

Using Code Words

By Joseph Parish

In the future when the balloon goes up it always helps to be able to catch aggressors or invaders by surprise when necessary. I look at the situation as if it is either them or me. I would rather catch them napping than they in turn discover my family and I unprepared. Plain text language would often reveal your intentions to any evil doer that may want your supplies or even worse to harm your loved ones. In place of that my family and I have devised a series of code words which indicate certain actions that should be accomplished immediately.

The use of code words is nothing new and had its origination in the world of spy verses spy. Code words have been used as a means of communication for ages in all countries around the globe. To be exact, when dealing with code words used in a military environment they are employed under strict and exacting guidelines. Each code word is created under explicit conventions and are assigned their own unique connotation. They are typically utilized to ensure reliability, clarity or above all secrecy. It is the security aspect that we are concerned with here.

Actually, the ability to code information is a specific branch of mathematics which comprises various source codes and their respective channel codes. The exact procedures can become extremely complicated since the channel code frequently surrounds redundancy issues to ensure consistent communication when confronted by noise. For those who wish to get into the process in further detail I would recommend they read the GSA publication entitled "Federal Standard 1037C" or MIL-STD-188 which is a Department of Defense Dictionary relating to Military and Associated Terms.

In short, a code word is nothing more than a word or associated phrase which is used to convey to another a predefined implication which is different from its usual interpretation. As an example, if I use the code word COPPERPOT an informed person such as a member of my family may interrupted that as meaning "meet at the edge of the woods at noon." If I were to employ a number such as 696 in place of the word it would be known as a code number. Either the code word or the code numbers can be referred to as a code group.

In the military the code would be comprised of a small list of messages as well as the code groups which define them. These are written down in two columns in what is known as a codebook. In order to create or to interpret any coded message one would have to first access the codebook. This much coding is really rather an overload for our purpose and I have represented it merely for reference.

To establish your codes, you could first sit down and think carefully of the necessary actions that would be required in an emergency. Make a list of them. Try to not make your list too long and keep it to a minimum.

Suppose I want my children to go to a specific location to hide in the event of an attack. The location would first be understood by all and then I would create a code word to use when the command is given. I would not want the code word to be even remotely associated with the location. If we are to meet at the boat dock the code should never mention anything close to water or the dock. I might use MOUNTAINVIEW to indicate they should go immediately to the boat dock to hide.

Take some time and practice the codeword with your family ahead of time. Make certain each member knows the code words and what actions are required when they are mentioned. A little thought on your part now may ease your stress and concerns in the future.