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Editor's Note

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You're standing on the edge of a tiny deck built around a Jurassic-recalling Kapok tree about 200 feet high in a Costa Rican rainforest, surrounded by enough colorful toucans and playful primates to film a cereal commercial. And you're preparing to leap off, feet-first, with the modest hope that, in this rare instance, you can defy gravity. Then you wonder—as you zip through the moist air, harnessed to a pulley attached to a cable tethered both to the tree behind you and the one ahead of you—is this what it feels like to buy a second home here?

That's how the first draft of my story about Costa Rica ("The Loop Realty," page 44) began. I had to shorten it in order to fit it into the layout our art director devised.

This isn't uncommon in the making of magazines. No writer—or editor—can write a piece that predicts exactly how much space will be allowed for "copy" in the layout, which also factors in important components such as photos and empty "white space." So, in order to make the story fit, we often have to trim it—which is to say we rewrite it a bit, looking for ways to communicate the same information in less space. You can turn to my article and see how we attempted to do that in this case.

I note this in addressing a point made in an email I received from a reader. She was miffed by liberties we took with some words in our May issue. Her slightly edited letter, whose subject was "Language," partly read:

In [your] article "House of the Rising Son," mutilated English words like next-gen, biz, prof and resto jumped at me so hard that it hurt. In the Food Drink Guide I read reno'd, faves, fab, natch and glam. ... Is this texting or writing? Don't writers have a responsibility to keep our language from disintegrating?

I found the missive delightful. It's a thrill to know not only that folks are reading my magazine so closely, but also that there is a concern for the language and how we use

it. It's a topic I never weary of discussing.

The striving for brevity, in an effort to fill our stories with more information, largely explains our re-imagining of words at times—*resto* instead of *restaurant*, *natch* for *naturally*. (Yes, often just a few letters here and there make a difference.)

It's true, too, that there *is* a tilt toward texting-compatible, current-conversational prose. I agree that our culture's fixation with texting and emailing does have certain drawbacks—such as the rise of generations with dwindling one-on-one, in-person communication skills, upon which our publisher Lou DeLone comments in his Publisher's Note—but I actually don't bemoan the evolution of the language itself. I find that the average person's approach to the written word—*apart* from texts and Facebook posts—is stuffy and contrived.

Conversational language, in measured amounts, is good for journalism. It is, after all, how most people communicate most of the time. And if its use in magazine articles facilitates the exchange of data—makes the prose more lively and accessible to more people—that's a positive thing.

Anyway, language evolves, whether the worried letter writer likes it or not. (Who'd have imagined *Google* as a verb?) Her key point, however, is that we people of letters should concern ourselves with guarding against its *devolution*. And, while that's a lovely romantic notion, I'm more concerned with amusing and enlightening readers, regardless of the particular words I use.

I hope, in fact, you'll be amused by this original ending of my Costa Rica article:

It's enchanting, like the feeling of reaching terra firma after a morning of zip-lining through tropical treetops. "How'd I do?" you may ask the young guide into whose hands you've put your life. "Pretty good," he'll deadpan in excellent second-language English. "But I'm not the best judge. This is my first day."

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