

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."

June bugs

- “However, in the future, if we were to have a street reconstruction project and the interest rate *was* (were) lower, then the amount that *we special asses*, as well as city-wide tax levy will be lower.” (Quote from a city official, New Brighton Bulletin, 6-29) It could happen to anyone on deadline. The editor screams for copy, there's a moment of panic, and *special assessments* comes out as *we special asses*. Happens to us all, sooner or later. – Ed.

- Rabin Robinson (CH9, 6-15) reported that a man, stuck in a swamp up to his neck, was rescued by a *Hoover boat*. Wördo Marlene Reuber: “What did it do? Suck him up? It was, of course, a *Hovercraft*.”

- “It's good to be a continuous business *rather than having been, say, a church* for some time.” (Steve Shaw, CH5, 7-11) YFIO.



Agreement, sad lack of: “*One In Four Men ... Admit* (Admits) Rape, Survey Finds” (The Guardian, 6-20) “*Neither* the owners nor Piccadilly *have* (has) returned calls.” (ST, 7-1) “One cannot sign away *their* (his or her) First Amendment rights.” (ACLU newsltr, Spring issue)

Acronym: A story describing a “New Crop Of U.S. Acronyms” suggested in a list of examples that the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) were *acronyms*. (WSJ, undtd) Not so. AHD: “*Acronym*: A word formed from the initial letters of a name.”

Huh? Inadvertent slips and goofs: “*Reduced Home For Sale*” (Road sign in Fountain, MN, 7-9) “Man's Memory Lives On *In Violin*” (ST head, undtd) “Capell, a physician at Regions Hospital ...” (ST, 6-20) Why not *Dr. Capell*? “By one of their *own* (why “own?”) parents.” (ABC, 6-13) “(She said) he'd have his prison wages *garnished* (garnisheed) ...” (PP, 4-2-'09) “... *meteorites* (meteors) were heading straight for the earth.” (Garrison Keillor, ST, 7-5) No. They're not *meteorites* until they hit the earth. “U.S. To Hold Stake In 2 New AIG Units” (ST, 6-26) The story said it was the Federal Reserve Bank of N.Y., not the U.S., that would hold a preferred stake. “*Scandalized* Evangelist Dies In Atlanta” (Head, Internet, unatt., undtd) Wördo Marlene Reuber: “No: He *caused* a scandal. He was not *scandalized*.” “Signs Point The Way To *Healthful* (correct!) Eating.” (ST, 7-14) In the story it becomes *healthy* (incorrect!) eating.” “... a *civil suit lawsuit*.” (ST, 6-18) “... *further* (farther) up the road.” (ST, 7-10) “Economics Wasn't GM's Only *Criteria* (Criterion)” (Head, WSJ, 7-6) “... while *further* (farther) north ...” (WSJ, 6-18) “Twin Cities' *most unique* tours.” (Ad, Highland Village, 6-17) “As the owner of four dogs and one cat, *it* probably comes as no surprise that (she) once considered being a veterinarian.” (CPS nsltr, summer, '09) This says that *it* owns four dogs and a cat. “Hi! I'm a neighbor who relies on sidewalks clear of snow so that *myself* (I) and others can get around.” (ST, undtd)

Impact: *Affect and influence are better.* "... the majority of *job impacts* are expected late in the summer." (Honeywell spokesman, ST, 7-3) "Phil Loadhold should make immediate ... *impact* (as to) who makes the 53-man roster." (ST, 4-28) Wördo Fred Webber notes that 95% of the AHD's Usage Panel disapproves of the use of *impact* as a transitive verb in the sentence "Companies have used disposable techniques that have a potential for *impacting* our health." "(The noun) *impact* ... in recent years has undergone a semantic shift that has allowed it to act as a verb ... (such a usage) would be perfectly acceptable if *impact* were performing not as ably as *affect* or *influence*." (Garner, GMAU)

Metaphors, good ones: "(The studio) seemed like a bustling newsroom ... (he) would fiddle with his earpiece, move his chair and glance down at his notes; he looked like a kindly newspaper editor interrupted in the middle of a big news day, busy, of course, but never too busy to explain the latest developments to out-of-town visitors." (Douglas Martin, NYT, 7-18, re: Walter Cronkite) "Skillful use of metaphor is one of the highest attainments of writing." (Garner, GMAU)

Precedence – precedent: Two sound-alikes, easily confused. Wördo Mark Warner: "It's apparent from the Sotomayor hearings that *precedence* is now the fashionable term for what used to be *precedent*. *Precedent* means that a previous ruling in a similar matter will be taken as guidance to make legal philosophy more uniform. *Precedence* is a matter of taking priority, pulling rank, cutting in line. The Constitution takes absolute *precedence* in law, instead of *precedent*."

Quotation marks which twist the meaning: In these two examples quotation marks have a diminishing effect by communicating an unspoken "such as it is," or "so-called." (1) "Kudos to The Economist Magazine for their '*slogan*.'" (salon.com., 4-10) (2) "The real risk is that health care reform will be undermined by '*centrist*' Democratic senators who either prevent the passage of a bill or water down key elements of reform ..." (Paul Krugman, NYT, undtd) Krugman: "I use scare quotes around '*centrist*' because if the center means the position held by most Americans, the self-proclaimed centrists are in fact way out in right field." Sometimes writers use quotes as a sort of decoration, as in "Get '*In*' On Our Sale" (Ad, ST, 2-5)

TV and radio people, oh how they talk! "... *wrecking* (wreaking) havoc." (CH5, Nightline, undtd) "We will continue to study this *cohort* of people." (NPR's Science Friday, unatt., undtd) The story indicated that the writer meant "section," or "sample" of the public. "One of the *most unique* temples in the world." (Maggie Newland, CH5, 6-28) "It is surrounded by water *on three sides*." (History Channel, 7-7) "More movies, *less* (fewer) commercials" (TNT cable network, 7-3) "The kids are not *alright* (all right)." (TV Guide, 7-13) "Her *oldest* (older) daughter..." (CH5, 7-8) Woman in the story had two daughters. "In a town with *less* (fewer) than 10,000 ..." (Steve Shaw, CH5, 6-10) "But *only numbers* tell part of the story." (Joe Mozan, CH5, 6-12) No. Numbers tell *only part* of the story.

YFIO, we can't: "(Agents) carry devices that can issue boarding tickets *if a flight is canceled*." (ST, 6-19) "... someone at Thomas-Rasset's computer was guilty of downloading, as evident by the fingerprints ... on the downloaded files." (ST, 6-19) Wördo Fred Webber: "No. Internet Protocol numbers don't have fingers and can't leave fingerprints. *Fingerprints*, if used figuratively, should have been in quotes." "He was *pinch-ran* for by Clete Thomas." (ST, undtd) "San Francisco Approves *Toughest Recycling Law In The Nation*." (Head, ST, 6-11) No such claim in the story. "(I have a) strategy that makes child's play out of finding adult bucks with impressive racks." (Minn. Sportsman, July-Aug., '09)

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