

Wördos? About 20 persons who meet once a month in Minneapolis and talk about our English language. Abbreviations: ST = Minneapolis Star Tribune, PP = St. Paul Pioneer Press, NYT = N.Y. Times, WSJ = Wall St. Journal, unatt = don't know source, undtd = don't know date, nsltr = newsletter, newsrls = news release, AHD = Am. Heritage Dict. III, GMAU = Garner's Mod. Am. Usage, OED = Oxford Dict. Of Eng. Lang. II, Warriner = Warriner's English Grammar & Composition, YFIO = you figure it out., Stringer = contributor. Italics used freely for emphasis. We have a Web page: <http://www.wordos.net>. Our motto: *Claritas super omnia*: clarity above all."

October winners

- "The kids were *consequenced*." (Quote, Edward Saxton, a district school superintendent, ST 10-14)

- "Les Raskob and Beverly Tellefson inspect an old newspaper clipping describing a robbery at the Farmers State Bank of Hamel *during the bank's 90th anniversary celebration*." (Cutline, Croix River News, 9-25) Wördo Fred Webber: "Prophetic! A prediction the robbery would happen during the anniversary celebration."

- "As I approached the field, I placed a tree between myself and the deer and kept inching forward, closing the distance while remaining concealed at the same time." (Mich. Outdoor News, 10-23) Tim Spielman, editor of Minnesota Outdoor News, contributed this item. "We're going to feature it in our 'Incredible Feats of Strength' special edition," he says.

- "Woman Hit By Transit *Bus In Critical Condition*." (ST, 10-1-'08) Bus was not in the best condition, but healthy enough to knock her down. Commas might have helped: *Woman comma Hit By Transit Bus comma In Critical Condition*.



Bravo corner: "U.S. Fails To *Stanch* Flow Of Cash To The Taliban" (ST, 10-19) Right. It's *stanch*, not *staunch*. "FAVRE *FEVRE*" (Head, ST, 8-10) Re: Brett Favre's signing with Vikings. "Morton's *Sizzles Out*" (ST, 7-4) Steakhouse went out of business. "The National Gazette: A *semi-weekly* newspaper in 1791." (NYT, undtd) *Bi* = two times, *semi* = half. Bravo! The Gazette is published two times a week. "He *lay* motionless." (MSNBC Sports Report, 9-27) Right: He didn't say *laid*.

Fraught: Three loose *fraughts* have recently been spotted: (1) "... courting the groovy can be *fraught*." (dangerous? risky?), (NYT, 10-11); (2) "...the country's attitude toward the chain has become more *fraught*." (suspect? equivocal?) and (3) "Equally *fraught* (uncertain? undecided? unresolved? problematic?) is the question how many civilian deaths can be justified." (Jane Mayer, New Yorker magazine, 10-26). Bryan Garner (GMAU) cites a new sense of *fraught*: *distressed* or *distressing*. "This new use" he writes (without a *with*), dates from the '60s."

Huh? Inadvertent lapses. "Manning Brothers *Each* Has (have) 4-0 Start" (Chattanooga Times Free Press, 10-9) Unsure about this one: what do you think? "It's a terrible tragedy for the food world to have *squashed* (quashed) this important voice." (Quote from the food editor of Gourmet magazine. ST, 10-19) "... he *sprung* (sprang) to his feet." (ST, 10-9) "(Gum-chewing is) ... the first topic to elicit a *limerick*." (Liz Reyer, ST, 10-5) Ms. Reyer's piece included a poem, but its rhythm and rhyming were not *limericky*. AHD: "*Limerick*: A light, humorous, nonsensical or bawdy verse of five anapestic lines, usually with the rhyme scheme *aabba*." AHD: "*Anapest*: (1) A metrical foot composed of two short syllables followed by one long one, as in the word *seventeen*. (2) A line of verse using this meter, for example: 'Twas the night

before Christmas and all through the house.” “I feel *badly* (bad).” (Fox News, 9-26). If you *feel badly*, that means you find it hard to thread needles or to put the key into the lock. “(President Obama), sitting with the *principles* (principals) of race relations...” (PP, 7-31) At the October meeting a Wördo asked: “Can one *ratchet down* as well as *ratchet up*?” The answer, from AHD is yes: AHD: “*Ratchet*: To increase or decrease by increments.”

Matriculate: It means “to admit,” not “to graduate.” “One of the ... benefits of being a recently *matriculated* graduate student ... is that you have the option of reading the newspaper every day.” (Radhika Mohan, ST, 10-4) What did the writer mean? (1) That the student had gained entrance to a group, say, of graduate students? Or (2) that the student received a diploma? YFIO. AHD: “*Matriculate*: To admit, or be admitted to a group.” “*Graduate*: To be granted an academic degree or diploma.”

Marrying wives, marrying husbands: A collection from Wördo Fred Webber: “... he married Christina, *his beautiful wife of seven years* and mother of his three young children.” (ST obit, 10-6) “Where she met and *married her husband* of 43 years.” (ST obit, 10-8) “In 1941 Audrey *married her beloved husband*.” (Unatt, undtd) We have a division on this item. Some Wördos find women marrying husbands (and men, wives) acceptable. Others hold that a woman marries a man who *then* becomes her husband, and vice versa.

May-might have different meanings. Philip Corbett, NYT’s deputy news editor, in “Times Topics,” 7-14: “Trouble arises mainly when ‘may’ and ‘might’ convey possibility. Both words can carry this meaning, but there’s a difference in nuance. ‘*May*’ simply states the possibility or likelihood, while ‘*might*’ emphasizes the conditional nature of the possibility, introducing a greater level of uncertainty. (Examples) “He may go to the theater tonight.” (stating the possibility) “He might go to the theater tonight.” (raising some doubt) Bryan A. Garner (GMAU): “...*may* expresses likelihood (We *may* go to the party) while *might* expresses a stronger sense of doubt. (We *might* be able to go if our appointment is not cancelled.)”

Spelling goofs: Typos? Or didn’t they know? “(The job) was *formally* (formerly) held by a deputy chief.” (Lakeshore Wkly News, 8-4) “Catholic churches are stricter, with *polices* (policies) ... that dictate what music is part of the liturgy.” (ST, 8-2) “*Trember* (temblor) Left Fans Shaken ...” (ST, 10-17) “*Sewing* (sowing) Seeds Of Tradition” (Head, W.B. Press, 7-22) “He *prophosized* (prophesized) something.” (CBS, 8-16)

TV people, oh how they talk! “The emergency crew *sprung* (sprang) into action.” (Steve Shaw, CH5, 2-10) “Her lyrics *sprung* (sprang) from the words of Jackie Lyden.” (MPR, 5-24) “That happens to be the *criteria* (criterion).” (Ian Leonard, CH9, 9-27-’09)

Words seldom seen: *Risible*, as in “The manual might be *risible* if the Taliban’s coercive insurgency were not effective.” (NYT, 10-26) AHD: “*Risible*: Relating to laughter, ludicrous.” *Toke*, as in “One *Toke* Over The Line” (ST, 10-23) Story about sale of marijuana for medicinal purposes. AHD: “*Toke*: A puff on a cigarette ... containing a mind-altering substance.” *Behest*, as in “... at the *behest* of the teachers’ unions.” (NYT, 10-23) AHD: “*Behest*: Urgent request.” *Scrum*, as in “Minnesota Jumps Into Lobbying *Scrum*” (ST, 9-25) AHD: “*Scrum*: Short for *scrimmage*. A rugby formation in which the two sets of forwards mass together around the ball and, with their heads down, try to shoulder their opponents off the ball or kick it to their own team.” By extension, a disordered, confused situation.

YFIO: We can’t quite find the meaning. “Short, with sunken eyes *and a south Minneapolis drawl* ...” (ST, undtd) Right. All southside Minneapolis people say “Y’all come over to see us!” Things like that. – Ed. “Hecker ... appeared upbeat and bumped fists with a man who attended the hearing *and was married for one year to Tamitha Hecker’s mother*.” (ST, 10-13)

--your humble & obt svt Robert MacGregor Shaw