Loviglio has explored the vibrant wildlife along the Amazon River. She also has visited the Galapagos Islands and Machu Picchu, the famed Lost City of the Incas high in the mountains of Peru.

When she’s not traveling, Loviglio shares her love of nature with others through volunteer work. As a docent at Drumlin Farm in Lincoln, Massachusetts, part of the Massachusetts Audubon Society sanctuary system, she educates visitors about maple sugaring and other farm activities, as well as the sanctuary’s wildlife, such as hawks and owls. Loviglio also volunteers as a monitor for bluebird boxes. She visits the nest boxes to check the progress of egg

laying and hatching and to note problems. She especially enjoys seeing the little baby birds right after they hatch.

Although she pursues other interests, Loviglio certainly hasn't abandoned her love of words. For example, after retiring from the *New England Journal of Medicine*, she joined a book club. Loviglio said she now enjoys having the time to meet regularly with other book lovers to sip wine and discuss good literature, such as *The Great Gatsby* and Ann Patchett's *Bel Canto*. Loviglio also is taking advanced conversation classes in Italian, and she made her first trip to Italy last year. "I'm determined to become fluent", she said. "But learning a new language in your 60s

is not the same as learning it in your teens or 20s." Despite the difficulty, Loviglio said she has always enjoyed studying other languages.

Although her new life, filled with language studies and birding expeditions, keeps her from writing for *Science Editor*, Loviglio is still a word watcher at heart. "I still get annoyed when I hear bad grammar on TV or see it in print", she said. "I'm still a grammar grouch. . . . I just don't have a soapbox anymore."

JENNIFER ANN HUTT *wrote this profile while a Science Editor fellow. She is now an editor at the Texas A&M University Press.*

Letter

Two Comments

Science Editor is one of the few publications I generally read from cover to cover, and the July-August 2003 issue is right up to standard. However, I am moved to comment on two matters.

First, the article by Stephanie Deming on the *Science Editor's* Bookshelf falls short of perfection only in being a bit too short. I would have listed the 1991 publication of CBE (as it was then) *Ethics and Policy in Scientific Publication* as a source of suggestions about dealing with some common problems. And I hope that she will give us some advice about dictionaries.

Second, Arnold Melnick, in "Each to Their Own Taste (Grrrr . . .)", cites 12 examples of disagreement between a personal pronoun and its antecedent

noun. Each of those examples seems to me to illustrate the same, much narrower problem: lack of an English pronoun that is gender-neutral, as in his first example, "This year, give everyone exactly what they want." I agree with Melnick that such disagreements should be avoided, but I could not rewrite that sentence without a couple of additional words that would themselves be less than ideal. Will we, some day, have a pronoun that is both grammatically and politically correct?

John C Bailar III
Professor Emeritus

Department of Health Studies
University of Chicago