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**TRIPLE THREAT — FRIDAY THE 13TH
FALLS THREE TIMES IN 1998**

DAYTON, Ohio — The first Friday the 13th of 1998 came and went in February without much fanfare, but there are still two more in March and November.

Having three Fridays falling on the 13th in one year is causing more triskaidekaphobia (fear of the number 13) than usual, says Jim Farrelly, an English professor who has taught literature and the occult classes at the University of Dayton for 25 years. This is the first three-fold Friday the 13th year since 1987.

"Thirteen is associated with the unknown," says Farrelly, who explains that primitive counting tables stopped at 12, the limit that could be counted with 10 fingers and two arms. Thirteen is seen as an incomplete number, he says.

Thirteen is also associated with the Last Supper, he says, citing the superstition that says "13 at table — one at least will die before the day dawns" although it obviously took more than a day for Jesus' death.

The negative association with "Friday" stems from the word's origin which comes from the Norse Goddess Freya, who was reputed to be a vengeful witch, he says. When you put the two together, the superstitious look forebodingly at Friday the 13th, Farrelly says.

Western culture is distinctive in placing negative associations with the number 13, according to Farrelly, who cites examples in literature from William Butler Yeats and Henrik Ibsen. In the fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty*, the king invites 12 wise women to share their wisdom with his daughter. It's the uninvited 13th wise woman who puts the spell on the princess.

Architects often skip 13 when numbering floors in a hotel. And for fortune tellers who use tarot cards, drawing the death card as the 13th card makes for an ominous fortune.

This year's third Friday the 13th in November is being seen as a glimpse into the millennium, Farrelly says. "That day is being construed by astrologers and numerologists as a prophetic sampler for what the end of the world will be like." he says.

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Friday the 13th always brings high expectations of doom, but the outcome never meets the predictions, he says.

The origin of many superstitions comes from a simple precaution for behavior, Farrelly says. For example, the well-known superstition about breaking a mirror was probably started when mirrors were expensive to replace, he says. A company owner might have told his workers that they would have seven years of bad luck if they broke a mirror, Farrelly says. "That's how superstitions take hold."

Friday the 13th has become a cultural icon since the release of the horror movie series of the same name, Farrelly says. "The media explosion has saturated us," he says.

The day, which was once dreaded, is now looked at with humor and is seen as an excuse for human error, according to Farrelly. When anything bad happens on Friday the 13th, it can always be blamed on the day, he says.

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