

Voices: Remembering spell check during graduation

May 19, 2025

It is that time again when hundreds of thousands of us can't get the sounds of "Pomp and Circumstance" out of our heads, often whistling or humming the melody, not even wondering why.

For the curious—and others in the majority who couldn't care less—Englishman Edward Elgar's 1901 march long has been the musical gold standard for graduation music. For a century, graduates have marched in and out to this tune—part and parcel—while nervously accepting certificates and diplomas.

Memory runneth not to the contrary in recounting hundreds of smile-producing ceremonial "foul-ups." Many smiles are forced these days as elected governmental leaders repeatedly throw public school educators under the bus, painting with brushes far too wide. We'll try to smile anyway, promising to dissect educational funding as best we can later.

Now, let the pratfalls begin.

Spell check

A proud graduate of my alma mater Howard Payne University leads the way. In no way comparable academically to David Cozart, I cracked a few books during my five undergraduate years. He devoured them—books, that is.

A quarter century later, I somehow wore HPU presidential trappings for a dozen years, knowing my 2.8 GPA fell well below those of most graduates

receiving diplomas. Goodness' sake, Cozart's transcript sparkles with all As, except for two Bs that may have been the result of a couple of professors getting on the wrong lines in their grade books.

I digress.

A highly respected minister since his teens, David is executive pastor of Waco's Meadowbrook Baptist Church. He also has survived cancer and, like the rest of us, relies too often on spell check.

Recently, he posted on Facebook what was to have been an instructive message for HPU graduates. He wanted them to "fly high," warning them of inevitable encounters with the shock and awe of adulthood and so forth.

Instead, Rev. Cozart trotted out the old line about the sun never setting on HPU graduates. Except, one letter fouled up his encouraging message for seniors ready for the on-ramp of life's highway. Truly, Cozart no doubt meant well.

With an "i" typed instead of a "u" between the "s" and the "n," the post became "the 'sin' never sets on HPU graduates."

Memories

On a serious note, I remember David well. He received one of only two presidential citations awarded during my dozen years in the HPU presidency some 30 years ago.

I recall the party held for him to celebrate his "cancer freedom" when he was just 22. It was wintertime. Invitees were asked to wear toboggans so David, devoid of hair due to cancer treatment, could feel more comfortable.

Unable to attend the Waco event, I forwarded a video to be viewed at the party—wearing a toboggan, as instructed. I found a scraggly headpiece at

Goodwill, plopping it on my head as the camera rolled. Out of sight, out of mind.

Alas, the party was postponed until a much warmer day. Friends gathered to celebrate, dressed in spring attire. The only toboggan in sight was atop my head in the video.

Ah, memories are made of this. As my wife of 58 years and I deal with twilight years, efforts are made to avoid pitfalls. For example, I regularly correct spell check's insistence to spell "Burleson," where we reside. Spell check thinks "burlesque" is a better choice.

As an end line, I join Cozart in urging graduates everywhere to march on with Christian confidence, admittedly praying specifically for grandchildren Addison McDaniel and Kedren Penney, who already have made us proud. May their pilgrimage starting this fall at Howard Payne be fruitful. Mimi and Poppy think they'll do well.

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