

Gee whiz! Let's bring back these nifty '50s slang terms

Written by Gallupsun Staff

Friday, 22 September 2023 02:16



The 1950s were a wild time. Everything was in black and white, there weren't any footprints on the moon and no one had even heard of Taylor Swift. Can you imagine what that must have been like?

Although some things from the 1950s are long gone, the decade's slang terms live on. Let's take a look at some notable quotables from the mid-twentieth century.

Gringles: worries. As in, "Boy, do I have a fat stack of gringles today." I like gringles because it sounds like "gripes" and "Pringles" had a baby. Let's bring it back!

What's buzzin' cousin? This means "how's it going" or "what's happening." I love the rhyme and the "z" sounds in this phrase. I'm going to replace "what's up" with this phrase in daily use.

Flutter bum: a good looking man. This is the decade's lesser-known version of "dream boat." To use the term today, you could say, "Ryan Gosling was a real flutter bum in the new 'Barbie' movie."

Agitate the gravel: to leave. Imagine a sock hop that goes sideways. Fonz and the gang decide to leave in a hurry, so they peel out in the gravel parking lot. I have dreams of agitating the gravel at most social gatherings, especially when I'm in "Antsville" (a crowded place).

Gee whiz! Let's bring back these nifty '50s slang terms

Written by Gallupsun Staff
Friday, 22 September 2023 02:16

Cut the gas: be quiet. This was a nicer way of saying “shut your pie hole.” If a real chump was saying bad things about your old lady — or worse — your car, you’d be remiss not to tell him, “Aw, cut the gas, chuckle head!”

Cow-handed: awkward. Imagine a human with cow hooves for hands. Better yet, a Tyrannosaurus Rex trying to do push-ups. That’s quite cow-handed. In middle school, all my school pictures showed a cow-handed kid who had been suckerpunched by preteenage nerdiness.

Get bent: die. Yes, to tell someone to “get bent” was to wish their time on Earth to expire. To go west. To kick the bucket. To meet their maker. That’s intense.

Heavens to Betsy: to express surprise. I still hear this one today, although it sounds antiquated when people say it. That’s not a bad thing, as I think it’s neat to hear a variety of phrases. “By golly” or “boy howdy” can be used interchangeably with “heavens to Betsy.”

We still hear many '50s phrases today. Some include the ubiquitous “cool,” “ankle biter,” “cruisin’ for a bruisin,’” “dibs” and “having a blast.” What midcentury words and phrases do you think we should bring back? Jump on the party line and let me know.

—Curtis Honeycutt is an award-winning syndicated humor columnist. Connect with him on Twitter ([@curtishoneycutt](https://twitter.com/curtishoneycutt)) or at curtishoneycutt.com.

'Grammar Guy'
By Curtis Honeycutt
Guest Columnist