

By ANNE DONNELL

Did you see the cartoon on Facebook (recent columns indicate you hang out there) in which the guy says something like, "When I hear 'I seen,' I never expect it to be followed by 'the inside of a book.'"? Also, did I place the question mark on the last sentence correctly? I'm an engineer so I like language used accurately! Thanks for working on it. -Line It Up, Nail It Down

Great name! I have to laugh at the cartoon. Thinking it could be Grammarly as the "edge" in the caption sounded like those folks, and Grammarly has a Facebook presence, I went looking. Grammarly.com "helps you detect plagiarism and improve your texts. Check your papers for plagiarism, grammar, style and more." There's a blog <http://blog.grammarly.com/>, and I found the aforementioned (legalese is fun!) cartoon there.

Around here the abuse of nonstandard verbs seems endless; there seems to be plenty of it elsewhere, too. (Can't heap all my scorn on the homefolk without determining if I need to save some for the rest of the English speaking world.) I haven't found statistics covering any patch of English speaking, large or small, but I have functioning ears.

I can't give an explanation; obviously a child hears the incorrect forms at home, but education (from the Latin for "lead out of") can change this.

The defense that something like "I goed" for the past tense of "I go" is a step forward in standardizing language might work for someone like Samuel Johnson, but I dismiss it as nonsense currently. The group of nonstandard verbs is a large, frequently used one – too late to revise it.

[ATA (According to Anne) – Samuel Johnson (1709-1784, English literary figure) was famous for talking as well as writing. His Dictionary of the English Language (published 1755) was a pioneering work. His famous biographer was a Scottish lawyer James Boswell. -Macmillon Concise Dictionary of World History]

The misusing of nonstandard verbs is a marker to many listeners – a marker of stubbornness, ignorance, contempt for standards and change. That's enough said.

Now about that question mark: our QP of T (Question Person of Today) has placed it correctly, indicating the whole sentence is a question and not the quotation at the end of the sentence. Had the quotation been a question then the question mark would be properly placed within the quotation marks and do double duty for the quotation and for the sentence. There would never be a need for two question marks. Punctuation is a guide to clarity for the reader, some insurance that the writer's exact meaning is taken.

ONLINE DEPARTMENT (Thanks, J.W.) *Kevin had shingles. Here's what happened to Kevin: Kevin walked into a doctor's office and the receptionist asked him what he had. Kevin said: "Shingles." So she wrote down his name, address, medical insurance number and told him to have a seat. Fifteen minutes later a nurse's aide came out and asked Kevin what he had. Kevin said, "Shingles." So she wrote down his height, weight, a complete medical history and told Kevin to wait in the examining room. A half hour later a nurse came in and asked Kevin what he had. Kevin said, "Shingles." So the nurse gave Kevin a blood test, a blood pressure test, an electrocardiogram, and told Kevin to take off all his clothes and wait for the doctor. An hour later the doctor came in and found Kevin sitting patiently in the nude and asked Kevin what he had. Kevin said, "Shingles." The doctor asked, "Where?" Kevin said, "Outside on the truck. Where do you want me to unload 'em?"*

"Natural Laws" (Thanks, P.K.) Law of Mechanical Repair - After your hands become coated with grease, your nose will begin to itch. Law of Gravity - Any tool, nut, bolt, screw, when dropped, will roll to the least accessible place in the universe. Law of Probability- The probability of being watched is directly proportional to the stupidity of your act. Law of Random Numbers - If you dial a wrong number, you never get a busy signal; someone always answers. Variation Law- If you change lines (or traffic lanes), the one you were in will always move faster than the one you are in now. Law of the Bath- When the body is fully immersed in water, the telephone rings. Law of Close Encounters - The probability of meeting someone you know INCREASES dramatically when you are with someone you don't want to be seen with. Law of the Result - When you try to prove to someone that a machine won't work, IT WILL! Law of Biomechanics - The severity of the itch is inversely proportional to the reach. Law of the Theater & Hockey Arena - At any event, the people whose seats are furthest from the aisle, always arrive last. They are the ones who will leave their seats several times to go for food, beer, or the restroom and who leave early before the end of the performance or the game is over. The folks in the aisle seats come early, never move once, have long gangly legs or big bellies and stay to the bitter end of the performance. The aisle people also are very surly folk. The Coffee Law - As soon as you sit down to a cup of hot coffee, your boss will ask you to do something which will last until the coffee is cold. Murphy's Law of Lockers - If there are only 2 people in a locker room, they will

have adjacent lockers. Law of Physical Surfaces - The chances of an open-faced jelly sandwich landing face down on a floor, are directly correlated to the newness and cost of the carpet or rug. Law of Logical Argument- Anything is possible IF you don't know what you are talking about. Brown's Law of Physical Appearance - If the clothes fit, they're ugly. Oliver's Law of Public Speaking - A CLOSED MOUTH GATHERS NO FEET! Wilson's Law of Commercial Marketing Strategy - As soon as you find a product that you really like, they will stop making it, OR the store will stop selling it! Applies also to restaurants and food you love. Doctors' Law - If you don't feel well, make an appointment to go to the doctor, by the time you get there you'll feel better. If you don't make an appointment, you'll stay sick.