

# ΜΕΛΙ ΝΥΚΕΣΚΕ

A newsletter for Classics at the University of Dallas

## ROMAN FLOODGATES TO PROTECT NEW ORLEANS

"A product of almost primitive engineering," says Col. Lewis F. Setliff III

Recovery efforts have long been underway clearing up the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and surrounding areas last fall. For alternative spring break this year, a group of students from the university spent a week restoring the interior of houses shelled by flood damage from Katrina. But with the hurricane season starting anew this summer, some people see no incentive to rebuild until New Orleans' flood control system is running again. In a *New York Times* article dated March 23, 2006, Mr. Tony Mantalano, the owner of Il Tony's Restaurant said, until a good flood control system is in place, "I'm sitting on my hands". Meanwhile, the United States Army Corps of Engineers has set to work on a temporary flood control system scheduled to be completed just in time for the hurricane season this summer.

As part of the flood control system, the USACE is constructing a floodgate structure to be set up where the 17th Street canal opens into Lake Pontchartrain and at two other drainage canals in New Orleans. The plan is to stop a surge in Lake Pontchartrain, like the one Hurricane Katrina created, from entering the New Orleans' canals and, from there, flooding the rest of the city. Round-the-clock work continues on the construction of the floodgates at the construction yard of Boh Brothers, a major local contractor. There construction workers are building a 45-foot tall framework mounted with steel gates that stay open 11 feet above ground level with huge pins. Once the gates are in place and a major storm is forecasted, the gates

will be shut by cranes and fastened into a U-shaped steel groove set in a reinforced concrete structure below the floodgates. Water in the canals will then be pumped back out into Lake Pontchartrain. In this way, the floodgates will keep water from rushing into the canals of New Orleans, which remain weak after Katrina, despite repairs to the most damaged parts of them. The cost of the floodgates is almost \$100 million.

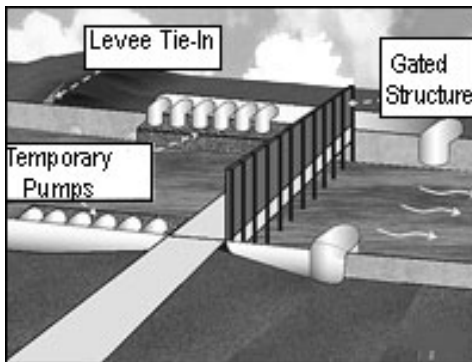
The early June deadline led the corps to a simple design, borrowed from Roman engineering. The *New York Times* writes an almost disparaging commentary that the gates are, "a product of almost primitive engineering, movable walls to keep water at bay. The technology, really oversized sluice gates, dates from Roman times. The simplicity was born of a need for speed, said Col. Lewis F. Setliff III, commander of the corps's efforts to rebuild the area's battered hurricane protection system."

The corps first proposed a similar canal gate design twenty years ago. But, though many people go to visit the Romans' Pont du Gard in France, because it is both elegant and a marvel of engineering, some people objected that the New Orleans floodgates are aesthetically displeasing. But in the wake of the Hurricane Katrina and with this year's flood season impending, there is now generally broad support for them: Ernie Taylor, a retired worker of Michoud Assembly Facility, said told the *New York Times*, "So what if it's big and ugly? I don't like the way my doggone life jacket fits, but it works. It saved me." Source: *The New York Times*. Thursday March 23, 2006. Section A-6

### Notes from the Editor

Please send your additions to the next issue of MN to them to UD Box 610, drop them off at the Classics department desk, or kindly email them to mpawlow@udallas.edu. A riddle on page two needs solving. Submissions will be rewarded with the effusive gratefulness of the Editor and maybe, after Easter break, all the bad-flavored jelly beans I don't eat. Have a blessed Holy Week and Easter.

*The Editor*



Above: Floodgates at the head of the 17th Street canal. Image courtesy of NPR: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5235774>.

### From Smyth's Greek Grammar

Substantives from ἀκούω:  
§839. AGENCY: Like κρι-τή-ς judge from κρίνω decide, κρι-; ἀκουστής (hearer; disciple) from ἀκούω.  
§840. NAMES OF ACTIONS AND ABSTRACT  
SUBSTANTIVES: λέξις style (λέγ-ω speak), ποιή-σι-ς poetry (ποιέ-ω make) so ἄκουσις (hearing) from ἀκούω.

### ON THE ROMAN ENGINEERING PROJECTS

On the drainage channel of Lake Fucinus in central Italy: "[Claudius] finished the drainage canal, which was three miles in length, partly by leveling and partly by tunneling a mountain, a work of great difficulty requiring eleven years, although he had 30,000 men at work all the time without interruptions. He constructed the harbor at Ostia by building curving breakwaters on the right and left, while before the entrance he placed a mole in deep water. To give this mole a firmer foundation he first sank the ship in which the great obelisk had been brought from Egypt, and then securing it by piles built upon it a very lofty tower after the model of the Pharos at Alexandria, to be lighted at night and guide the course of the ships." (From Suetonius, *Life of Claudius* XX)



**From the Classics Links Page:**

home.surewest.net/fifi/index50.html

Who's up for a field trip to Waltham, Mass.? I sure am--at least to get out of the air-conditioned ice-box some buildings on campus have become. We'll take a trip to the the Mezzanine level of Goldfarb Library at Brandeis University in Waltham, where there's a clay model of the Forum in 179A.D., at the close of the reign of the good emperors. It took two and one half years to complete for Robert Garbisch, a firefighter from northern California, who has an interest in Roman history and model construction. There are over 720 Roman citizens living in this model and carrying on with their lives. Garbisch made the model to show the day in Rome when Marcus Aurerlius last visited Rome in the summer of 179 AD (932 AUC). Several of the items put in the model are from educated guesses; but when Garbisch visited Rome, he found one of the items he had placed in his model on guesswork, a circle game pattern reported to be engraved on the Forum pavement, was just about in the exact same place where he had placed it. Garbisch has incorporated two modern day businesses into his model, McDonalds and Baskin Robbins. If Waltham is too far, at least check out this site for more photographs of the model. (Photo above taken from the website.)

**The Curiosity Corner**

*Though a country boy, the Bard had a superb command of the classics. In anticipation of final exams, I recommend to the fainthearted this excellent tutorial from Shakespeare's THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR, Act IV, Scene I:*

- SIR HUGH EVANS:** What is he, William, that does lend articles?
- WILLIAM PAGE:** Articles are borrowed of the pronoun, and be thus declined, Singulariter, nominativo, hic, haec, hoc.
- SIR HUGH EVANS:** Nominativo, hig, hag, hog; pray you, mark: genitivo, hujus. Well, what is your accusative case?
- WILLIAM PAGE:** Accusativo, hinc.
- SIR HUGH EVANS:** I pray you, have your remembrance, child, accusative, hung, hang, hog.
- MISTRESS QUICKLY:** 'Hang-hog' is Latin for bacon, I warrant you.
- SIR HUGH EVANS:** Leave your prabbles, 'oman. What is the focative case, William?
- WILLIAM PAGE:** O,--vocativo, O.
- SIR HUGH EVANS:** Remember, William; focative is caret.
- MISTRESS QUICKLY:** And that's a good root.

**T-Shirt Design Needed!!!**

The First Annual *Iliad* Marathon Reading is looking for a T-Shirt design especially from Classics students for its event. This event is a two day reading of the entirety of the *Iliad*. The T-shirt should have at least the following information:  
Dates: April 27-28, 2006  
Location: on the mall or Constantine Garden University of Dallas  
Also on the shirt in Classical Greek should be the opening lines of the *Iliad*- How many is up to you. You may also include other images, e.g. the Shield of Achilles, a Trojan soldier, a god, etc. It is totally up to you. The design is only for the front of the shirt and it will be a single color (black) on a white cotton shirt.  
Send the designs in a word document to: williamgeisler@hotmail.com . The best design submitted will be used and that person will be credited in the *Iliad* program and will be able to point out this shirt when worn by UD students to all their friends!!!  
Please call 972-983-1816 or email williamgeisler@hotmail.com with questions.

**Games, Ancient and Modern by T.D.**

We don't know a great deal about Greek and Roman games, but what we have discovered shows that some of our games are older than what you might have guessed. For instance, we have a description from the second century A.D. of a game called "Bronze Fly." Today we call it "Blind Man's Bluff." We know they played a board game called πεττεία. It was divided into squares and the game consisted of moving the pieces in such a way as to surround the pieces of the other player. We also know there were a tremendous number of ball games, including ἐπίσκυρος, which may have been an early form of rugby. There are pictures of what look like players wielding hockey sticks, and the Spartans played a game best described as an ancient equivalent of airsoft or paintball. For more information, check out Walter S. Hett's *The Games of the Greek Boy*, available on JSTOR.

Quattuor aequales currunt ex arte sorores  
sic quasi certantes, cum sit labor omnibus unus;  
et prope sunt pariter nec se contingere possunt.

This riddle is from Symposius, the name given to the author of 100 riddles written in hexameter verse, probably in the 4th or 5th century A.D. Turn in your answer to the Classics department.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Class: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
The answer to the riddle is: \_\_\_\_\_



**Book Review from the Classics department library**

AP Latin Literature and Latin: Vergil Released Exams 1999

This thin little book has not gone unnoticed, though maybe it deserves less attention than some of our more stellar volumes. Nevertheless, the selections from students' AP Latin exams, together with their grader's comments, is somewhat interesting and may be helpful especially for people thinking of teaching Latin/Greek at the high school level, to see what is in store for them. For example, the students were asked translate a passage from Horace's Ode 1.25 literally. The booklet gives three students' translations, with commentaries on each translation ranked in order of the quality of their translation. A really ambitious person might have fun systematically categorizing the students' errors and presenting some scheme for correcting them. Come by the Classics department library for this and other texts.