

MORE MIDDLE NAMES

JEFF GRANT

PAT GRANT

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Inspired by Bill Webster's list of nearly 100 centrally imbedded personal names in the August 2001 *Word Ways*, we decided to search for more examples.

To refresh your memory, the given name must be entered in a dictionary word. Unlike Bill, we were not overly concerned with the length of the word. However, just to establish a record for the longest word (albeit a non-dictionary one) with a name in the middle, here is a superb 51-letter example from *Headlong Hall*, by T.L. Peacock, published in 1816. This term, used to describe the structure of the human body, also appears in Dmitri Borgmann's 1965 book *Language on Vacation: osseocarnisanguineoviscERICArtilaginonervomedullary*.

Is the fortuitous position of ERICA at the heart of Peacock's clever construction simply chance? Or did she maybe have some particular significance to the author?

Most of the words on our list can be found in the Chambers Dictionary (1998), and the personal names are taken mostly from *What to Name the Baby* by Evelyn Wells (1946).

We were able to find examples for names beginning with every letter of the alphabet, the hardest being X, Y and Z. In fact X had us stumped until the word seXENArY (meaning sextuple) came to light in Webster's Second (1934).

While recording additions to the list, four possibilities occurred to us for extending the collection:

- Further searching would probably yield another 100 centered names quite easily. To start the ball rolling, here are half a dozen four-letter examples from A to F: isABELLa, abBESSes, sCATHe, meDALEts, bEWENT, preFRANKed.
- Using bigger dictionaries and different name books.
- Including phrases like guarDIAN Angel or paST EVENts.
- Adding humorous coinages such as crEDIT Hog (a bankcard addict), uNIGELd (to half castrate), and teNORMANia (Pavarotti frenzy). Actually, this could make an interesting separate article.

A special case of the centered name occurs if the name is removed and a word left behind, for instance when ARCH is taken out of SEARCHED the word SEED is left. (This is called a Word Deletion by the National Puzzlers' League.)

Our final list has 103 entries, which combined with Bill's original 99 makes a grand total of 202. There are many nice specimens in the collection, but two of our favourites are ALIENATED (title for a TV sitcom?) where ENA comes between ALI and TED, and SASARARA where SARA disappears only to be replaced by a clone.

The longest new name is the seven-letter HEATHER (our daughter), and there are four new sixes, including EDWARD and ELAINE (Jeff's parents) and JUSTIN (his nephew). A word with JEFF in the middle looks impossible. We nearly found one for PATRICIA, though; Webster's Second lists unPATRICIAN, but only as an adjective (frustrating!).

crAGGIEst	fERNIEr	adJUSTINGs	diRENEss
unbALANced	pERVING	drunkenness	pyREXia
chALLENge	jESTERs	sKITs	fRICHt
gALLIEs	lEVANt	baLANCErs	tROLANDs
explANAtion	oFAYs	compLEXness	pyROLYze
evANGELic	leGALEse	parLIAMent	baRONAge
rANGIEr	vaGINAtE	visuaLISAtions	uSAGEs
seARChed	reGRANted	reaLIZing	baLSAMing
exhAUSTINGly	arGUSEs	fLUKEd	saSARArA
sunBEAten	unsHEATHing	formALize	reSIANce
viCARAge	sHEATHERs	formATTing	alTARAge
isoCHASmic	vigILAnte	cliMAXing	deTERRing
pitCHERful	fINGAN	anNEALed	alTESSEs
garDENing	fashIONable	paNELled	laTEXes
incanDESCence	vIRAl	subNORMAlly	pectINAted
reDESIGN	laIRISed	sOLIVEs	hISTORICAL
anecDOTally	confIRMAtion	collIER	deSTROYing
pEARLY	legISLAted	zOONAl	fortUNAtely
bEDWARDs	lIVORs	coPIER	deVALue
dELAINERs	hiJACKed	egOTISTs	cleVERNess
rELIC	yoJANAs	sPAULd	eVICTORs
fELLED	serJEANtry	compETence	conVIVial
shELLIEst	oJIME	toxophilites	tWILLIEs
aliENAted	joJOBAs	pasQUINade	seXENArY
cERING	paJOCKEs	deFRAYing	roYALeTs
	enJOYed	dREGs	gaZEBos

Editor's note: in a separate study, Susan Thorpe identified 38 embedded names of six or more letters, only four of which are duplicated in the Grants' list:

- 6: hALBERTs, mALISONs, cAMELIAN, pANTHEAN, exhAUSTINGly, inCLAUDent, unrELISHAbLe, rEVELYNg, tHESTERs, prIMOGENit, DISRAELi, choLESTERols, pLOTTIEs, collUCIANist, hoMORGANic, caMORRISTs, eNORMANd, toLIVERs, boLIVIAN, crABBIEr\$, hysterotrACHELorrhaphy*, brANDLEs, dREGGIEr#, metROLANDers, myROSINAsE*, schiSANDRACEAE+, diSORCHARD, BURsULAE*, eVICTORs, swALTERs
- 7: grADELINEss, bALISTERs, sANTONIAN, rhaBARBARAtes, exCANDIDate, inCLEMENTly, sHEATHERs
- 8: evANGELICALs

*All are in the OED except *Stedmans Medical Dictionary, +A Dictionary of the Flowering Plants & Ferns, CUP 1966, #Collins English Dictionary 1998, \$New Oxford Dictionary of English 1998*