



ILLUSTRATION BY MARLEY ALLEN-ASH

At sea, our family made up our own words

FIRST PERSON

Even a world-renowned linguist was impressed by our family dictionary, Lorraine Escher writes

I have been sailing around the world with my husband, Rick, and our four children since 2015. In that time, we have developed some vocabulary of our own. I wrote a family dictionary that captures more than 100 unique words and phrases we use at sea. For example, we might use “hobbleton” as a term of endearment when speaking to an injured person. We use the term “engine clothing” to describe an outfit worn for grubby boat jobs. Recently, my dictionary has

become a solace. I use it in the same way some people might flip through old photo albums. After years of home-schooling, my eldest daughter, Betty, has been accepted into university in Ontario. She is leaving our boat to begin her first year. We will continue our circumnavigation from Malaysia without her. I recently added definitions for “bathroom tourism” and “Magic Porridge Pot mom” and felt a strange mix of joy and loss. The dictionary preserves family memories, including those made when our kids were small. While looking for other family dictionaries, I came across the book *Kitchen Table Lingo*. It contains a compilation of public submissions with words like “bogwurple,” as well as contributions from some well-known authors and broadcasters. English

linguist David Crystal wrote the afterword. I was delighted to see that I shared a common interest with people whose careers left me awestruck. Quicker than I could type “What are you thinking?” I found David Crystal’s website, clicked “Contact” and filled in an online form. For 15 hours I sat alone with the knowledge that I had contacted a world-renowned linguist about our family dictionary. As Rick was talking to me about our watermaker, I received a notification on my phone. Crystal’s name flickered briefly. “Oh!” I said, and I turned off my phone. Without missing a beat, Rick continued, “What we need is a quick-fit hose connection that allows a big pipe to go to a smaller one.” We agreed that this seemed to be what plumbing was all about. Small to big, and big to small. Then, as Rick made some notes, I opened my e-mail. “Oh, Rick! David Crystal wrote to me.” Rick looked up. “Who?” “He’s a famous English linguist. He’s written more than 100 books and received an Order of the British Empire. I sent him a note about our family dictionary.” “What did he say?” I read his note out loud: “Many thanks for sending this, Lorraine. It’s such a worthwhile project, and I wish more families did such a thing.”

I read the words again. The front cover of Crystal’s 2002 book, *Shakespeare’s Words: A Glossary and Language Companion* displays a quote from actor Kenneth Branagh that reads, “Detailed, comprehensive, fascinating.” I imagined a similar endorsement appearing on our family dictionary: “Such a worthwhile project – David Crystal.” Of course, I had to respond. It would be rude not to. But what to say? In his e-mail, he’d mentioned his most recent book. Seeing a connection, I wrote: Hello Professor Crystal, ...There have been several times during our circumnavigation when I have felt like an unwitting Victorian curiosity-seeker myself. I touched on that feeling in a blog post I wrote about land diving in Vanuatu... Grammar check. Send. The next day at breakfast, I had hardly sat down before I saw his reply. “He wrote again!” I said excitedly. Rick stirred his bowl of yogurt. Betty was up earlier than usual and came into the cockpit to share the excitement. I took a breath. “Thank you, I’d not come across land diving before. Extraordinary! And very nicely written.” “Very nicely written” seemed to glow off the page. “It’s not exactly ‘Amazing, excellent work’ though,” I said, feeling

a tinge of disappointment. “No, it’s great, Mom.” “You should ask if he might be okay with you putting his comments on your blog,” Rick said as he scraped the last bits of yogurt from his bowl. This time I really felt like I was pushing my luck. I was writing to a man who had written several books about English grammar. Every word was considered before I sent him another note. Then, I waited. Breakfast turned into lunch. I tried to tell myself it didn’t matter. While it would have been nice to receive formal permission for using his quotes on my blog, it was not really necessary. Really. Then, he wrote again: “Sure. No problem.” One day, my kids will look back at our family dictionary. They might share a laugh revisiting family terms like “nimbleton” and “wavers.” Maybe Betty will find herself at school back in Canada with her arms akimbo and she will remember how she’d sometimes “put out her bingo wings” to claim space in an anchorage.

Lorraine Escher lives in Ottawa and is currently circumnavigating Malaysia on a sailboat.

First Person is a daily personal piece submitted by readers. Have a story to tell? See our guidelines at tgam.ca/essayguide.

TORONTO FORECAST AND ALMANAC As observed at Toronto Pearson International Airport

TODAY

H: 18
Sunny.
P.O.P.: 0%

L: 10

Wind: W, 21km/h

TEMPERATURE TREND

Today is **WARMER** than Average.

Today (Av+): 12.0
Current (4p EST): 18
Difference: +6.0

PRECIPITATION

October

NORMAL, MONTH (mm): 65.3
CURRENT: 21.9
DIFFERENCE: -43.4

PERCENT OF NORMAL: 34%

Sunrise: 7:24am
Sunset: 6:45pm

Sunlight Hours: 9

Moonrise: 6:17am
Moonset: 6:06pm

TOMORROW

H: 18
Mainly sunny.
P.O.P.: 0%

L: 16

Wind: E, 24km/h

SUNDAY

H: 19
Cloudy, showers.
P.O.P.: 80%

L: 15

Wind: S, 15km/h

MONDAY

H: 21
Mix, sun and clouds.
P.O.P.: 20%

L: 11

Wind: NW, 13km/h

TUESDAY

H: 11
Chance of a shower.
P.O.P.: 60%

L: 5

Wind: NW, 33km/h

WEDNESDAY

H: 11
Mix, sun and clouds.
P.O.P.: 30%

L: 7

Wind: W, 22km/h

THURSDAY

H: 12
Sunny.
P.O.P.: 0%

L: 9

Wind: SE, 18km/h

NATIONAL FORECAST

	TODAY	TOMORROW	SUNDAY
BANFF	11/1 R	0/5 SN	4/8 S
BRANDON	20/8 PC	19/5 PC	7/1 C
CALGARY	14/0 SH	1/3 SN	2/7 PC
CHARLOTTETOWN	15/6 PC	10/5 PC	12/12 PC
CHURCHILL	4/1 RS	5/2 C	4/0 RS
CORNER BROOK	14/6 SH	9/4 R	8/5 SH
EDMONTON	8/0 R	3/2 SN	3/4 PC
FORT MCMURRAY	5/0 R	4/3 SN	6/2 S
HALIFAX	18/7 S	13/5 S	15/13 PC
INUVIK	-3/5 PC	0/3 PC	-1/3 C
IGLOUIT	0/6 PC	-1/5 PC	-2/6 PC
JASPER	4/2 R	1/9 SN	5/8 S
KINGSTON	16/7 SH	16/15 S	18/15 SH
LETHBRIDGE	21/3 S	5/1 R	3/4 SN
LONDON	17/8 S	22/16 S	18/13 R
MONCTON	16/4 S	12/2 S	16/13 PC
MONTREAL	13/3 PC	14/9 S	20/13 PC

	TODAY	TOMORROW	SUNDAY
NORTH BAY	11/2 SH	16/13 PC	19/11 PC
OTTAWA	13/1 SH	16/9 PC	20/13 PC
QUÉBEC	12/2 SH	12/5 S	19/13 PC
REGINA	21/7 PC	10/1 C	4/1 C
SAINT JOHN	15/6 SH	13/5 S	15/13 PC
SASKATOON	15/5 PC	5/0 SH	5/3 PC
SAULT STE MARIE	15/8 S	21/16 PC	22/12 PC
SHERBROOKE	11/1 SH	12/6 S	21/13 PC
ST JOHN'S	17/9 SH	12/6 SH	9/7 PC
THOMPSON	6/0 PC	2/1 SN	3/1 SN
THUNDER BAY	14/9 PC	22/12 PC	26/10 S
TORONTO	18/10 S	18/14 S	19/15 SH
VANCOUVER	15/9 SH	14/6 SH	15/6 S
VICTORIA	17/9 SH	14/8 SH	14/9 S
WHITEHORSE	4/4 S	7/1 S	7/1 PC
WINNIPEG	19/13 C	24/9 PC	9/5 R
YELLOWKNIFE	3/4 PC	4/2 PC	6/2 PC

	TODAY	TOMORROW	SUNDAY
AMSTERDAM	18/11 SH	15/10 SH	15/8 SH
BRUSSELS	16/9 SH	14/8 S	14/8 S
BEIJING	26/16 S	27/16 S	26/18 S
FRANKFURT	13/9 PC	14/7 SH	13/5 SH
HONG KONG	27/25 S	28/25 S	28/26 S
JERUSALEM	26/17 S	27/18 S	26/17 PC
LONDON	19/10 SH	14/8 PC	14/10 PC
MADRID	19/10 S	22/12 S	22/13 PC
MOSCOW	17/9 C	12/7 SH	13/9 C
NEW DELHI	33/23 SH	33/23 T	33/23 PC
NEW YORK	21/11 S	19/13 S	19/17 PC
PARIS	16/12 C	17/11 PC	16/9 C
ROME	21/15 SH	21/15 SH	24/12 S
SAN FRANCISCO	18/14 S	15/11 S	16/12 S
SEOUL	24/14 PC	26/17 S	28/19 S
TOKYO	24/16 S	25/17 S	25/18 S
WASHINGTON	23/14 PC	23/16 PC	20/18 SH

REGIONAL FORECAST

HUNTSVILLE

13/3/SH

KINGSTON

16/7/SH

COLLINGWOOD

16/9/5

PETERBOROUGH

15/4/5

TRENTON

17/4/5

KITCHENER

17/7/5

TORONTO

18/10/5

HAMILTON

18/7/5

SARNIA

19/12/5

LONDON

18/10/5

WINDSOR

20/14/5

TODAY

TOMORROW

SUNDAY

BARIE

15/6 S

18/12 PC

19/12 C

BELLEVEILLE

16/5 S

17/12 S

19/13 C

BRACEBRIDGE

14/3 SH

17/11 S

19/12 C

COBOURG

16/9 S

17/13 S

18/14 SH

COLLINGWOOD

16/9 S

20/14 S

20/13 C

GODERICH

16/12 S

21/14 S

19/14 C

HAMILTON

18/7 S

21/13 S

19/14 R

HUNTSVILLE

13/3 SH

17/11 PC

20/12 C

TODAY

TOMORROW

SUNDAY

KITCHENER

17/7 S

21/11 S

19/12 SH

LONDON

18/10 S

21/13 S

18/14 R

MISSISSAUGA

17/9 S

21/13 S

19/14 R

NIAGARA FALLS

17/8 S

18/13 S

19/14 SH

OSHAWA

15/8 S

21/13 S

20/12 C

OWEN SOUND

14/5 SH

19/13 PC

20/13 C

PARRY SOUND

18/10 S

21/14 S

19/15 R

ST CATHARINES

18/7 S

19/12 S

19/14 SH

UV READINGS

LOW: 0-2, MODERATE: 3-5, HIGH: 6-7, VERY HIGH: 8-10, EXTREME: 11+

AIR QUALITY HEALTH INDEX

LOW RISK: 0-3, MOD. RISK: 4-6, HIGH RISK: 7-10, VERY HIGH RISK: 10+

BARIE

3

HAMILTON

3

KINGSTON

3

LONDON

4

MISSISSAUGA

3

ST CATHARINES

3

TORONTO

3

WINDSOR

4

BARIE

1

HAMILTON

2

KINGSTON

2

LONDON

2

MISSISSAUGA

2

ST CATHARINES

2

TORONTO

2

WINDSOR

2

C CLOUDY	FR FREEZING RAIN	NA NOT AVAILABLE	R RAIN	S SUN	SF SNOW FLURRIES	T THUNDERSTORMS
FG FOG	HZ HAZE	PC PARTLY CLOUDY	RS RAIN/SNOW	SN SNOW	SH SHOWERS	W WINDY

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