

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."

## Potholes

- “*Crucifixion Is Fun For The Whole Family*” (One-col. head, La Crosse Tribune, 7-26-'08) The story related to a local festival named Crucifixion Summer FunFest, sponsored by La Crosse's Church of the Crucifixion. “Something about the words crucifixion and FunFest just sticks in your mind,” the columnist wrote. This one is in a class all its own. Thanks, Stringer Myron Schober.

- “Man Found Hiding Under *Couch Going To Prison*” (Head, Winona Daily News, 4-10) Wördo Jack Finnegan: “Must have been a hide-a-bed that's going to the warden's office.”

- “Celebrex may not be appropriate for *people* (persons) taking aspirin or the *elderly*.” (NBC ad, 4-30) Wördo Jack Finnegan: “It obviously is not for vampires.”

- “I stop the boat and flip a slip-bobber over the back of *my outboard and drop it* right on their (the fishes') noses.” (Outdoor News, 5-1) Wördo Fred Webber: “Seems hardly worth it if you have to retrieve the motor every time.”

- “According to a survey of *shoppers released today ...*” (ABC News, 5-13) Wördo Peg Alnes: “Quick! Round 'em up! Get 'em back!”



**Agreement, sad lack of:** “... a dog smarter than *me* (I)” (ST, 4-21) “He's four years younger than *me* (I) “Neither *were* (was) hurt.” (Winona Daily News, 4-17) “The Taliban *are* ...” (Hillary Clinton, undtd) Should *Taliban* be singular or plural? It's appearing both ways. AP Stylebook says *Taliban* is plural; ST Chief Copy-Editor Steve Fisher says it's singular. “The vast majority *are* (is) in compliance.” (ST, 4-28) “... a group of enthusiasts *gets* (get) together.” (New Yorker, 4-13) “Soaring Rate Of Abandoned Animals *Are* (Is) Sign Of Economic Crisis.” (Altnet.org 4-28) “One in six *people* (persons) *do* (does) *suffer* (suffers).” (Pfizer TV ad for bladder control, 4-26) A record, of sorts: three goofs, same sentence. “One in five online consumers *were victims* (was a victim).” (Cons. Reports, June, '09) “...the data *is* (are) being completed.” (Outdoor News, 5-1)

**Ambiguous reference:** “Witness Details Attack On *Bicyclist With Baseball Bat*” (ST, 5-15) Who had the bat? Attacker or bicyclist? “Evidence of an *old head injury*...” (Law & Order SVU, 5-5) Old head? Old injury? “Experience the in-flight service even other airlines *talk about on one of our four weekly flights* from Houston ...” (Ad, Economist, Singapore Airlines) This seems to say that agents from other airlines talk about SA's service as passengers on SA's weekly flights from Houston.

**Bravo heads:** “Minnesota Ready To Kick Some Ash Borer” (Head, ST, 5-17) “10,000 Twitter Tweets Thwarted In Attack” (Head, ST, 4-14)

**Fewer-less:** "... The Non-Profits Have *Less* (Fewer) Resources To Do It." (ST head, 12-21-'08) "You see *less* (fewer) new things that are so over the top." (Sara Glasman, ST, undtd) "I don't know how you deal with *less* (fewer) dollars." (ST, 12-28-'08)

**Huh?** He's four years younger than *me* (I) ..." (Pres. Obama, 4-21) "...nobody knows for sure whether (the virus) will wane or it will become more aggressive – as it did during the deadly 1918-1999 (1918) flu epidemic." (Holly Wenzel, Review Newspapers, undtd) Well, did it wane or did it become more aggressive? "He was Machiavellian, in the *very best sense* of the term." (James Baker, undtd, unatt., re Lee Atwater) Wördo Fred Webber: "There is no best sense of that term. It's all bad. Online dictionary defines *Machiavellian* as 'characterized by unscrupulous cunning, deception, expedience or dishonesty.'" "I had a tutor ... for *awhile* (a while)." (ST, 5-17) "*Love Making* Good Early Impression" (Head, Rochester P-B, 10-3-'08) *Love Making* stopped us for a moment. The basketball player's name in the story was Kevin Love. "...extinction of *dozens of frogs*." (ST, 5-12) No. Dozens of species of frogs. "Upstairs, a robber... had already thrown a female customer *to the ground* (to the floor)." (Abby Simons, ST, 2-22) "... followed her into her daughter's bedroom and forced her *to the ground* (to the floor)." (Emily Johns, ST, 2-24) "Fawcett didn't come off as a sad has-been grasping for her last tendril of *notoriety* (fame)..." (ST, 5-19) "People who don't think precisely *like* (as) we do..." (Pres. Obama, 5-18)

**Only always must be carefully placed in the sentence:** "The store is *only open* (open only) on weekends." (ST, 3-1) "Lillians (sic) stores are *only open* (open only) four days a month." (ST, 4-27)

**Pluperfect tense:** "(Smith hit the ball) inside the left-field line, scoring Brad Hawpe and Trowitzki, both of whom (had) walked." (ST, 10-16) "The victims, two men and two women ... (had) said they were headed for a night of partying across the border only to be found strangled, stabbed and beaten a few days later." (ST, 5-16) Without the two "hads" in the above examples, the reader is left guessing when (1) the two baseball players walked, and (2) the victims said they were headed for a party. That's the function of the pluperfect tense. to make clear that an action was completed at some specific time in the past.

**TV people, oh, how they talk!** "Two *former* 17-year-old girls..." (CH5, 5-22) "Another story about housing prices *you haven't heard*." (CH5, 5-15) "As the *overnight* goes on ..." (CH5, undtd) YFIO. "...showing no *rapid sign of ending*." (CH5, 12-7-'08) "As the data *comes* (come) in ..." (Dr. Sanjay Gupta, CNN, 4-29) "Without *hardly* a clue." (Mark Albert, CH5, 12-29-'08)

**Spelling:** "... two weeks later the (stolen) outboard motor was found at Excel Pawn Shop in Maplewood. Police *ceased* (seized) the motor ..." (Police report, Forest Lake Press, 5-20) The motor had run continuously for two weeks in the pawn shop. Thanks, Stringer Earl Lellman. "... without previous *incidence* (incidents) ..." (Outdoor News, 5-1) "*Sighting* (citing) rural America ..." (Inspired Magazine, 4-5, '09) "(She was a) *rosemauler* (rosemalar)." (Commonwealth Theatre newsrsls, undtd) "... whichever son succeeds to the *thrown* (throne)." (ST, 4-17) "The *rattle snack* program ..." (Houston [Minn.] Nature Center newsrsls, 6-20-'08)

**YFIO, we can't:** "Redhawk softballers are off and running with solid pitching, competent hitting, and *decent* speed." (Unatt., undtd) It's called "condemning with faint praise."

- yr *humble & obt svt*, Robert MacGregor Shaw