

**By ANNE DONNELL**

*My granddaughter just asked me why she had to learn the rule about i before e, except after c. As I was trying to answer her she pointed to the word Science on her science folder. Please help me out on this as I told her I would get in touch with you and ask. Thank you. -Granny in a Quandary*

Bright granddaughter! U.S. Presidential timber, I'd say; I'll have to last until she's 35. U.S. Constitution says this (not that I have to last, but that she must be at least 35 to be President of the United States). And, a person must be at least 35 to be Vice President, 30 to be a Senator, or 25 to be a Representative. Article 1 (legislative branch), Article 2 (executive branch).

About the i before e: let's say, throwing logic to the winds, the exception proves the rule. I don't remember any form of geometry letting anyone get by with that.

[And the origin for the exception proves the rule, according to "The Phrase Finder" online? "It's a legal maxim, established in English law in the early 17th century. Written, as law was in those days, in Latin: Exceptio probat regulam in casibus non exceptis and is interpreted to mean 'exception confirms the rule in the cases not excepted.' It has (slightly modified) examples in print going back to at least 1617..."

Speaking of Latin, scientia, meaning knowledge, is the root of our word science which retained the first five letters in the same order. Hence, the c-i-e and not c-e-i.

So, i before e, except after c and when sounding like a, as in neighbor and weigh, is a reasonably sound rule. It's easily dated to the 1860's and, possibly 20-30 years before that. Its popularity remains unchallenged; its usefulness, debated.

Two more exceptions to tickle your granddaughter's fancy: species, sufficient. Remember, English spelling is a dark cavern of stumbles and misleading ways. That fickle master

memorizing is still the most reliable guide to good spelling.

And that explains why old people, struggling to remember the date, how to tell time, et cetera, often can't spell worth a hoot. There's also the constant exposure to the any-which-way-but-prefer-texting spelling of the young. And, if their piercings and tattoos don't numb the brains of us old ones, the five-color hair will.

[Why us old ones and not we old ones? The preposition of mandates using the objective case.]

ONLINE DEPARTMENT *A repeat, but fun to read again, especially if your memory didn't store the first time. "Older Than Dirt?" (Thanks, A. A.) Someone young asked the other day, "What was your favorite fast food when you were growing up?" "We didn't have fast food when I was growing up," I informed him. "All the food was slow." "C'mon, seriously. Where did you eat?" "It was a place called home," I explained. "Mom cooked every day, and when Dad got home from work, we sat down together at the dining room table, and if I didn't like what she put on my plate I was allowed to sit there until I did like it." By this time, the kid was laughing so hard I was afraid he was going to suffer serious internal damage, so I didn't tell him the part about how I had to have permission to leave the table. But here are some other things I would have told him about my childhood if I figured his system could have handled it; □ Some parents NEVER owned their own house, never wore Levis, never set foot on a golf course, never traveled out of the country or had a credit card. In their later years they had something called a revolving charge card. The card was good only at Sears Roebuck. Or maybe it was Sears & Roebuck. Either way, there is no Roebuck anymore. Maybe he died. □ My parents never drove me to soccer practice. This was mostly because we never had heard of soccer. □ I had a bicycle that weighed probably 50 pounds, and only had one speed, (slow). □ We didn't have a television in our house until I was 19. It was, of course, black and white, and the station went off the air at midnight, after playing the national anthem and a poem about God; it came back on the air at about 6 a.m. and there was usually a locally produced news and farm show on, featuring local people. □ I was 21 before I tasted my first pizza, it was called "pizza pie." When I bit into it, I burned the roof of my mouth and the cheese slid off, swung down, plastered itself against my chin and burned that, too. It's still the best pizza I ever had. □ I never had a telephone in my room. The only phone in the house was in the living room, and it was on a party line. Before you could dial, you had to listen and make sure some people you didn't know very well weren't already using the line. □ Pizzas were not delivered to our home, but milk was. □ All newspapers were delivered by boys, and all boys delivered newspapers --my brother delivered a newspaper, six days a week. It cost 7¢ a paper, of which he got to keep 2¢. He had to get up at 6 AM every morning. On Saturday, he had to collect the 42¢ from his customers. His favorite customers were the ones who gave him 50¢ and told him to keep the change. His least favorite customers were the ones who seemed to never be home on collection day. □ Movie stars kissed with their mouths shut. At least, they did in the movies. There were no movie ratings because all movies were responsibly produced*

for everyone to enjoy viewing, without profanity or violence or most anything offensive. ☐ When my dad was cleaning out my grandmother's house (she died in December) he brought me an old Royal Crown Cola bottle. In the bottle top was a stopper with a bunch of holes in it. I knew immediately what it was, but my daughter had no idea. She thought they had tried to make it a salt shaker or something. I knew it as the bottle that sat on the end of the ironing board for sprinkling clothes. ☐ **HOW MANY DO YOU REMEMBER?** Head lights dimmer switches on the floor. Ignition switches on the dashboard. Real ice boxes. Pant leg clips for bicycles without chain guards. Using hand signals for cars without turn signals.☐ ☐ **OLDER THAN DIRT QUIZ**☐ Count all the ones that you remember, not the ones you were told about. Scoring at the end. 1. Blackjack chewing gum 2. Wax Coke-shaped bottles with colored sugar water 3. Candy cigarettes 4. Soda pop machines that dispensed glass bottles 5. Coffee shops or diners with tableside juke boxes 6. Home milk delivery in glass bottles with cardboard stoppers 7. Party lines on the telephone 8. Newsreels before the movie 9. P.F. Flyers 10. Butch wax 11. TV test patterns that came on at night after the last show 12. Peashooters 13. Howdy Doody 14. 45 RPM records 15. S&H green stamps 16. Hi-fi's 17. Metal ice trays with lever 18. Mimeograph paper 19. Blue flashbulb 20. Packards 21. Roller skate keys 22. Cork popguns 23. Drive-ins 24. Studebakers 25. Wash tub wringers☐ **SCORING** 0-5 = You're still young; 6-10 = You are getting older;☐ 11-15 = Don't tell your age; 16-25 = You' re older than dirt!