

bernstein on words | Friday 13th? Relax, it's triskaidekaphobia

By Theodore Bernstein

Lawyers Latin. A news article about Internal Revenue Service regulations said: "An exception, called the de minimis exception, would apply, however, to benefits that are so small that it is administratively impractical to keep track of them." Arthur J. Morgan of New York observes that the Latin phrase is not used correctly there, but it is not limited to tax law or tax rulings. It is part of a general maxim that exists throughout our law; de minimis non curat lex, which means "The law does not concern itself with trivial things." Maybe the law doesn't, but obviously we do.

No like. The word unlike is as troublesome as like. Here is an example of its misuse: "No matter how poor the lens; an image of high quality will be formed in holographic reproduction, unlike as in conventional photography." In that sentence unlike is functioning as a preposition.

Therefore it should be given a noun or the equivalent of a noun. James A. Martin of the University of Michigan Law School thinks it would be a good idea if our language had a word such as unas combining not with as, but failing that, he suggests making it "unlike the way it is." That requires a few more words than the original, but it gives us acceptable usage.

For those who came in late. Having wandered into a church in Philadelphia and found herself in a beautiful setting, Louise T. Brennan of North Wales, Pa., was delighted to hear two men playing a lovely duet on the organ. When she reported this experience to a friend, the friend said, "What a lagniappe for you." Our correspondent would like to know the exact meaning of that word. Lagniappe in its original meaning denotes a small gift presented to a customer who makes a purchase, but in its

broader, more usual meaning it denotes a bonus or something extra. As lagniappe we shall disclose that the word is pronounced lan-YAP.

Light verse lives! J. C. Hepler of Bethayres, Pa., was not exactly on the fly when he wrote the following verse, but that was his subject:

Winged Thoughts

I'm glad I'm not a little fly
That walks upon a ceiling

The very thought of flying high
Gives me a dizzy feeling.
I'd hate old garbage pails that reek
Where mamma flies sit preening.
I'd hate to bump my tender beak
Against the window screening.
I'd hate to have folks think of me
As just a pest and bother,
But most of all I'd hate to be
A little maggot's father!

Students plan fire station for contest

By Sandy Mohr

Design a fire sub-station in the residential district of a community with a population of 24,000. The 3,000-square-foot building should be constructed on the corner of a main and a residential street and should house four firefighters on 24-hour shifts.

This problem was given to 150 UNL architecture students who are competing in the Nebraska Concrete Masonry Association (NCMA) annual design competition. For 10 years, NCMA has sponsored the competition, with prizes of \$250 for first place, \$150 for second and \$100 for third, according to architecture Associate Prof. John Benson.

Before designing the station, students are required to visit other fire stations, said participant Liz Sterns, a senior architecture major from Lincoln.

"If you're lucky enough you'll be there when an alarm comes in," she said.

Ability to get out of the station quickly is one con-

sideration in building the station, she said. That's why most fire stations do not use the traditional poles to slide down anymore, Sterns said she learned.

"People kept falling on each other," she said one fireman told her. "They couldn't get out fast enough."

Sterns said she designed a one-level station that houses both men and women firefighters, although she said there are no firewomen in Lincoln. The building also houses two fire trucks.

The 30-inch by 40-inch black and white ink drawings that the students have worked on for four weeks are due today. But Benson said the prizes, which apply toward next year's tuition, will be awarded in April.

The project benefits both the students and NCMA, Benson said.

While "acquainting architecture students with the design possibilities of concrete blocks," Benson said, the competition also gives the students "financial support and experience in working with the competition."



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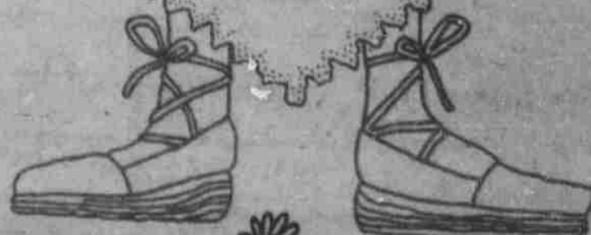
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