

Government Regs Hamstring the Soapbox!

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SQUEAK-SQUEAK . . . SQUEAK-SQUEAK . . . SQUEAK-SQUEAK . . . announces the new digitally enhanced moniker. The proverbial soapbox is in the building.

Apparently an apology is in order for certain disparaging remarks this editor made in a recent October 2011 editorial, "The Soapbox is Back . . . But New and Improved." It has been learned that both dyslectic out-of-work sport-shoe/cappuccino designers and motley GED cheaters are seemingly disadvantaged members of federally protected groups. Who would have thought? Who could have known?

Being fully cognizant that such ignorance of the law cannot be used as an excuse, I extend my deepest and most sincere heartfelt apologies for exposing those respective assemblages as something they claim not, even though voluminous evidence unequivocally trends toward the existence of total incompetence and overwhelming ineptitude. To all I have offended, I am so sorry! Now, get over it and buck it up!

One member of the dyslectic contingency informed that I was totally off base with my claim of "right-hand rule." The barista cited that there are indeed standards for cappuccino steam frothing valves, and that if I were anything but a moron I would have noticed that the pitcher of milk is in my right hand while it is indeed the left hand that controls the valve; ergo, it is a left-handed valve, as such, specifications dictate *lefty tighy-loosy righty*. Really, how can you argue with that line of logic, as convoluted as it may be? Which reminds me of a long past editorial where I made fun of some guy stuck on a Mobius strip because he couldn't find an exit. I guess he is still there, or is not federally protected, because he has yet to file a complaint or ask for an apology. Whatever! My guess he's still stuck there!

To slightly recap, *anything but a moron*? Please! One step up from imbecile, but only two up from an idiot! Since ignorance can be no excuse, and I now refuse to cut any slack to either the out-of-work designers or motley cheaters, a quick Internet check for moron finds several AMAs, one being the Ambidextrous Morons' Association. Since we are dealing with an organized group of self proclaimed dyslectics, it can easily be seen how the purest of symmetry could cause vast confusion between that AMA and the others.

But whatever, it is supposed that morons are yet another protected group; as such and quite frankly, for one protected group to purposely make fun of another, just to reinforce their own inadequacies, is like the pot calling the kettle black. (HmMMM, pot/kettle

may be good fodder for a future missive.) The pot making fun of the kettle's color is in my opinion much more egregious than the meager, and unknowing, infraction committed by this lowly contributing editor. I, on the other hand, will not threaten retribution toward the parties nor issue a demand for either of the slacker groups to publish an apology to the morons. Personally, I think the problem simply stems from dyslectics being dominant over cheaters, and both being jealous of ambidextrous morons. Don't know for sure, just an opinion. What is to be jealous? Possibly the pure symmetry of being ambidextrous? The dominance of a *homo sapiens* having inwardly opposed thumbs of equal superiority? Whatever!

Some readers requested to learn more of the box's recent rehabilitation process alluded to in that previous editorial. Thank you for asking. As I am sure you remember, the box was in the purest of original states. Perfectly preserved from the days of colonial America. So much so in fact, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places; as such, it was grandfathered from certain present-day issues. However, given the seriousness of its existence, some idiot thought it best to appoint a nine-member blue ribbon panel, just shy of a super committee, to investigate various enhancement options. After slight dissension, the panel devolved a bit to a red ribbon committee, followed by a yellow ribbon group, and finally rendered to somewhat of a green assemblage.

This painstakingly difficult study left no rock unturned, so much in fact, that haystacks across the country are no longer safe havens for needles. All issues were on the table at one time or another, unless they were not. The remaining issues reportedly had never been on the table, under the table, or even near the table, but were held in an adjacent room for consideration by remote viewing; thus, allowing plausible deniability to those who would need to claim that they had neither seen, nor ever heard of, any such issues. After much deliberation, a unanimous decision was made by the sole remaining member. The assemblage of one made a recommendation to forgo the box's lengthy historic fabric, its actual reason for oratory existence, and schedule the box for full rehabilitation in the name of *government-mandated* eco-friendliness and safety.

The box's wood was very well preserved due to the soap it had once contained, and the surface had grown to a wonderfully worn, rich and silky smooth patina, but it was obviously susceptible to fire. Old, dry, brittle, much like this alleged moronic

editor. Independent studies confirm that retained soap of unknown origin could in fact enhance the level of fire, not to mention release numerous yet-to-be-determined chemical compounds. The nature of such compounds would have to be fully investigated and individually listed if the box would ever stand half a chance of traveling to, or even through, certain unnamed states. Unfortunately, such would be a destructive test.

The first recommendation issued by the "panel → committee → group → assemblage → sole remaining member," more simply identified as PCGASRM, was to replace the original wood with the latest new-fangled *fortified glass wood*. Reportedly a tad tough on tools during construction, but no more worries of fire. Ditto for bugs and rot. Assumed ditto for mold and mildew. Of course, PCGASRM's recommendation does come with certain ramifications and consequences; mainly, necessitating that all box systems become code compliant, including the need for a fire suppression system. Ironic, don't you think? A fire suppression system required for something that will not now burn? Unfortunately, sometimes the deepest vetting is not deep enough. It was too late learned that PCGASRM was extremely conflicted, not only by being a lobbyist for the fortified wood industry, but also by being a sales rep for both woodworking tools and fire suppression systems. Go figure. Vetting? If beauty is only skin deep and ugly goes clear to . . . yada, yada, how deep do you have to go for vetting?

There is no stopping a snowball once it starts to roll down a bureaucratic hill. Look, there are avalanche warning systems for ski areas, so how about giving us little guys a grant to develop a snowball warning system for the slopes of bureaucracy? Due to said bureaucratic hill, additional considerations had to be factored into the box's upgrade, which is polite speak for *mandated*.

In addition to fire suppression, upgrades had to include – new, high-strength, low-mass, non-skid, non-reflective, no-rust deck plate; attached with high-strength, non-stripping, auto-torque locking devices; non-slip treads; stainless steel hand rails mockingly painted safety yellow; safety chain; safety tape; safety reflectors; safety stickers; warning stickers; caution stickers; danger stickers; pot stickers; non-glare reflective tape; tip-over warning system; mind-altering, low-overhead warning system; it-will-do-in-a-pinch warning system; wheel locks; wheel chocks; wheel self activated stops for the chocks; no-chock warning indicator; missing chalk board eraser indicator; over-chocking warning; under-

chocking warning; over-under-sideways-down warning; three brand spanking new teleprompters positioned l-r-c; plus onboard stowage for five spares in the concealed escape compartment with fail-safe internal release latch leading to a self-contained bioenvironment, complete with mandated cartoon notification for employees to *wash hands before returning to work*; tamper-proof, permanently mounted, self-locking desiccant filled, mold-proof, bulletin board with all the federal/state/local mandated postings chronologically organized by alphabetized regulatory agency protected by low-e, argon-filled, bulletproof glass with prominently affixed sticker attesting that *under penalty of law access is by authorized personnel only*. All this must be powered by the latest self-contained, greenhouse gas saver, low-voltage, high-amperage, fuel cell run with the bloviator's own self-produced methane, complete with odor reduction non-flare excess methane collection and

compression storage system. And so the BOX was reborn! The Ultimate Box, the UBOX. Again, thanks for asking.

Now, as fashionable, slick, flashy, full of pizzazz, and code compliant as the box has become, it is, in my humble opinion, no longer really a soapbox. Not to sound disrespectful of everyone's fine efforts, but it seems more like any dime-store high-tech throwaway podium with an incomprehensible user's manual published on 90% recycled paper of unknown origin in 27 languages by an author of unknown linguistics, but not really a soapbox, and certainly not "The Soapbox."

We all have to roll with change (pun knowingly intended). Change, or the politically popular "reform," is inevitable. Sometimes positive and sometime not so much. Sometimes desired, sometimes self initiated, sometimes necessitated, and sometimes, well . . . sometimes just plain mandated by groups with little or no cognitive power, and

with so little foresight that there is no clue of unintended consequences.

As a never-wavering, dyed-in-the-wool pragmatist, I miss the old box. It was indeed a soapbox. A real soapbox. It was simple, uncluttered, somewhat battered around the edges, but functional after all these years, full of character, full of history, full of accomplishments, handed down from one distinguished orator to another by a simple handshake with a humble request to respect the box and never, never, never oil the casters. Maybe those antique pickers on the cable TV will be able to find me a new, dust-covered "old one" stashed away in some old barn.

Let the SQUEAK, the real unlubricated SQUEAK, be with you. Any similarity to real persons, places, boxes, or events is purely coincidental. Have a great day. **SV**

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