

ROSS ECKLER: HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT "RETIRE" MEANT

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In the late 1980s, while writing two wordplay books, I discovered *Word Ways*. Ross was consistently helpful and generous in responding to my questions and assisting my research.

The books sold moderately well, but I discovered that it's difficult to make a living exclusively from puns, so I returned to my "day job" as a freelance advertising copywriter. Still, I retained my interest in recreational linguistics, and frequently thought about finding another venue for this consuming passion.

Thus it came to pass that I offered to write articles for *Word Ways* regularly. Ross agreed, observing that light, humorous pieces would provide some balance to the "heavier" technical essays that often seem to dominate the issues. (Not that there's anything wrong with those!)

I've contributed a wordplay article to every issue since February 2001, along with an occasional review and Kickshaw. One recurring feature suggested the idea for a new book. Because of Ross and *Word Ways*, I have another chance to become a Famous Author, disproving the aphorism that there are no second acts in American lives.

Over the years, Ross visited me on several occasions—I live in Manhattan opposite Lincoln Center—while he was in town to attend the ballet or meet family members. These encounters have been far too infrequent, but I've relished each opportunity to chat with him about matters logophilic.

The world of recreational linguistics will never have a better friend and advocate than Ross Eckler. Thanks, Ross, and congratulations. You are truly stowing in guile . . . er, going in style!

Don Hauptman, author of *Cruel and Unusual Puns* and *Acronymania*, speaks and writes on language and wordplay.