

KICKSHAWS

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DOGGY AND KITTY PALINDROMES

The following palindromes are excerpted from Rich Lederer's newborn A TREASURY FOR DOG LOVERS and A TREASURY FOR CAT LOVERS (Howard Books October 2009).

20 canine palindromes:

REX: I'M A MIXER.

SALT A PUP, ATLAS.

PAT A DOG. GOD -- A TAP.

DOGS HARASS SARAH'S GOD.

STARK RABID, I BARK, "RATS!"

A DOG? A PANIC IN A PAGODA!

GODS RIDICULE LUCID IRS DOG.

GOD! NATE BIT A TIBETAN DOG.

TEN ALPO DOGS GO DO PLANET.

GOD! A NOTE, O POET, ON A DOG.

DRAW PUPIL'S PUP'S LIP UPWARD.

"DOG," SIDES REVERSED, IS "GOD."

FOOL A POOR DOG. GO DROOP ALOOF.

GODDESSES SO PAT A POSSESSED DOG.

RISE, SIR LAPDOG -- GOD, PAL. RISE, SIR.

DOG AS A DEVIL NEVER EVEN LIVED AS A GOD.

GOD! A RED NUGGET! A FAT EGG UNDER A DOG!

DID I STEP ON DOG DOO? GOOD GOD! NO PETS! I DID!

"WARDEN IN A CAP," MAC'S PUP, SCAMP, A CANINE DRAW.

EVA, CAN I STAB ONE MAN'S DOG? GODS NAME NO BATS IN A CAVE.

ARE WE NOT DRAWN ONWARD, PUP, DRAWN ONWARD TO NEW ERA?

12 feline palindromes:

STACK CATS.

TACKLE ELK CAT.

WOE ME: "MEOW!"

WAS IT A CAT I SAW?

PURR. IT'S A STIRRUP.

SO, CATNIP IN TACOS?

WE MOOCH, COO, MEW.

NO, SIT! CAT ACT IS ON.

REP PUSSY ASSAYS SUPPER.

SENILE FEMALES. RODNEY AWAY, ENDORSE LAME FELINES.

PUSS, A LEGACY RAT IN A SNUG, UNSANITARY CAGE, LASS UP.

ARE WE NOT DRAWN ONWARD, TACO CAT, DRAWN ONWARD TO NEW
ERA?

CALENDROMES AND OTHER WORDPLAY

Rich sent the following three items about current events.

(1) Most readers of WORD WAYS know that the second day of this year -- 01/02/2010 -- read the same forward and backward. The next such date will wink out at us on 11/02/2011, and the next such January 2 will not occur for another 10,000 years -- 01/02/12010. Mirror-image dates are commonly called numerical palindromes. I suggest a more compact sobriquet -- *calendromes*.

(2) The Christmas bomber trained for his dastardly deed in Yemen, and news comes that Al Qaeda in Yemen is planning another attack on the United States. No surprise, then, that an anagram of YEMEN is ENEMY.

(3) In Andre Agassi's new autobiography, OPEN, the tennis legend reveals that he took crystal meth. A better title for the book would have been THE AGASSI AND THE ECSTASY.

EMBEDDED RELATIONS

According to Susan Thorpe: "When one word is embedded in another word, the two words are sometimes related. In pRUNing, RUN is embedded in PING - occasionally when we RUN, the result is the PING of snapping tendons!" She wonder if readers might come up with any examples.

Other such relations include:

fINNed – one gets FED at the INN

sHIPway – HIPS SWAY don't they?

pAPERy – what did the APE do? PRY!

In yet other cases, the entire word is drawn into the relationship:

complIcATED – the CAT is COMPLICATED but this one COMPLIED

sneeZEEd – the EWE SNEEZED at the SNEEZEWEED plant

erRATic – the pet RAT called ERIC had ERRATIC behaviour

fLEAPit – those who LEAP out of the FLEAPIT must be FIT!

CINEMATIC ANAGRAMS

Mike Morton sent numerous anagrams for "Star Wars, Episode I: The Phantom Menace." [Copyright (c)1999 by the author, Mike Morton <mike(AT)mikemorton(DOT)com>. All rights reserved. You may reproduce this, in whole or in part, in any form provided you retain this paragraph unchanged.] Here are ten of Mike's Cinematic Anagrams, along with a bonus anagram set that is still funny after all these years.

Top Ten CINEMATIC Anagrams for "Star Wars, Episode I: The Phantom Menace":

-

10. Sweetish drama: poet, thespian, romance.
 9. And WHOSE metaphor isn't a masterpiece?
 8. Aesthete swept in epic drama: Rashomon
 7. Swedish cinema, anathema to "proper" set.
 6. Cinema as metaphor: Who isn't desperate?
 5. Eastwood: "I threaten perp, smash cinema"
 4. DeNiro: "Mean Streets" was macho epitaph
 3. Western cinema: The drama! Pathos! Poise!
 2. The essence: Adapt a timeworn aphorism.
- And the number one CINEMATIC anagram:
1. Rashomon epic: A witness met rape, death.

Top Ten CRITIC'S POSITIVE Anagrams:

-
10. Don't hiss... a metaphor, a new masterpiece.
 9. Dominant masterpiece: We share pathos
 8. Mandate praise: Shown hot masterpiece.
 7. Oh, a new masterpiece! Thespian stardom!
 6. Showman is adept: Another masterpiece.
 5. Now praise that handsome masterpiece.
 4. Portents show: I made a masterpiece, Han!
 3. Thespian was hot: A modern masterpiece.
 2. Repeat smash with adept Oscar nominee

And the number one CRITIC'S POSITIVE anagram:

1. Ripe drama! Sweet pathos! Honest cinema!

Top Ten CRITIC'S NEGATIVE Anagrams:

-
10. Somewhat poetic sneer: "Drama? Thespian?"
 9. What repeat Oscar nominee? Tepid smash.
 8. He means: adapt cheap, timeworn stories.
 7. Showpiece drama: Same rotten thespian.
 6. Metaphor doesn't wash in a masterpiece.
 5. Drama somewhat "epic"? Thespian to sneer.
 4. Masterpiece? Instead, shown a metaphor
 3. Mean, cheap, he adapts timeworn stories.
 2. A theme. A tempo. Not a "Cries and Whispers".

And the number one CRITIC'S NEGATIVE anagram:

1. Emphasis: A masterpiece? Rotten, and how!

Top Ten SCIENCE FICTION Anagrams:

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10. Martian: "We'd respect, hate homo sapiens"
 9. Happenstance is remote asteroid -- wham!
 8. Somewhat ardent hope: Martian species?
 7. Earthmen swear to dominate spaceship.
 6. Martian decree: "Homo sapiens? What pets!"
 5. Escape asteroid with smart phenomena.
 4. Earthmen eradicate snappish twosome.
 3. Homo sapiens met sapient hardware, etc.
 2. Martian species, somewhat death-prone.

And the number one SCIENCE FICTION anagram:

1. Sentient space-hemorrhoid ate a swamp.

Top Ten STAR WARS Anagrams:

-
10. Einstein's memo: We approach Death Star

9. Nine episodes? What, me, a Mr. Catastrophe?
 8. Empire Death Star weapon: Macintosh SE?
 7. Worse epic: Death Star on amphetamines
 6. Someone panics: "What Empire Death Star?"
 5. Star wars, Episode One: Cheap MIT anthem.
 4. Misshapen mice now operate Death Star
 3. Media see hope: inane <http://starwars.com>
 2. A new epic: Homer Simpson ate Death Star
- And the number one STAR WARS anagram:
1. Death Star: Weapon? Metaphoric nemesis?

Top Ten WEIRD Anagrams:

10. Sweat, perspiration: a home-made stench
 9. A chemist: "We eat Pert shampoo-and-rinse"
 8. Demonstrate each passionate whimper.
 7. Who hasn't impersonated a masterpiece?
 6. Homo sapiens: a pathetic Western dream.
 5. Meet sado-masochist partner; "Whee! Pain!"
 4. Sheep escape Martha Stewart dominion
 3. Wit. Dross. Amphetamines. Peace on earth.
 2. We'd erase a pathetic h. sapiens: M. Morton.
- And the number one WEIRD anagram:
1. A dream tempts: caress a Winnie-the-Pooh

Top Ten POP CULTURE Anagrams:

10. American Pie: pathos, Don M.'s sweetheart
 9. Madonna: Sweatshirt. Pope: Cashmere tie.
 8. Pimped to America's sweetheart, Hanson.
 7. Media newscast: "Teen hair? Pert Shampoo!"
 6. Detest a heretic, a pawn, a Homer-Simpson.
 5. Princess Diana: "What pathos! Meet o'er me."
 4. Death Star opponent: Miss America! Whee!
 3. "I am somewhere in space"? That doesn't rap!
 2. Ah, woe! Ed McMahon, persistent parasite!
- And the number one POP CULTURE anagram:
1. Hope: Escape Martha Stewart dimension

Top Ten HISTORICAL FIGURE Anagrams:

10. Caesar, Eisenhower, Patton... amidst hemp?
9. Homer: "Archimedes wasn't a sapient poet"
8. Descartes: "I am this Promethean weapon"
7. Homer, Descartes, Tom Paine: "What a penis!"
6. Isaac Newton asserted: "Ahem... I'm prophet"

5. Dante, Homer, Socrates: "Epitaph was mine"
 4. Dramas: Caesar. Tempest. Winnie-the-Pooh?
 3. Homer, Hippocrates mandate new siesta.
 2. Tom Paine: He posts American watershed
- And the number one HISTORICAL FIGURE anagram:
1. Isaac Newton: 'Perhaps theorist made me'

Top Ten POLITICAL Anagrams:

10. One pastime: Smash apathetic new order.
 9. Oh, American postwar emphasis: Detente.
 8. I see MP smash new, apathetic NATO order
 7. Emphasis enters the atomic era and... pow!
 6. Hope I smash American postwar detente.
 5. Smash new, posh order. Attain peacetime.
 4. Statesmen worship amid peace on earth.
 3. Ah, America's pastime... shopworn detente.
 2. China oppresses Taiwan -- moderate them.
- And the number one POLITICAL anagram:
1. I spawn peacetime: smash the NATO order!

Top Ten RELIGIOUS Anagrams:

10. He wants promise amidst peace on earth.
 9. America... we'd rant "Postpone the Messiah!"
 8. Atheist: "Smear Pope, Madonna, wee Christ"
 7. American Messiah (Protestant, we'd hope)
 6. Weep to repeat: "Madonna, Christ, Messiah..."
 5. Noah, Moses, Christ meditate, appear new.
 4. Esteem a wise Madonna, a prophet, Christ.
 3. Portent was dim: Messiah? Peace on Earth?
 2. Heed a prosaic New Testament aphorism
- And the number one RELIGIOUS anagram:
1. Catastrophe. Redemption. A new messiah.

Anagram Bonus -- a chronology of the Clinton-Lewinsky story,
told entirely in anagrams for "Star Wars, Episode I: The Phantom Menace"

Monica, President: atmosphere was heat.
A shame: Monica at the president's power
Ah, wet dream: Monica's phone-striptease.
Oh, wait! Sperm penetrates Monica's head.
Media path seen: sports... weather... Monica.
Impeach a president? Whoa, Senate storm.
Ah, the media repeat: News, Sports, Monica...
Oh, Ma! Pa! President's sweetheart: Monica!

America: "Oh, President! Senate! Wham! Stop!"
Monica: "Starr? He's the media's pet weapon."
What? Some senator? Impeach a president?
Whip at Senate: "Sperm adheres to Monica."
A warm season to impeach the president.

CHRONICLING THE APPLESAUCE

These quickies are from Louis Phillips's search for meaning in life through the exploration of humor in language. His ongoing collection of mini-writing is called *The Applesauce Chronicles*.

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Men, I'm Eminem.

*

DEAD MALES IN HADES ARE OFTEN RANDY

Shades
In Hades
Make raids
On ladies.

*

SWCHOITSCKHY == Blended Scotch Whisky

*

What does a hen with a broken wing have in common with Ozone in the atmosphere?

Both are damaged layers.

*

WHAT THE HUMAN RACE
RECEIVED FROM HELL

Dis sent
Dissent.

*

This final bite of applesauce is by Theodore Kaufman, a friend of Louis's:

"Can water whet the appetite?"

DISORDER IN THE COURT

Ray Love purloined the following from the web: "These are from a book called "Disorder in the American Courts", and are things people have actually said in court, word for word, taken down and now published by court reporters who had the torment of staying calm while these exchanges were actually taking place."

ATTORNEY: Are you sexually active?

WITNESS: No, I just lie there.

ATTORNEY: This myasthenia gravis, does it affect your memory at all?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: And in what ways does it affect your memory?

WITNESS: I forget.

ATTORNEY: You forget? Can you give us an example of something you forgot?

ATTORNEY: Now doctor, isn't it true that when a person dies in his sleep, he doesn't know about it until the next morning?

WITNESS: Did you actually pass the bar exam?

ATTORNEY: The youngest son, the twenty-year-old, how old is he?

WITNESS: He's twenty, much like your IQ.

ATTORNEY: Were you present when your picture was taken?

WITNESS: Are you shitting me?

ATTORNEY: So the date of conception (of the baby) was August 8th?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: And what were you doing at that time?

WITNESS: Getting laid

ATTORNEY: She had three children, right?

WITNESS: Yes.

ATTORNEY: How many were boys?

WITNESS: None.

ATTORNEY: Were there any girls?

WITNESS: Your Honor, I think I need a different attorney. Can I get a new attorney?

ATTORNEY: How was your first marriage terminated?

WITNESS: By death.

ATTORNEY: And by whose death was it terminated?

WITNESS: Take a guess.

ATTORNEY: Can you describe the individual?

WITNESS: He was about medium height and had a beard.

ATTORNEY: Was this a male or a female?

WITNESS: Unless the Circus was in town I'm going with male.

ATTORNEY: Is your appearance here this morning pursuant to a deposition notice which I sent to your attorney?

WITNESS: No, this is how I dress when I go to work.

ATTORNEY: Doctor, how many of your autopsies have you performed on dead people?

WITNESS: All of them. The live ones put up too much of a fight.

ATTORNEY: ALL your responses MUST be oral, OK? What school did you go to?

WITNESS: Oral.

ATTORNEY: Do you recall the time that you examined the body?

WITNESS: The autopsy started around 8:30 p.m.

ATTORNEY: And Mr. Denton was dead at the time?

WITNESS: If not, he was by the time I finished.

ATTORNEY: Are you qualified to give a urine sample?

WITNESS: Are you qualified to ask that question?

And the best for last:

ATTORNEY: Doctor, before you performed the autopsy, did you check for a pulse?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: Did you check for blood pressure?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: Did you check for breathing?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: So, then it is possible that the patient was alive when you began the autopsy?

WITNESS: No.

ATTORNEY: How can you be so sure, Doctor?

WITNESS: Because his brain was sitting on my desk in a jar.

ATTORNEY: I see, but could the patient have still been alive, nevertheless?

WITNESS: Yes, it is possible that he could have been alive and practicing law

STRANGE LETTERS IN GAMES MAGAZINE

The December 2009 GAMES Magazine has an article of mine in it. On some of the pages, there are huge letters as part of the design. Mike Morton wrote me to ask what the letters meant. Here is our email dialog:

MIKE: Just noticed the giant letters in the background: R d a c(?) f t k h — I give up?

DM: Those letters stand for: "Restricted, defined, amplified constraints form textually kinetic hypermeters." That's a line from James Joyce's *Ulysses*. It appears in Molly Bloom's soliloquy near the end of the book where she thinks about making love and writing poetry. It's followed by the initial letters placed as a single word--RDACFTKH.

Joyce liked doing that kind of thing. For instance, he used KMRIA earlier in the book to mean "Kiss my royal Irish arse." (Scroll down for more information, Mike.)

DM (cont'd): God, I'm a liar! I wondered what those letters meant, too, and since you asked, well, I didn't want to say that I didn't know, so I made up some high-falutin' mumbo-jumbo. Did you believe it?

MIKE: I absolutely fell for it; well done... had to look up KMRIA to see if you'd faked that, too!

NAMELY, ANAGRAMS

Here are some shorter anagrams from Mike, who says "All are mine, but Googling finds that the last of the three is not new..."

Oral Roberts
Terror. A slob.

Rupert Murdoch
He'd corrupt rum

Soylent Green
Stolen energy

WIKIPEDIA

Wikipedia, the "free online encyclopedia," has been at the heart of a few scandals recently, including a problem with one of the main editors, who had the power to edit delete people's entries. This particular editor believes in global warming, and he deleted more than 500 scientist's entries that presented information contradicting the global warming situation. Whether one believes in it or not, this type of editing is nothing more than censorship of the most blatant kind. Most Wikipedia editors don't have this all-powerful control of Wiki entries. Most editors are young, inexperienced people who enjoy having the power to determine whether an entry should be kept or dropped. Wordplay is a low priority item on Wikipedia. A much higher priority item is video games. Marshall McLuhan said "The medium is the message." With the web, the medium users make the message. The name WIKIPEDIA has wordplay concealed within, as shown in the two comments that follow.

Martin Schwartz: Wikipedia could mean "wicked children." "paideia from Ancient Greek paida 'children,' Modern Greek 'pedhia' (dh = the in trhen)."

Ove Michaelsen: WIKIPEDIA anagrams to I WIPE A KID.

BILL SACKTER RETURNS

The previous Kickshaws began with student bloopers from freshman papers on Bill Sackter, the man who was branded “subnormal” and placed in Faribault Institution for Imbeciles and Idiots, located in Faribault, MN. Here are a few more bloopers directly related to Sackter.

Bill’s story shows that you can’t take life for granite.

If you get above 50 IQ on the test then you were in the average learning angel.

Bill’s father died and the mother remained with 3 children and she became a grocery.

Bill became so famous in the city with his generosity, he became smatter to people.

Bill got the information and he went to visit them in the emergency room and he found the friend’s daughter was in a comma.

His father was a stream tress.

Bill’s mother decided to send him to Fairmount, Minnesota, to a Mental Institution, back then called an Institution for Idiots and Imbasols.

COINED PYRAMID WORD

Jeff Grant tells about a word among coins: “I was having a conversation with an old numismatist friend, Professor Dupondius, who collects Roman coins, such as the aureus, sestertius, solidus and antoninianus (double denarius). He recently commented: ‘I am not **antiantoniniani**, but my interests lie primarily with denarii, sestertii, and the gold aurei and solidi.’ My ears pricked up when I heard the coined (if you’ll pardon the pun) term ANTIANTONINIANI, a rare 15-letter pyramid word, containing one O, two T’s, three A’s, four I’s and five N’s. Similar coinages include Sir Jeremy Morse’s LINENLESSNESSES, states of being without linen, and TELETATTLETALES, TV gossip show hosts. Susan Thorpe found two 15-letter pyramid place-names - DJANNADJANNAIJA, a community in Indonesia, and BURABURARAKABRA, a stream in Guyana (WW, Nov 2003, p313).”

SCRABBLE QUIZ

Although I’m an amateur Scrabble player, I think the game of Scrabble could use more terminology, so I made up nine two-word terms, each beginning with the word “Scrabble.” The first on the list below is a real term—“Scrabble tile.” The rest are brand new. Can you fill in the blanks? Once you’ve done that, can you come up with any new terms that work the same way?

Scrabble _____ = a piece in a Scrabble game

Scrabble _____ = the extra work required to play a great Scrabble game

Scrabble _____ = the device that the Scrabble factory uses to imprint the letters

Scrabble _____ = a fee charged to be in a Scrabble tournament
Scrabble _____ = a story revolving around Scrabble
Scrabble _____ = the bag that the Scrabble letters are placed in
Scrabble _____ = the last letter played in a game of Scrabble
Scrabble _____ = the color of an antique Scrabble tile
Scrabble _____ = a full rack of Scrabble tiles played vertically on the board
Scrabble _____ = to talk about a Scrabble game

HALLOWEEN SCRABBLE

Jed Martinez has a haunting Scrabble story: “If you like Scrabble, then you'll love to hear this... On the October 28th meeting of Scrabble Club 276 - which I'm a member of - a special prize was given out to the player (in the first two of three games) who came up with the best word associated with Halloween (based on a voting procedure amongst all the attending members).

Prior to Game One, I drew a ghost on the whiteboard in the room (beginning with the word "BOO!" - the eyes of which became his eyes); and it was during that first game I came up with the word GHOST, which would inevitably become the word with the most votes! Weird, eh?!

Club President Sandee Bloom took my picture (with her digital camera) of me with said prize - a floppy teddy bear dressed up like a witch, holding onto a small bag of 'candy corn' - which would later appear in the Scrabble Club 276 website...

Two days later, I was going out for dinner with my brother Glenn at a buffet restaurant in Coral Spring. I'd brought along both the 'teddy bear witch' (sans the 'candy corn') and a special ('buy one, get one free') coupon for the restaurant. At one point, I'd accidentally left said coupon in his car, and was entering the eatery with the teddy bear! Catching my mistake, just in time, I went back to his car and made the necessary exchange.

After we'd paid for our order, using said coupon, who should we run into at the restaurant but Sandee (and two Scrabble Club members)!! She even had her digital camera with her, so she was able to show Glenn the picture she'd taken of me with the aforementioned 'teddy bear witch'.

One final thought occurred to me: Sandee attended the pre-Halloween meeting in costume that night... dressed up like a witch!! Now is that spooky, or *what?!?*”

AMUSE SEE ‘EM

For his creative writing class, which I mentioned in the last Kickshaws, Danny Morice wrote the following poem that uses wordplay.

An I males free
quaint the muse see 'em.

Ever read die exist tents imp life I'd.

Elle leg ant be east snow at piece.

Matte tic hue loss lye construct it in sides burr rot to gather
buy the blooper rant of lie huff.

Caged in crack et glass sand ma hog any
prize on
four evers till.

Cur wrist still eyes
the hat of void blink king pre-saint thee
I'm mortal falls I'm age of fair oh city.

Gnaw hot hunger reed en knee amor.

Pre-served tied tans
axe stinked.

Arose pedal blood draw pit bawdy dry.

I'm mow bile sells de cease din mob ill itty.

Know as arc
still born hearts give in two eat
turn all fax smiley.

New more us act shuns con solid ate sin the half tore life.

Wee
C the air end two
B one of
A zero inner
gee.

COMICAL COMMENTS

Ove Michaelsen sent a passle of funny statements from many different sources. His own are the comments without quotation marks.

ACCREDITATION

A disgruntled recording artist, whose name I will not disclose, considered including this comment in the liner notes for one of her CDs:

“Thanks to all who have helped me through the years to ensure that the number of names in my list of credits be kept to a bare minimum.”

ATTIRE

A friend to Dorothy Parker: “Isn’t your dress a little too young for you, dear?”

Parker’s reply: “Do you think so, dear? I think yours suits you perfectly. It always has.”

AUDIENCES

“I’ve played many rooms, and this was one of them.”

On inattentive audiences: Why waste good ink on poor paper?

“I’ve had a perfectly wonderful evening. But this wasn’t it.”

—Groucho (Julius) Marx (1890-1977), U.S. comic actor

“One of the more important aspects of public folk singing is audience participation... So if any of you feel like joining in, I’d appreciate it if you would leave.”

—Tom Lehrer (intro to “The Irish Ballad,” from his album Tom Lehrer Revisted)

I’ve seen more life in a mausoleum.

“The play was a complete success. The audience was a failure.”

—from “Pot-Shots” by Ashleigh Brilliant (1933-), English-born U.S. cartoonist

BAD LUCK and HARD TIMES

Opportunity once knocked at his door. It had the wrong address.

It’s an air-tight case, but he doesn’t stand a chance—he’s defended by Murphy’s lawyer.

At the end of a rainbow he found a pot of pyrite.

“He once had a near life experience.”

A would-be has-been.

You can bet he’ll never win.

When there’s a 30% chance of rain, it finds him, and he gets all 30% of it.

She took him in and helped him out (in a hurry).

His fate is sealed with a curse.

He suffers from an ongoing shortcoming.

He's always alone with someone new.

When it comes to money, he can't add nor multiply—only subtract and divide.

He told his shrink, "Give me one reason to live." The doc replied, "Okay, I'm stumped."

"He's as lonely as a pork chop at a kosher deli, or a tear at a lawyer's memorial."

He's rejected by even the losers. Rodney Dangerfield couldn't have used his material.

CHEAPSKATES

"He writes enormous checks—on her account."

He throws quarter tips around as if they're manhole covers.

—paraphrasing Dorothy (Rothschild) Parker (1893-1967), U.S. author and critic

"He would give you the sleeves off his vest." —George S. Kaufman (1889-1961), U.S. dramatist and journalist

COLD CUTS

"Remember the compliments you receive. Forget the insults. If you succeed in doing this, tell me how." —Mary Schmich (1954-), "Wear Sunscreen," from her column in the Chicago Tribune, June 1, 1997 (made into a book in 1998, subtitled "A Primer for Real Life"). The piece was widely circulated online, falsely attributed to author Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., "from a speech he gave at M.I.T." Ms. Schmich, a veteran journalist, has also been the writer for the comic strip Brenda Starr since the mid 1980s.

Many of these one-liners have been around for generations. Some are recent, and several of the sources were difficult to trace. Louis Safian, Evan Esar, Colin Jarman (the Guinness Book of Poisonous Quotes [1993]), and other compilers have published some cited here. A number of these were adopted or slightly revised by gag writers and humorists, or erroneously attributed to various celebrities. Some were written by their writers. Many of these lines were conceived by yours truly, but never used. I claim no responsibility for consequences that might occur to those who express their freedom of risking personal injury for using any of these lines in conversation.

"Don't insult a crocodile until you've crossed the river."

—Middle Eastern proverb

CORRESPONDENCE

It is said that a non-response is the ultimate snub. Here are some choice (printable) insults collected from letters.

“Excuse me for not answering your letter sooner, but I’ve been so busy not answering letters that I couldn’t get around to not answering yours in time.” —Groucho Marx

“I must decline your invitation, owing to a subsequent engagement.”
—Oscar Wilde

In response to an acquaintance who hadn’t written in a long time:

“I appreciated your letter, but of course, back then I was much younger and more impressionable.”

“Having the time of my life! Wish you were her.”

Richard Lederer passed along this anecdote:

It is said that British writer Rudyard Kipling earned about a dollar per word in the height of his career. An autograph hound tried in vain to get a signature from the author. In his final attempt, he sent this letter: “I see you get \$1.00 a word for your writing. I enclose a check for \$1.00. Please send me a sample.”

The author responded with an unsigned postcard containing only the word “Thanks.”

Gyles (Dabney) Brandreth, in his book *The Last Word* (1979), cited this quote by Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) from a letter to William Stahan:

“You and I were long friends; you are now my enemy, and I am
Yours,
B. Franklin”

Samuel Johnson [“Dr. Johnson”] (1709-1784), English critic, poet, and lexicographer, to an author who had sent him a manuscript for his comments:

“Your manuscript is both good and original; but the part that is good is not original, and the part that is original is not good.”

CRITICS

“Critics? I love every bone in their heads.” —Eugene (Gladstone) O’Neill (1888-1953), U.S. playwright

“A statue has never yet been erected to a critic.”

—Finnish composer Jean (Julius Christian) Sibelius (1865-1957), in response to English Critic Ralph Wood, who called Sibelius’s Seventh Symphony “a failure”

On an art critic: “He wouldn’t know a work of art from a LeRoy Neiman.” (He dubbed himself “America’s artist.”)

Songwriter/activist Malvina Reynolds (1900-1978), to me, in reference to a critic of her songwriting: “Where was HE when the page was blank?”

“I think critics are the reincarnation of the mobs that killed Christ.”
—Pete Cosey, lead blues guitarist for Electric Mud (1968) and other bands

DOLTS, ETC.

“A tendency toward density.” (or “a propensity for density.”)
—Lisa D. Schad

“So dense that light BENDS around him.”

“His ignorance is encyclopedic.”
—Abba Solomon Eban (1915-), Israeli politician

“If ignorance ever goes to \$40.00 a barrel, I want drillin’ rights on that man’s head.” —
Jim Hightower, on president George Bush’s policies

“I would like to take you seriously, but to do so would affront your intelligence.”
—William F. Buckley, Jr. (1925-), political commentator and author

(I’m) as dumb as pumice.

A polywonk.

There’s no hook on the end of his line.

The line is clear, but the phone’s off the hook.

“Why do you sit there looking like an envelope without an address on it?” —Mark Twain

“His memory bank is closed for deposits.”

“His reality check bounced.”

“His logic is so fuzzy you could knit a sweater with it.”
—Virginia Graham [Virginia Komiss] (1912-1998), U.S. talk show host and wit

“One loop shy of a full bowl.”

“There’s no grain in the silo.”

“One tree short of a hammock.”

“Not the sharpest chip in the woodpile.”

“He thinks Cheerios are donut seeds.”

There’s no butter on his toast.

He has the cleanest tools in the shed.

“One sandwich short of a picnic basket.”

Husband to his wife: “I have a thought.” His wife: “Congratulations!”

Sometimes he forgets to think, then doesn’t recall that he didn’t remember.

On a job application, under "Education Level," he wrote, "self-tot."

I wonder how many angels can dance on the tip of his head.

Moe to Curly:

"Please forgive him; the heel has no soul." —the Three Stooges

“She sits on the TV and watches the couch.”

—Michael Musto, columnist for the The Village Voice

(to be continued)

THE SMALLEST BOOK IN THE WORLD

Mary Jo Dane, a friend of mine, talks about a tiny tome: “My son Tristan found that a Canadian team created the smallest book - just got in the Guinness Book of World Records. Each page is 11 by 15 microns and can only be read using an electron microscope. It was laser-etched into crystalline silicon.” Her name, by the way, can be made into a spoonerism: Merry Jane Doe.

FOUR-LETTER-WORDS POEM

Ray Love composed the 4-letter-words poem below. It's about a loser who can't handle life, tries religion but that fails him, so he ends his life.

A SOPE OPERA

Dope!

Mope.

Cope?
Pope?
Hope?
Nope.
Rope!

NEWER MATH: LIMERICK ADDITION

Beginning in the early 1960s, New Math was introduced in grade schools. It emphasized mathematical structure through set theory and number bases other than 10. The principle idea was: If kids learned the axiomatic foundations of math, they could easily deal with math theorems later. Parents and teachers opposed it in America. They considered it to be too far outside the students' normal experience, and they thought it took time away from traditional math topics, like arithmetic. By the end of the decade, it was given an F for failed experiment.

Of course it failed! It didn't take an approach that kids would enjoy. It ignored the fact kids liked to play baseball, go swimming, tell dirty jokes, and do other things. The New Math was a complex exercise in boredom. In order to provide an alternative educational instruments, I've developed Newer Math, which is based on two principles: (1) Repetition is the mother of retention, and (2) limericks are hilarious math vehicles. The first unit in Newer Math is called Limerick Addition. The students learn math-based limericks by repeating them until they've learned them by heart. Here is how Unit 1 begins:

A one and a one and a one
And a one and a one and a one
And a one and a one
And a one and a one
Equal ten. That's how adding is done.

A two and a two and a two
And a two and a two and a two
And a two and a two
And a two and a two
Equal twenty. It's easy to do.

A three and a three and a three
And a three and a three and a three
And a three and a three
And a three and a three
Equal thirty. Just try it. You'll see.

A four and a four and a four
And a four and a four and a four
And a four and a four

And a four and a four
Equal forty. Now look at your score.

A five and a five and a five
And a five and a five and a five
And a five and a five
And a five and a five
Equal fifty. And that ain't no jive.

A six and a six and a six
And a six and a six and a six
And a six and a six
And a six and a six
Equal sixty. Such wonderful tricks.

A seven, a seven, a seven
A seven, a seven, a seven,
A seven, a seven,
A seven, and seven
Is seventy. Check out eleven.

An eight and an eight and an eight
And an eight and an eight and an eight
And an eight and an eight
And an eight and an eight
Equal eighty. Wow! That's really great!

A nine and a nine and a nine
And a nine and a nine and a nine
And a nine and a nine
And a nine and a nine
Equal ninety. Addition's so fine.

A ten and a ten and a ten
And a ten and a ten and a ten
And a ten and a ten
And a ten and a ten
Make one hundred. Yes! Right once again.

Eleven, eleven, eleven,
Eleven, eleven, eleven,
Eleven, eleven,
Eleven, eleven
Is one twenty one. You're in heaven.

Here's a preview of the next three units.

from Unit 2: Limerick Subtraction

A one minus one minus one
Minus one minus one minus one
Minus one minus one
Minus one minus one
Is negative nine. Less than none!

from Unit 3: Limerick Multiplication

A two times a two times a two
Times a two times a two times a two
Times a two times a two
Times a two times a two
Equals one thousand twenty four. Ooh!

from Unit 4: Limerick Division

Divide one by a one by a one
By a one by a one by a one
By a one by a one
By a one by a one,
It's still one! That's division. What fun!

Further limerick units teach squares, square roots, pi, complex numbers, geometry, trigonometry, calculus, and everyone's Halloween favorite, Boolean Algebra. Once the students have mastered the first four units, they discover that higher mathematics is as simple to learn as "There once was a girl from Nantucket."

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

"Even with unemployment being as high as it is," Bill Brandt states, "there are still a lot of job opportunities out there if you are willing to meet the challenges they entail." To prove his point, he lists the follow:

There is a job opportunity for an archeologist, but you need to be aware that your career may end up in ruins.

There is a job opportunity for a ballet dancer, if you are willing to stay on your toes.

There is a job opportunity for a barber, but you need to be prepared for some hairy experiences.

There is a job opportunity for selling bicycles if you are willing to peddle the merchandise.

There is a job opportunity as a burlesque dancer; however, the work is often a hard grind.

There is a job opportunity for a cardiologist if you are willing to work wholeheartedly.

There is a job opportunity for installing ceiling tiles; however you may find the work is over your head.

There is a job opportunity as a cook if you are willing to stir things up.

There is a job opportunity as an elevator operator, but you should be prepared for a lot of ups and downs.

There is a job opportunity for an executioner, but you may find it takes a while to get the hang of it."

There is a job opportunity for a farmer and although the work is harrowing you will have a good opportunity to be outstanding in your field.

There is a job opportunity as a florist; however, you should be aware the work isn't all a bed of roses.

There is a job opportunity for a judge, but you may find the work is trying.

There is a job opportunity as a masseuse, but you have to be careful not to rub people the wrong way.

There is a job opportunity for a mortician, but you need to be dead sure this is what you want to do because it is a grave undertaking.

There is a job opportunity for installing mufflers, but the work is often exhausting.

There is a job opportunity for an optometrist if you are willing to not make a spectacle of yourself.

There is a job opportunity at the pin factory, but you may get stuck with most of the work.

There is a job opportunity as a rodeo cowboy, but you'll have to buck for a promotion.

There is a job opportunity at the sausage factory; however, you will have to know how to make both ends meat.

There is a job opportunity for growing sugar if you are willing to raise cane.

There is a job opportunity as a taxi driver, if you think you can hack it.

There is a job opportunity for a weather forecaster, but you may find the work is not always a breeze.

There is a job opportunity for a wildlife veterinarian; however, you may end up walking around with a little bear behind.

There is a job opportunity as a window washer; however, although you can start at the top you may find the work is a pane.

There is a job opportunity as a fisherman, as long as you are not just there for the halibut.

GLOBAL LIMERICKING

Bill describes a recent project of his: "I thought I would try to write a few limericks. Once I got started it was hard to stop. When I did, I came up with the idea of "Around the World in 80 Limericks." Some tell a story, some try to be funny, and some required me to renew my poetic license. Although limericks have a reputation of sometimes being vulgar, I have tried to keep these more on the lighter side. The entire list is too long; nevertheless I would like to submit the following selections as a submission to Kickshaws."

There was a young lady from London
Whose lingerie often came undone.
Though she fiddled with bows,
And what else heaven knows,
But it only made watching her more fun.

There was a girl in Nantucket,
Who kept all her gold in a bucket.
But just as she feared,
The gold disappeared,
And now she believes her Pawtucket.

There was a young girl from the Bosphorus
Who bought all our stocks and bonds for us.
Right from the beginning,
Her selections were winning,
Making us all the more prosperous.

There was a young girl from Paraguay,
Who needed a scale but could not pay.
She went to the department store,
Found a scale, but wait there's more,
She stepped on the scale and then stole a weigh.

There once was a young girl in Rome,
Wearing socks, one pink and one chrome.
Was it strange did she think?
She said "No" in a blink,
"I've a duplicate pair back at home."

The last one is sort of a tribute to Ogden Nash and his poem "The Lama," which goes as follows:

The one-l lama
He's a priest.
The two-l llama
He's a beast.
And I will bet
A silk pajama
There isn't any
Three-l llama.

And here is Bill's "Lamerick," or "Llamerick":

There was a young girl in Peru,
Who wasn't sure just what to do.
The llama the beast,
And the lama the priest,
Should she spell them with one L or two?

THE BOYS OF SUMMER

Alan Stillson discusses last summer's victorious Yankee baseball team: "Rumor has it that the New York Archdiocese will be making some changes to celebrate the 2009 World Champion Yankees. These are:

- One of the Ten Commandments will be to honor the Sabathia
- The twenty-third psalm will be changed to read, "Thy A-Rod and thy pitching staff comfort me."
- The keys to the kingdom will be given to Saint Jeter.
- A popular catchphrase will be changed to "Mariano saves."

EVOLUTION OF AN OVERWROUGHT POEM

Louis wrote the following small poem with a big title...

WORRYING DAY & NIGHT
ABOUT BECOMING VERY TENSE
OVER ANGER BEING SHOWN
TO THE AUTHOR OF PORTNOY'S COMPLAINT

Overwrought
Over wroth
Over Roth.

He followed up on it with a similar poem...

WORRYING DAY & NIGHT
ABOUT DUTCH ELM DISEASE

Overwrought
Over rot.

When he showed the Overwrought/Over rot verse to his friend Morty Schiff, Morty responded with two of his own:

WORRYING DAY & NIGHT
ABOUT A NY GIANTS SLUGGER

Overwrought
Over Ott

WORRYING DAY & NIGHT
ABOUT NOTHING IN PARTICULAR

Overwrought
Over aught

Louis then emailed to me: "Maybe you'll add something we've overlooked." And so I tried, and the following poem is my reply:

WORRYING DAY & NIGHT
ABOUT BECOMING OVERLY TENSE
OVER THE OVERUSE OF "OVERWROUGHT"
IN POEMS THAT HAVE OVERTLY LONG TITLES
AND THAT USE THE WORD "OVERWROUGHT"
IN THE FIRST LINE AND TWO WORDS THAT
SOUND LIKE "OVERWROUGHT" (MORE OR LESS)
IN THE SECOND LINE AND SOMETIMES
EVEN IN THE THIRD LINE, OVERRESULTING IN
AN OVERABUNDANCE OF OVERACTIVE,
OVERAMBITIOUS, OVEREAGER, OVERANXIOUS,
OVERENTHUSIASTIC, OVERRIPE, OVERDEVELOPED
OVERPRODUCED, OVERSPECIALIZED WORDPLAY,
WITH APOLOGIES TO THE OVERFLOWING,
OVERACHIEVING OVERWRITER LOUIS PHILLIPS

Overwrought?
Over, out.

BOOKS READ YOU

To conclude this Kickshaws, here is a poem that's also a word-order palindrome. Its three-words-per-line structure made it easy to compose and also made it sound normal and unpalindromelike. That's one of the keys to creating normal-sounding palindromes—keep them short and sweet...

Books read you
Cooks feed you

Pages make you
Ages take you

Words write you
Birds sight you

You sight birds
You write words

You take ages
You make pages

You feed cooks
You read books

