

bernstein on words



'Nine' magical to ancient Egyptians

By Theodore M. Bernstein

The mystic nine. A couple of items that appeared here spoke of the number nine being unusual or a symbol of perfection, but not much was provided by way of explanation.

But now Wade Smith of Camden, Ark. writes that when he was in the fourth grade (he says he is now in the 11th) his class, in studying about the Egyptians, learned that they regarded three as a lucky number "much as we regard seven or 11 today."

"The Egyptians then reasoned," he goes on, "that if three was lucky, then three

times three—that is, nine—must be magical." He thinks that the myth of a cat having nine lives also has a connection with the magic of nine, but does not know in what way.

P.S.—He doesn't say anything about a cat-o-nine tails.

Prohibition. "Forbid" and "prohibit" mean just about the same thing, but they are not used in precisely the same way, and errors are most often made in the use of forbid. Frequently you will come across a sentence such as, "All city employes were 'forbidden' from striking."

Idiomatically the verb "forbid" is followed by a "to" infinitive, so that the sentence properly should read, "All city employes were forbidden to strike." A mnemonic device for remembering this is to think of two numbers, four and two, and then associate them with "forbid to" which should always be in combination.

On the other hand, "prohibit" should be followed by an object none ("The law prohibits the possession of unlicensed hand guns") or by a "from" phrase ("The law prohibits citizens from possessing unlicensed hand guns").

The advice to follow "prohibit" by

"from" must have been taught to—but not quite understood by—an official on Long Island, N.Y., because along much of the Long Island Expressway there are signs that say, "Trucks, Buses and Trailers Prohibited From Left Lane." You cannot be "prohibited from" a place.

Word Oddities. A "cat-o-nine tails" is a flogging whip made of nine knotted cords and a handle. But what's a cat got to do with it? you may ask. And the American Heritage Dictionary answers that it's because the whip leaves marks like the scratches of a cat. Purr-haps.

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SUN offerings increased; low-income aid added

Four new course offerings, a financial aid program for lower income Nebraskans and a toll-free telephone system for students are among changes to be started by the State University of Nebraska (SUN), according to its dean, Milton Hassel.

The new courses will double the number offered last fall by the university program, which uses educational television, newspapers and mailed instructional material to bring postsecondary education to people in their homes, Hassel said.

The new courses include American Economy, Characteristics of Learning Disabilities, Classic Theater and Freehand Sketching.

All courses will be telecast as 30 minute segments, he said. Hassel said two courses will be shown each weeknight from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. Repeats of courses will be shown Saturday from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Courses will start Sept. 1 through Sept. 6, except Classical Theater, which will begin Sept. 25.

Hassel said most courses cost \$20 per credit hour for students taking the class for credit, and \$10 per credit hour for noncredit students.

This year, The Omaha World-Herald, Lincoln Journal and Star, Beatrice Sun, North Platte Tribune, Grand Island Independent and Scottsbluff Herald will publish the courses, he said.

Hassel said financial help for lower income SUN students was made possible by a \$5,000 grant contributed by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation for tuition waivers. Money from the grant would pay for one-half of a student's tuition.

He said need will be determined by the SUN central office in the Telecommunication Bldg., on the basis of three categories:

—High School students starting their college careers early.

—Two or more students of the same family in the SUN program, in which case one would receive one-half tuition waiver.

—All others applying for aid.

Hassel said SUN also will offer a toll-free telephone line enabling students to call offices in Lincoln and Omaha from any part of the state.

The Omaha number is (800) 642-8445. Lincoln's is (800) 742-7421.

Hassel said SUN will continue its policy of open admissions. "There is no admissions requirement other than the desire to learn," he said.

Hassel said this fall SUN will receive most of its financial support from a \$100,000 appropriation from the Nebraska Legislature, and from tuition charges. Last year, he said, the program had been financed mainly through private foundation funds and tuition.

Hassel said 1,110 students enrolled in SUN last year. The average age was 39.

Courses to be offered by SUN, with credit hours and material costs for each, are:

—The American Economy (3 hrs.), a practical course in general economics, \$10

—The Characteristics of Learning Disabilities (3 hrs.), intended to help parents, teachers and others recognize and counteract the handicaps affecting some children's ability to learn, \$23.

—Classic Theatre (3 hrs.), which uses a British Broadcasting Company series of 13 plays from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries under the heading of The Humanities and Drama, \$20.

—Freehand Sketching, a 30-lesson noncredit course with Disney artist Bruce McIntyre, for persons with little or no drawing experience, \$5.

—The Consumer Experience, a practical approach to consumer problem-solving, \$15.

—Introductory Psychology (3 hrs.), focuses on why people behave the way they do, \$17.

—Fundamentals of Computer Science (2 hrs.), an introduction to the world of computers, \$9.

—Accounting I (3 hrs.), the study of the principles of accounting, \$25.

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