

KICKSHAWS

PHILIP M. COHEN
Aliquippa, Pennsylvania

Kickshaws is currently being assembled by a series of guest editors; all contributions should be sent to the editor in Morristown, New Jersey.

Caveat

'Cross-references' would probably be a better title for this column than 'Kickshaws', but I didn't want to go against tradition. Some symbols used in the cross-referencing: NI2 = Merriam-Webster New International Dictionary, Second Edition; NI3 = Webster's Third New International Dictionary; NI = NI2 and NI3; WW = Word Ways; NPL = National Puzzlers' League.

Taken out of Circulation

I belong to two circlets, round-robin letters that circulate among members of the NPL. In one letter, Jeanne E. Roman wrote 'The small daughter of a friend (seven years old) is quite bright. Reading aloud one day, she came to the word 'discourse', read it, and went on. I interrupted her to ask if she knew what the word meant. She shrugged and said, 'Well, if intercourse means you can "do it", I guess discourse means you can't.'

She also enclosed a dialogue of dwelling-place puns evolved with her son Richard:

J: VILLA MANSION sin?

R: Can you get to a CABIN the rain?

J: Will he LEAN-TO a HUT little number and SHACK up?

R: If he DIGS her and she's not too HOSTEL (or FLAT!).

J: HOUSE to make a choice? HOVEL he decide? I CHALET two-to-one he picks INN.

R: Will our announcing his intentions over the PIED-A-TERRE him?
It's APT. not to. But he should remember what Confucius said
ABODE it: Man who burns candle at both ends may find it hard to
keep his WICKIUP.

J: And if he can't, how is he TEPEE?

Mary J. Hazard writes: if you do something on a large scale, is that doing it in a big weigh?

Tangled Trigrams

One of the puzzles featured in the NPL's monthly publication, *The Enigma*, is the anagquote. This is a quotation divided into trigrams, which are alphabetized for the solver to unscramble given the word-lengths of the quote. Thus, 'The/ Fre/nch/ for/ Lon/don/ is P/ari/s' would be presented as ARI DON FOR FRE ISP LON NCH THE S (3 *6 3 *6 2 *5) (leftover letters go at the end). Now try these two quotes, one by Bob Muron in the January 1980 *Omni* and the other by Harry Hazard in the April 1975 *Enigma*:

EAR EEN ENO ESE IFY MAL NEN OUV THE UCL VES WAR YOU L
 (2 3'2 4 3 7 3, 3'2 4 4 3)
 ALE ANC ARI BOU CHE CKS DRI EDB EIG ELO GAR IBA LDL OON
 PLO PSS CUI RTS SHY SLO THA TUF TYD UCK VIE WSE XIT
 (1 4 7 6 5 5 3; 1 6 4 5, 7 3 5; 1 5 4 5 4)

Divine Madden-ness

Mary Ann Madden's *New York Magazine* competitions, now over a decade old, contain some of the funniest reader-generated quips I have ever read. I remember the time I read her first anthology, Thank You for the Giant Sea Tortoise: I was in the Library of Congress reading room, and I started laughing so loudly and uncontrollably that I had to run out. As I sat reading in an alcove, the laughter interfering with my breathing, a passing couple thought I was crying and came over to see if I was all right. Her second book, Son of Giant Sea Tortoise, was just as good, but I'm told it bombed in sales because nobody understood the title. Let's hope her third book, Maybe He's Dead (reviewed elsewhere in *WW*) doesn't die for the same reason.

The *New York* competitions may be the best, but they are not the only ones around. England has the competitions in *Punch* (long since replaced by cartoon-caption competitions) and *New Statesman* (the inspiration for the *New York* ones). *Potomac Magazine* in the *Sunday Washington Post* may still have them; *National Lampoon*, *Pittsburgh*, and the *Sunday Chicago Tribune Magazine* used to; so did *Damon Knight's* recently-defunct hardback anthology series, *Orbit*, beginning with *Orbit 16*. There are probably dozens of others I've missed.

More on Oxymorons

Since I raised the topic of self-contradictory terms like guest host, jumbo shrimp, and military intelligence (editorializing shows here), *WW* readers have responded with a dozen more: antepost, even odds, fast foods, growing small, light heavyweight, a little big, monopoly, negative goodwill, Noyes, pretty ugly, superette, underoverlooker. I was pleased to discover that the 27 July 1980 'National Challenge', the *Tribune's* competition, reported reader contributions to this topic. First prize went to divorce court and Greater Cleveland, and second prizes to peace offensive, cardinal sin, and United Auto Workers (more editorializing). I preferred some of the runners-up: flat busted, liquid

gas, original copy, rib joint, and standard deviation (my favorite). Less directly contradictory: closet claustrophobic (a contrived phrase?), constructive criticism, death benefits, diplomatic blunder, drag race, good grief, inside out, no-fault divorce, Prohibition Party, spendthrift, unbiased opinion, and unemployment compensation. I've noticed elsewhere half-completed, The Modern Primitives (an art book), turn up missing, and 'With your baby mine', a line from the song In the Good Old Summertime.

Fantastic Competitions

My favorite competition series is one that's been running about three times a year in The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction since November 1971. Not unnaturally, these have a science fiction/fantasy flavor; for example, the June 1975 one asked for unlikely SF novel collections. Even those who don't know thousands of SF story titles will, I hope, get something from my (unpublished) entry: Atlas Shrugged/Pity About Earth; The Day After Tomorrow/Martian Time-Slip/Now Wait For Next Year; Who Goes There?/Soldier, Ask Not; 102 H-Bombs/Close to Critical/The Great Explosion; All Right, Everybody off the Planet!/The Dispossessed; The Listeners/Bug Jack Barron; City of a Thousand Suns/Fire Time; Star Bridge/Three Hearts and Three Lions/Double, Double.

I submitted ideas for three competitions based on Kickshaws material: What's the Question in December 1976 (various Kickshaws in 1970-72), anachronisms from historical novels of the future in December 1977 (using Dave Silverman's May 1974 examples), and my favorite, excerpts from an alien lexicon in May 1974 (Brian Aldiss's 'Confluence' in November 1971). I liked the prizewinners less than some of the runners-up. Among others, E. Hunt proposed:

AMCI'SV - one responsible for the care and upkeep of natural laws
 ET'S'THU - to commit incest by means other than sexual intercourse
 N'L'YENDA - i. four days ago ii. four days hence iii. a politician
 R'STKY-TKY - i. the place where beginnings go ii. the spontaneous
 interchange of the populations of two or more cities
 ZL'AYNZE - i. to live as if one will die tomorrow ii. to live as if
 one had died yesterday iii. inedible pets

Competitions are Omnipresent

Yet another good competition series is the one in Omni Magazine. January 1980 had scientific graffiti and bumper stickers like 'Reunite Gondwanaland!' March 1980 had future brand names like O-Gee-Whiz Zero-Gravity Toilets. Perhaps the best so far, and certainly the most logological, was the one for 'designatures', words drawn to have curious properties. September 1979 set the competition with beautiful work by Scott Kim, including ways of writing UPSIDE DOWN and MOZART so that they remain unchanged when inverted, and a version of MERRY that becomes CHRISTMAS when reflected in a horizontal mirror. (Longtime readers of WW may recall John McClellan's mirror-

symmetric words and sentences in the May 1971 issue, but designations go several steps further than this.) The beauty of these designs is impossible to describe and too hard to reproduce here; look up the April, May and November 1980 Omnis, or wait for the book that Martin Gardner says will be published by Byte Magazine this spring as one of their new line of paperbacks.

Ask Guy Hoax Mock Chaff Examine Question Ridicule

The closest thing to an NI reverse dictionary -- one, that is, which lets you go from definition to word instead of vice versa -- is Thomas Pulliam and Clare Grundman's *The New York Times Crossword Puzzle Dictionary* (Quadrangle, 1974, 2nd edition, 1977). Here's a quiz by G. Hardy Ropes based on that book, presented at a regional meeting of the NPL held at Kingston, N.J. in November 1979. You are given all the synonyms for ten words in Pulliam/Grundman, and their lengths. What are the words? This quiz isn't easy; I scored only three on it.

1. churl clerk writer goodman guidman graycoat retainer befeater (6)
2. baff dump phut plod swag doyst flump pound squelch (4)
3. wit lore wisdom letters learning (9)
4. body stiff corpse carcass subject skeleton (7)
5. barmy spumy sudsy frothy spumose
6. reap store gather imbarn collect (6)
7. powhead bullhead polehead polliwog porwige (7)
8. sammy sappy soggy poachy draggled (6)
9. cry peep chirp cowry whine snivel whimper (4)
10. tutor pedant dominie squeers teacher thwackum (9)

Onomastic Wordplay

Louis Phillips of New York City remembers some 35 years ago a man named LEON NOEL in St. Petersburg, Florida. More recently, Joan Griscom of Ringwood, N.J. passed along the obituary of ANNA DANNA, a 93-year-old retired film editor, in the Bergen Record. Are there other naturally-occurring palindromic names? Dmitri Borgmann cites Revilo P. Oliver, a classics professor, in *Language on Vacation*, and he constructs several more. Some, such as MARY BYRAM or NELLA ALLEN, ought to be findable without too much difficulty. (In fact, the editor discovered LEON NOEL in St. Petersburg, New Orleans, Hartford, Dallas and Indianapolis telephone directories, LEO NOEL in Buffalo and Baltimore, and NELL ALLEN in Cincinnati, St. Louis and Phoenix -- but, alas, no MARY BYRAM.)

Some time ago, the editor noticed ASHLEY HALSEY in the 1980-81 *Who's Who in America*. Can anyone find other first and last names that are transposals?

In the November 1972 *W W*, Darryl Francis bemoaned the fact that YELLOW did not appear in a list of more than 100 color surnames in the London telephone directory. This omission has been rectified by the editor, who recently found two people with this surname in U.S. telephone

directories: Gloria Yellow of Minneapolis, and Harold Yellow of St. Paul. In passing, he also noted a bewildering variety of surnames beginning with Yellow-: Yellowbank (Chicago), Yellowboy (D.C.), Yellowcorn (Pittsburgh), Yellowday (Manhattan), Yellowdy (Baltimore), Yellowfish (Dallas), Yellowhair (Kansas City, Los Angeles), Yellowhorse (Houston, Phoenix, Los Angeles), Yellowlees (Atlanta, Phoenix), Yellowpaint (Suffolk Co.), Yellowpine (New Orleans), Yellowrobe (Los Angeles), and Yellowitz (Bergen Co., Sub. Maryland, Minneapolis). Of course, Yellow is common enough in other languages (German Gelb, Chinese Huang, etc.).

Recently, I discovered a curious asymmetry in directional surnames. The 1975 Chicago telephone directory, for example, has about 369 Wests, 42 Norths (quite a drop!), 22 Easts, and only 10 Souths. Is that typical? Yes, according to Social Security surname counts, which give (in thousands) 185, 20, 13 and 10 for these four names.

Kickshaviana Slavica

In my November 1979 Kickshaws, I expressed doubt that TOKAMAK was the longest word identical in English (Roman) and Russian (Cyrillic), since etymology would make it TOKAMA[†]. The Bol'shaja Sovjetskaja Entsiklopedija, however, confirms that the Russians do spell it TOKAMAK. Whew.

There are a few words that can be typed with only one finger on an English typewriter keyboard: Azaz, Qazaq; cede, ceded, decede, deceded, deece, deed, deeded, deeded, ecce, ece, Ed; grr; hum, Hun, hymn, juju, mu mum, mummy, muumuu, kiki; lo, loll, Lolo, loo. However, LeRoy Meyers notes, a Russian keyboard generates 50 or more Russian one-finger words. Most are typed by the left index finger, which controls six high-frequency Russian letters, transliterated E, N, A, P, M, I. (Do any of them beat the English record of seven letters?) Studies have shown that a different arrangement of the keys on an English typewriter, sharing the tasks more evenly between hands (at present the left hand does more of the work) could increase typing speed considerably. How much more this would be true for the Russians!

He adds another Russian curiosity: the prefix semi- means 'half' in words of Latin origin, but 'seven' in words of Slavic origin.

Go West -- About 500 Miles

Ed Wolpow invites you to guess the import of the following five vaguely logical sentences:

Try Telling Them, 'No, Sir', Raved Refs
 Harken: Vile Green Rye Pollen Falling
 Give Rude Tinning Hammer True Fitting Bonnet
 Lee Dons Odder Fur, Taps Ring, Strands Belle
 Rise, Humble Giver: Ask Manna, Fly Hemmed Haven

Answer: these 36 words are all the names of towns or locations in Denmark, according to Geodaetisk Instituts Kort: Danmark 1:200 000 (1973) Copenhagen, 26th Edition. There are nearly one hundred more Danish place-names that are spelled the same as English words. Of particular note were the near-misses: Basballe and Butterup -- sadly, there is no Batterup. (There is, however, an Underup.)

A Toponymic Trivia Test

Thomas L. Bernard writes that there are a number of places (nations, states, islands, etc.) in the world bearing names based on the names of individuals. When one considers the fact that these individuals had both first and last names, it is interesting to conjecture what the official designations would have been had the first name been used rather than the last one (or vice versa). Here are some examples of what might have become familiar names in the United States or on the map of the globe. Can you identify them?

U.S. States: 1. Bourbonia 2. Georgia 3. Hanoveria 4. Henrietta-land 5. Jamesia 6. Stuartia 7. Thomasia (or Westia) 8. WL
Foreign Place Names: 1. Abellia 2. Cecilia 3. Christopheria
4. Hapsburgines 5. Herculia 6. Juania 7. Simonia 8. Vespuccia

On Changing Light Bulbs

One of my favorite logological activities is listmaking -- for example, a list of words beginning with all 676 two-letter combinations. My listmaking is not confined to such hardcore logology projects, however; I also collect What's The Question? jokes, truncated proverbs ('familiarity breeds'), words occurring in book titles of the form The ---- Man (Bogey, Terminal, Invisible, Non-Statistical), etc. Recently, I began a new collection, light bulb jokes.

The archetypal Polish joke is 'How many Polacks does it take to screw in a light bulb?' What you may not know is that this has also become the archetypal light bulb joke, a template for jokes about any group you choose, sometimes with a little variation. (How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb? Only one -- but the light bulb has to really want to change.) I was going to present my collection and ask for more, but was forestalled by How Many Zen Buddhists Does It Take to Change a Light Bulb? (St. Martin's Press, 1980). I neglected to buy it and haven't seen a copy since, so I can only quote Forthcoming Books, which says it's \$3.95 but fails to give an author. I did look into it to find the answer to the title: two -- one to screw in the light bulb, and one not to screw in the light bulb.

Nothing to This One!

Mike Stueben asks: how many single English words can you find that are represented by, or represent, the symbol O? Variant spellings are allowed, but no words for which 'O.' or 'o.' is simply an abbreviation, like bone (os), object, oblast, ohm, etc. To start you off, I offer

'pint': O = pint goes with other apothecaries' measures that can only be called symbols, such as the ones for minim or dram, so it might be considered a symbol rather than an abbreviation (for octarius). There are probably more than 40 more.

Base 26 Update

Words can be regarded as base-26 integers, wherein letters represent the digits (A = 0, B = 1, . . . , Z = 25). My February 1977 article, "Base 26", gave a list of words that are squares when so regarded, the only five-letter example being the prefix IRIDO-, the square of CYO. Crossword puzzle 2526 in a November 1979 issue of The Listener was Sabre's "Base 26", which also uses base-26 arithmetic as one of its themes. The puzzle used 22 base-26 squares, 13 of which had five letters; this was possible only because he used an arbitrary letter/digit correspondence (I = 0, U = 1, K = 2, etc.). Less elegant, but still quite a feat.

Metric Wordplay

We've had metric wordplay in the February 1971 and August 1976 Kickshaws; I now find, in an interesting book called A Random Walk in Science (Crane, Russak & Co., 1973) that the 1 January 1970 issue of the NBS Standard anticipated most of our ideas and had a few other good ones. A quadrillionth of a bismol is a femto-bismol, a trillion bulls make a terabull (goes well with the nanogoat), and a fiftieth of a halfwit is centimental.

This is the Title of a Kickshaws Section

Self-descriptive words and sentences (autologs) like English, noun, self-descriptive, and proparoxytone have been a perennial topic in Kickshaws. Douglas Hofstadter's column in the January 1981 Scientific American deals with the broader and richer field of self-referential sentences. There is an interesting discussion of the mathematical aspects, but the main attraction is the sentences themselves. A sample:

As long as you are not reading me, the fourth word of this sentence
has no referent

What would this sentence be like if it were not self-referential?

This here sentence don't no english too good

Please publish me in your collection of self-referential sentences

Short Multisyllable Words

Frank Rubin of Wappingers Falls recently posed the following challenge to readers of Technology Review: find the shortest possible words of two, three, . . . , nine syllables, not allowing spelled-out words like PDQ and DDT, or proper names such as Ionia and Kania. TR readers came up with the following:

2 a/i

6 o/var/i/ot/o/my

3	ar/e/a	7	ep/i/de/mi/ol/o/gy
4	a/cu/i/ty	8	di/i/o/do/bu/ta/no/ic
5	ox/y/o/pi/a	9	ep/i/de/mi/o/log/i/cal/ly

All but diiodobutanoic appear in NI2 or NI3. Frank Rubin found an improved six-syllable word, o/ni/o/ma/ni/a, and the seven-syllable ones an/is/o/i/co/ni/a and ap/o/si/o/pe/si/a, the former in the Random House Unabridged.

This subject has already been explored by WW readers. In the February 1970 issue, Murray Pearce noted the Maori word o/i/i and the Hawaiian words a/al/i/i, i/li/a/u and la/u/i/a; however, the non-Websterian word i/e/i/e, cited in Mrs. Byrne's Dictionary (in what dictionary did she find it?), is even shorter. At the other end of the scale, Ralph Beaman reported in the November 1970 WW the nine-syllable u/ro/bi/lin/o/ge/nu/ri/a, the ten-syllable he/man/gi/o/en/do/the/li/o/ma, and the twelve-syllable hu/mu/hu/mu/nu/ku/nu/ku/a/pu/a/a, all in NI3.

Is no further improvement possible? Kyle Corbin of Raleigh, North Carolina cites the NI3 Guide to Pronunciation, page 41a:

" /oi/ ... Whether, however, such sequences are to be regarded as one syllable or two is a more difficult matter ... coin and boy are more disyllabic than monosyllabic"

Accordingly, he submits the six-syllable am/i/o/i/de/i and the seven-syllable om/o/hy/o/i/de/i, both in NI3, as one-letter improvements on the Rubin examples. (He was unable to improve the five-syllable word-length using this stratagem, but he did find a number of companions for oxyopia: acuaria, allipoe, anoesia, dianoa, isourea, oidiod, oogonia and zeoidei.)

Going outside the rules specified by Rubin, he presents (in the May/June 1981 issue of Games magazine) the NI3 word AWOL, which has four letters and six syllables: ā-double-you-ō-ell.

Thought for the Year

Two wrongs don't make a right, but three lefts do.