

英汉对照读物

美国 词语的 掌故

续一



WORDS AND
THEIR STORIES
Supplement One

美国词语的掌故

(续一)

美国之音慢速英语部 编写

黄家宁 施家馨
钱德生 袁 兴 陈谷华 译

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《美国词语的掌故》出版后，我们又陆续收到近一百篇词语掌故的广播稿，其中经原编写者修订定稿的已有四十四篇，现将这四十四篇翻译出版，算是统一，以后还打算继续翻译出版经修订过的词语掌故。修订稿与广播稿略有不同，比广播稿更简洁、严谨，可以作为学习美国英语的参考书，也可以作为收听广播的辅助材料。

这本书的出版，得到美国之音慢速英语部的大力支持，谨在此表示感谢。

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1 A White Elephant

A “white elephant” is something which will cost you money, perhaps an increasing amount of money over time, and in the end, have no value. It may be something that costs too much to fix or too much to use.

A “white elephant” could be a car, a boat, a house, or even a business which demands more and more of your money without bringing in enough profit in return.

In the words of the poet, John Cheever Goodwin —

“For that elephant ate all night,
And that elephant ate all day,
Do what he could to furnish him food,
The cry was still ‘more hay.’”

This is true of all elephants, white or dark. As we all know, the elephant is the largest land mammal, and perhaps the heaviest of eaters.

There have never been many albino or “white” elephants.

一 白象

“白象”指花钱不少、用处不大的废物，也许留用的时间越长，花的钱越多，最终也无济于事；也许指某种修理费、使用费不胜负担的东西。

“白象”可能指一辆汽车、一艘船、一栋房子或一个企业，需要你不断投资，却收不回足够的利润。

诗人约翰·切沃·格德温写道：

“大象通宵吃草不停，
又从日出吃到日落；
主人即使倾家荡产，
也填不满大象肚皮。”

不管是黑象还是白象，都有一个填不满的大肚皮。我们都知
道，象是最大的陆生哺乳动物，也许是食量最大的动物。

不过，白象的头数向来很少。白象在亚洲部分地区被视为神

White elephants are considered to be holy or sacred in parts of Asia. Writers William and Mary Morris give this explanation for our present use of the expression, "white elephant:"

Hundreds of years ago there were so few white elephants that every one was taken by the king. And because they were sacred, it was unlawful to put any of them to work.

The king used a white elephant to punish any of his officials who displeased him. He gave the man the elephant as a gift. Then the king just waited. He knew that in time the official would spend all his money feeding the elephant. And, because the elephant could not do any work, the official could not use him to make any money. So, the gift of a white elephant resulted in ruin.

2 Baloney

The word "baloney" means something that is wrong, stupid, or foolish.

Language experts are not sure how the word baloney came to be used this way. Most experts think the word was born in Italy. The Italian city of Bologna is famous for a kind of meat sausage, a mix of smoked, spiced meat from cows and pigs. It has a taste that is very different from the taste of beef or pork alone.

Language experts think this is how the expression "baloney" came into existence. Baloney means an idea or statement that is nothing like the truth, in the same way that bologna sausage tastes nothing like the meat used to produce it.

American meat factories produce thousands of pounds of

物。威廉·莫里斯和玛丽·莫里斯这两位作家对“白象”之所以转意为“沉重的负担”解释如下：

数百年以前，白象数目极少，国王把所有的白象养了起来。役使白象是非法的，因为白象是神物。

国王用白象去惩治任何一个使他不快的大臣。他送一头白象给这个大臣，然后静观事态的发展。他知道象食量颇大，朝臣非变卖资产来喂象不可。果然，朝臣不能役使白象，不能靠白象赚钱，收了白象这份礼终于导致破产。

二 熏腊肠

“熏腊肠”这个词指错误、无聊或愚蠢的东西。

语言专家们说不清“熏腊肠”一词怎么会有这种含义。大多数专家认为，“熏腊肠”是个意大利词。意大利波洛尼亚城由于制作肉肠而名扬四海，这种肉肠用牛肉、猪肉混合加香料熏制而成，味道与纯牛肉或纯猪肉大不相同。

语言专家认为，“熏腊肠”就是这样成了“胡说”的代名词。指与事实丝毫不符的意见或说法，就象波洛尼亚香肠的味道与用来制作这种香肠的牛肉或猪肉味道根本不同一样。

美国的肉制品厂每天生产成千上万磅波洛尼亚香肠。大部分

bologna sausage every day. Most Americans call these meat products "baloney," the very same word they use to describe something foolish.

Baloney is not the only kind of meat product whose name has more than one meaning. Another is ham. The word ham also can mean an amateur radio operator, someone who likes to talk with others by sending and receiving shortwave radio signals. Ham also can mean an actor, especially an actor who is full of himself.

Turkey is another meat whose name has a second meaning. It can mean someone or something that is a failure. A ham actor can turn a good play into a turkey.

Still another kind of meat is the hot dog. The hot dog or frankfurter is a sausage made from the meat of cows, pigs, turkeys, or chickens. But hot dog can mean something else. A hot dog can be a person who is kind of like a ham actor. He is someone who likes other people to watch him and cheer him. A hot dog football player will make an easy play appear difficult so the crowd will cheer.

3 Blitz

The word "blitz" means an attack or campaign.

At the beginning of World War Two, the powerful German army of Nazi leader, Adolf Hitler moved with great speed and skill through western Europe. The Germans captured Poland, Belgium, France and other countries in a very short time.

Hitler described his aggressive plan with the German word

美国人把这些肉制品叫做“波洛尼”，这恰好与“蠢事”同字。

“熏腊肠”并不是唯一具有双重意义的肉食。“火腿”也是个双关键词，指乐意收发短波信号与别人通讯的业余无线电爱好者。“火腿”还可指演员，特别是指自满的演员。

“火鸡”是具有双重意义的另一种肉食。它可用来指失败的人或事。自满的演员会把一台好戏演砸了。

还有一种肉食“热狗”，又名“法兰克福香肠”，是用牛肉、猪肉、火鸡肉或鸡肉混合制成。“热狗”有别的意思，也指自满的演员，指一个喜欢出风头和听喝彩声的人。橄榄球运动员如有“热狗”的绰号，必是喜欢故弄虚玄，把一场容易获胜的比赛踢得惊险万分，好赢得观众的喝彩。

三 闪电战

“闪电战”指一次攻击或一次战役。

在第二次世界大战初期，强大的德军在纳粹头子阿道夫·希特勒的统率下，以迅雷不及掩耳之势横扫西欧。德国人在很短的时间里占领了波兰、比利时、法国和其他一些国家。

希特勒在形容他的侵略计划时，用了一个德语单词，意思是象

“blitzkrieg.” Blitzkrieg means war that is fought as quickly as lightning strikes.

Military experts around the world soon began to use the word blitzkrieg to describe any fast moving, powerful attack by strong forces.

Hitler's blitzkrieg attack on western Europe succeeded for awhile. But the Nazi leader was not able to defeat Britain.

As time passed, Hitler decided to bomb London and other British cities to break the spirit of the British people and force them to surrender. Soon, thousands of kilograms of German bombs were falling on British cities every day. The British people called the attack another blitzkrieg, or “The Blitz.”

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill described one series of raids in this way: “The new bombing began with the blitz of the city of Coventry on the night of November fourteenth.” Churchill wrote in his history of the war, “By the time the sun came up, nearly five hundred German aircraft had dropped six hundred tons of high explosives and thousands of fire bombs.”

Use of the word blitz did not end when the Allied troops finally marched into Berlin in nineteen forty-five and Germany surrendered. Instead, the word became even more popular.

People began to use the word blitz to describe any kind of strong action, campaign, or movement. For example, sports fans in the United States use the word blitz to describe an aggressive play by the defensive team in American football.

Political leaders also use the word blitz. A candidate to become president of the United States may plan a campaign in which he visits five different cities every day for two weeks. One day he is in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington. The next day he campaigns in Jacksonville, Orlando, New Orleans, Houston and Dallas. Newspaper reporters who travel with the candidate are likely to call this kind of campaigning a political blitz.