

KICKSHAWS

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

Missing Kickshaws?

On March 16, 1969, David Silverman wrote to me as follows:

For issue #8, besides the usual fare, Kickshaws will include among other topics and tidbits: the evolution of "stink", the "dog" mystery, "unless", ambiguities, words with two distinct antonyms, language islands, translators' dilemmas, onomatopoeia in different languages (your heart goes pit-a-pat or pitter-patter here, but in Japan it goes "doki-doki"), animal curios, horse colors, reversing acronyms, common denominators, one up on Ogden Nash, Indian names, Lewisisms (I'll let you guess what those are), What's the question?, hybrids, the great "chiliad" mystery, pre- and suffix proliferation, mythical lands, and Mad British Ship Names.

As it turned out, Dave never did send the batch for #8 because soon some signs developed that Word Ways might not still be a viable publication, and our present Editor had not yet emerged as its rescuer. But how many of the above topics did Dave ever get around to? For one thing, I know he never did deal with "Unless" in this column -- he wanted me to write about it because it was I who brought the matter up, but I wanted him to write about it because of his skill in working with truth tables. When I asked the Editor which items later appeared, he replied:

Most of these 21 items did appear in later Kickshaws; however, Dave's descriptions of several are rather cryptic, and I can offer only tentative candidates. Common Denominators is probably Levy's Lexicography in August 1970 (find the most specific common feature of three items, as 'pampa, savannah, veld = grassy plains'); but is Animal Curios his later Nouns of Multitude in February 1970 ('an exaltation of larks', 'a parliament of owls', etc.)? I think Language Islands refer to the May 1970 Isolanos (words unconnected to any others via word ladders). The Great Chiliad Mystery appeared in November 1970 under the title What's The Difference? (between words like 'chiliad' and 'millenium'). Reversing Acronyms refer to the creation of suitable phrases whose initial letters spell out a word (for example, 'APOLLO = Advanced Program for Orbital Lunar Landing Operations' in the November 1970 issue). Hybrids

are, possibly, Double-Duty Words (as 'lascar = sailor from East India' in May 1971. Words With Two Distinct Antonyms appeared more than six years late, in May 1975. We'll never know what Dave had in mind for Horse Colors, Indian Names, Pre- and Suffix Proliferation, Mythical Lands, and the Dog Mystery. That last item I am especially curious about, for Dave mentioned it several times in letters to me, sometimes as the Great Dog Mystery.

Unless

Sometime in the middle-to-late forties I opened an issue of Time or Newsweek and came upon an article by a language expert. I don't remember his name or what most of the article was about or even what kind of a language expert he was. All I remember is that he said that it is possible to construct perfectly grammatical English sentences that no one can understand, and he gave as an example 'Unless you don't disapprove of saying 'No', you won't agree'. He followed this up with the rather cryptic remark that "unless" was the most difficult word in the language.

After that, I found that many people, in attempting to simplify this sentence to get at its meaning, would quite unthinkingly substitute the word "if" for the word "unless", just as if it made no difference. This led me to compare the two words, and I discovered they were actually antonyms ("I will go outside if it rains" means I'll get wet, but "I will go outside unless it rains" means I'll stay dry). Now, to me this was highly interesting, because practically every speaker of English, if asked for the opposite of "black", will immediately respond with "white", but I doubt that one person in a thousand who is asked for the opposite of "if" can, even after prolonged thought, respond with "unless" (unless he or she resorts to a dictionary).

Of course, there are fine points involved. "Unless" is really more strictly the negative of "if and only if" and "if" is sometimes used in the sense of "whether". That's why I wanted Dave to discuss it, because he was well-versed in the propositional calculus. For my part, I have always reserved the above-quoted incomprehensible sentence as the very thing I would say if I were ever placed on a witness stand.

Popping the Longest Palindrome Bubble

Leon was a foe of Asa W. Noel.

Leon was a foe of a foe of Asa W. Noel.

Leon was a foe of a foe of a foe of Asa W. Noel.

Leon was a foe of a foe of a foe of a foe of Asa W. Noel ... ad infinitum.

The Pangrammatic Pyramid

Pyramid words (such as A, EGG, BANANA, SERENENESS) dropped out of sight in Word Ways pages as soon as Jack Levine's pattern word lists disclosed no examples containing 5 of one letter, 4 of a second, 3 of a third, 2 of a fourth and 1 of a fifth existed. I would like to see this ridiculous quietude shattered with a cataclysmic eruption of interest (Edi-

tor's Note: Howard Bergerson lives about 100 miles south of Mt. Saint Helens, which violently exploded about a week before he mailed the Kickshaws material). I, for one, would like to see pyramids carried all the way through the alphabet: one letter used 26 times, one letter used 25 times, and so on for a total of 351 letters. However, a pangrammatic pyramid consisting of a single made-up word of this length is far less alluring to the logological mentality than the infinitude of possible 351-letter pyramid poems and stories. For instance, I think it would be interesting to see Poe's poem "The Raven" translated into 18 pangrammatic pyramids, although admittedly that would take some doing. For starters, let us do a little feasibility experiment, beginning with a pyramid phrase of fifteen letters which we will expand step by step, in order to get some idea of whether pangrammatic pyramids can really be achieved.

Addleheaded Dale.

Dale, the addleheaded lad.

Let Dale, the addleheaded lad, melt.

Lead, mild addleheaded lad; let the hate melt.

Lead, Dale, mild addleheaded lad; let mirth melt the hate.

Lead them, Dale, mild addleheaded lad; let glad mirth melt their hate.

Lead them all, Dale, mild addleheaded teen lad; glad mirth might melt their hatred.

Dale, a mild addleheaded teen lad, led them -- old men all -- a-right; glad mirth might melt their hatred.

Ted Alden, a mild addleheaded lad, led them -- grim old men all -- to land: rare mirth's glad height might melt their hate.

Dell, dim addleheaded giant liar, led them -- grim old men all -- home to land; rare mirth's glad height might melt, then, a dread death lust.

So far the going doesn't seem too difficult, though I would expect the hard part is yet to come. Let's take it one more step, because I really want to get them to their homeland.

Alec, dim addleheaded giant liar, led them -- grim old men all -- to their homeland; rare mirth's glad height might melt, then, glum Donald's dread death lust.

The score at this point is 1-C, 2-U, 3-S, 4-O, 5-N, 6-G, 7-R, 8-I, 9-M, 10-H, 11-T, 12-A, 13-L, 14-D and 15-E. The Editor notes that the distribution of letters in a pangrammatic pyramid must be somewhat flatter than normal written English -- for example, the commonest letter can occur only $26/351 = .074$ of the time (instead of E, at .125), and the rarest letter must occur at least $1/351 = .003$ of the time (instead of Z, at .001). Who will be the first to construct a pangrammatic pyramid?

The Panalphabetic Window

Several years ago at a noisy nightclub a male friend invited me to join him at his table, and introduced me to a girl who was with him, named Xan Xu, with the information that she had made TV commercials for the Seven-Up company.

"My friend Howard knows things about words," he assured her.

"O really! Like what?"

Within seconds I had irretrievably committed one of my great social blunders. "Oh, for example, I know something about THE UNCOLA which is -- uh -- interesting."

"What is it?"

"It's not really interesting," I said, sweating profusely and trying to beat a hasty retreat.

"O come on!" she insisted.

"Okay," I gulped. "If you number the letters of THE UNCOLA from one to nine, you can rearrange them to 9-6451-2783." I waited miserably while the two of them counted on their fingers and marked on a napkin with a pen. Xan Xu figured it out ahead of him and crumpled the napkin, leaving my friend -- who will remain anonymous -- mystified.

"What are you going to do with this item?" she asked.

"I thought I'd send it to some girlie book."

"Oh." She stared at me and her eyes smouldered.

"Yeah. You know, like Playboy . . ." I squirmed and mopped my brow. Then a strange thing happened. Xan Xu, I realized, was most justifiably unfriendly -- but I hardly noticed the meanings of her words as she spoke, though I listened aghast:

"Well, about porn, I can say definitely that although I loathe junk like that myself, I don't propose to question other people's right to it, because, in my view, if sexy magazines and X-rated movies are what they want instead of the real thing, more power to them!" And with that she betook herself and him from my presence, out to the dance floor.

"My God!" I shouted inwardly as I walked home through a midnight thunderstorm, "the panalphabetic window! -- the narrowest panalphabetic window freely occurring in nature that I have ever seen or ever hope to see! The probability of such a freely occurring event must be infinitesimal!"

Slowly I walked home, mulling over the incredible logological properties of Xan Xu's parting shot. To believe in its existence would beggar the faith of a fundamentalist preacher -- but there it was!

At home I began searching out some of my old notes on the panalphabetic window. There is no window in "The Raven" or "Intimations of Immortality"; in these, W is the last letter that occurs in order. "The Deacon's Masterpiece" gets through the Y, but no further. Ditto "Il Penseroso". "L'Allegro", however, has a window, and so does "Paul

Revere's Ride". Gray's "Elegy" has the narrowest window I found, one of 88 lines in length, beginning with the words "shall burn" in the 21st line. In general, even the tightest naturally occurring panalphabetic windows I had found were quite broadly sprawling, and I had certainly never turned up anything to compare to that minuscule slot in Xan Xu's flabbergasting announcement.

Pangrammatic Sonnets and Word Ladders

How rare are naturally occurring pangrammatic sonnets -- that is, sonnets which contain all the letters A through Z without regard to order? I went through all Shakespeare's sonnets and found only one which was pangrammatic -- the 27th. If it had been the 26th, perhaps that would have been too much for coincidence. However, the 27th has three "ands" which could be replaced with ampersands, and the ampersand has been called the 27th letter of the alphabet.

A number of years ago, Mrs. Karl (Marjorie) Wihtol of Middletown, New Jersey proposed the problem of changing WORD to QUIZ in 22 moves, using every letter of the alphabet. She can do it several ways in 23 moves. You might try to equal or better her results before looking them up in Answers and Solutions.

Unique-Trigram Words

I once asked our Editor if he knew of any trigrams, such as GNT, which existed in only a single word. He replied yes, he knew of many such trigrams, and mentioned as examples soleMNLy, caLMNess and joDHPurs. I wish he would share some of this knowledge with us in an article. Who knows what logological minds might be stimulated by this? Who knows in what way?

In a fascinating letter dated April 4, 1965, Dmitri Borgmann wrote to me as follows:

You will remember sending me a set of word curiosities from Playboy Magazine some time ago, and my commenting on the frustration of not being able to improve on that magazine's singling out of SOVEREIGNTY as the only English word exhibiting the letter combination GNT.

This fact lay dormant in the murky inner recesses of my mind for quite some time, and then suddenly sprouted in a most unexpected way.

First, you will note that a government is something that rules over men, a fact eloquently attested to by the word itself: GoverNment. This, in itself, is quite a remarkable discovery. However, what lends it its truly unparalleled character is the fact that the three letters that border the words "over" and "men", when placed together, form that unique 3-letter combination: sovereiGNTy. Finally, "sovereignty" and "government" are synonyms of one another.

This is one of those remarkable word curiosities that defies classification, but gives one ample pause for thought.

I replied to Dmitri appreciatively, for I thought he had made an exquisite discovery. But I remarked that the uniqueness was slightly marred by the fact that the GNT also existed in the plural "sovereiGNTies". However, in view of the fact that worldly sovereignties do in truth comprise a plurality, it might be better to tighten up the uniqueness by taking the entire tetragram GNTY which only exists in the singular "sovereiGNTY", and construe this as referring to the single and universal Sovereignty of the Deity who rules over men all Governmen-Tally.

Reciprocomynorcagrams

My dear friend James Albert Lindon, who preferred to be called JAL, died on December 16, 1979. He was 65 on December 12. In 1977 I asked him if he would compose an automynorcagrammatical version of Poe's "The Raven" for me. Not only did he do this, but, to my gigantic astonishment, he rhymed it throughout! -- a thing that I myself had not even considered when working on my own version. Lindon liked his problems hard! Since it is too long to insert in Kickshaws, I hope our Editor will publish it as a separate article. JAL also suggested an intriguing mynorcagram variant. His own words follow:

Have you considered using this mynorcagram idea in two passages playing cross-hands, so to speak? E.g. something starting like

A.

Some thoughtful and really intelligent new guests of Vera's entered, reading magazines, yet enduring my presence took young Timothy off poetry, he admitted to Olive, letting go a sigh...

B.

Staring over my empty top hat, Olga's uncle grimaced, his thin features ugly like a nauseating draught, repelling even a love lorn youth...

Just an idea. I've little doubt you know all about such things and already have a name for them.

Well, I hadn't thought of it, and I didn't have a name for it, but I think it's an excellent idea! In fact, it seems to me that, given a pair of words to begin with, two logologists could compose the two passages together, much as people play chess by mail!

Some One-Syllable Rhymeless Words

The words "orange" and "silver" are often cited as examples of words which have no perfect rhymes in English. It seems obvious that there must be very many words of two or more syllables which have no rhymes. The one-syllable rhymeless words are a much more exclusive class, and perhaps it would be interesting to extend and refine our knowledge of it. I have never seen a list of such words, so I offer you

a preliminary list of my own. I certainly wouldn't guarantee that every word in this list entirely lacks a perfect English rhyme, and I would certainly be interested in knowing any rhymes any readers may be able to supply for any of them, either in English or in other languages. No doubt some words will ultimately be crossed off this list, and possibly quite a few more will be added. Of course, much will depend on what one accepts or rejects. For example, I include "pint" because I hesitate to accept the dialectical "ahint" or "behint", and perhaps I am wrong in this. On the other hand, I don't include "pints" because "Heintz" is obviously a good rhyme for that.

aitch	cusps	filmed	months	sixths
angst	depth	films	mulcts	tenth
angsts	depths	fluxed	mulched	tenths
beards	eighth	glimpsed	ninth	tufts
breadth	eighths	gulf	ninths	twelfth
breadths	else	gulfs	pint	twelfths
bulb	fiends	jinxed	puss	width
bulbed	filched	lairds	scalds	widths
bulbs	fifth	leashed	scarce	wolf
cup	fifths	mouthed	sculpts	wolfed
cupped	film	month	sixth	wolf's

Neutronyms

It seems strange to me that neutronyms have never before been named or identified as a category. Nor do they seem to be very numerous, though I'm sure there are many more than the handful I have noticed. What are they? They denote meanings midway between antonym pairs. I hope logologists will extend this small collection.

Antonyms

true, false
 hot, cold
 warm, cool
 boiling, freezing
 torrid, frigid
 yes, no
 beautiful, ugly
 positive, negative
 right, left
 big, little
 large, small
 huge, tiny
 good, bad
 love, hate
 male, female
 black, white
 morning, evening
 dawn, dusk
 win, lose

Neutronyms

undecidable

 tepid, luke-warm
 maybe, perhaps, mayhap, perchance
 plain
 neutral
 center

 medium
 indifferent
 indifference
 hermaphrodite, androgyne
 gray

 noon (or midnight)
 draw

Frosty Words

I think it would be a most pleasant thing if I could somehow infect a few Word Ways readers with one or two of my more utterly irrational logological interests. Here goes: would you think that the word "frosty" could be a word-curiosity in some heretofore totally unimagined sense? Well, allow me to refer you to William Shakespeare's poem "Venus and Adonis". This poem is written in 6-line stanzas. Now, go to the 6th stanza, and look at the 6th line of that stanza, and, finally, the 6th word of that line. You will find that it is a 6-letter word, and that it begins with the 6th letter of the alphabet -- and that word is FROSTY. Amazing? No more than this: the 5th word of the 5th verse of the 5th chapter of the 5th book of the New Testament is a 5-letter word -- namely, WORDS. So there you have five fives, as well as six sixes. Do you want to try for seven sevens? (Which reminds me: is it not odd that HEAVEN -- of which we are told that the seventh is the highest -- is also the seventh word of the Bible?)

Miscellany

I once anagrammed the name of the originator of this column thus: The ViviDreamlands of David Silverman -- with one D doing double duty. He liked it well enough that he thought of using it as a title for a book which he would someday write. Now, to free-associate a bit: back in the 60's, Dmitri Borgmann told me in a letter that he had once anagrammed ELVIS PRESLEY to SILVERY SLEEP -- without particularly knowing why. I was reminded of this when I read Tom Pulliam's article on shiftgrams in the February 1980 Word Ways, for I had noticed around the time that Elvis Presley died that ELVIS was a shiftgram of A HERO. In the 60's, Dmitri also told me about someone who had written to him to tell him that I is the happiest vowel because it is in the middle of BLISS; all the others are either in HELL or PURGATORY. The same individual also pointed out to him that beLEAGUErs is three times as long as sMILEs. Have you ever wondered if there exist any words that might be considered of the Hyrda-headed ilk? -- perhaps a word of four syllables such that if you cut out one syllable it still has four syllables? A phrase will illustrate this: suppose you were to read in a labor union publication the words UNIONIZED LEADER. Now lop off the last of the five syllables, and you have UNIONIZED LEAD -- a phrase, still of five syllables, which probably exists in many a tract on physical chemistry. Even as I write this, something else has occurred to me: JAL lived four days into his 66th year, and SIXTY-SIX -- besides being a palindromic base-10 numeral -- can be expressed palindromically using only alphabetical letters: six XI's. Another thing: what a curious word is ADMIX (does anyone know what was the most outstanding event of the year A.D. 1009?).

Ancient Greek Rug Words

Back in the May 1969 Word Ways, I presented a 12-by-13 array of letters formed by tracing the alphabet (repeated six times) in a clockwise spiral from the center outwards. In this array, I noticed four four-letter words spelled out: HUTS, RUTS, NAVY and DENE. Com-

menting on this, Dave Silverman wrote:

If one can start with any letter in the center aren't a lot of additional words possible? I wonder which is the longest? Also, there are other methodical paths than spirals, e. g., look at any ancient Greek rug design. God knows what magnificent words may be lurking in a Hellenic rug pattern! -- BANKRUPTCY or TREACHEROUS or JABBERWOCKY. This is truly a fertile ground for plowing.

Dave drew a simple Ancient Greek Rug design in the margin of his letter, and I gave it a try. The first six alphabets are given below, in a 12-by-13 array.

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Z C-B-A Z-Y-X-W-V-U-T-S-R
Y D U-V-W-X-Y-Z-A-B-C-D Q
X E T E-D-C-B-A-Z-Y-X E P
W F S F U-V-W-X-Y-Z W F O N
V G R G T M-L-K-J A V G N
U H Q H S N A-B I B U H M
T I P I R O D-C H C T I L
S J O J Q P E-F-G D S J K
R K N K I-I-H-G-F-E R K J
Q L M L K-L-M-N-O-P-Q L I
P M V-U-T-S-R-Q-P-O-N M H
O-N W-X-Y-Z-A-B-C-D-E-F-G

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The commonest four-letter word in this design is LADE, followed by the KLUX of Ku Klux Klan; rare ones are BUTS (as in "No ifs, ands or buts"), TIPI (variant of "tepee"), PIRO, SNAB and ABIB. No five-letter words are there, although DEPOD is a plausible coinage. I sent this result to him, and asked him to send me more of the patterns. This was his further reply:

I'm not well-versed in the many traditional Greek rug patterns, but I strongly recommend your seeking a source at your library, because an article on some of the words which lurk in these patterns (LEPRECHAUN appears in one of them -- straight across -- no deviations) is bound to be a fascinating one, though it will require a lot of work. I have a strong conviction that DELIVER NO EVIL is waiting to be found. I wish I could be more specific. Some city official in Smyrna during the Peloponnesian Wars had the rug, but the wrong alphabet and language. You've got the words and the letters -- but not the rug.

May Zeus bless the homes of any logologists who inherit David Silverman's enthusiasm.

From the File

The following old undated newspaper clipping was sent me many years ago by Leigh Mercer:

A recent dispatch from Fiji fixed my attention on the odd combina-

tion of letters -- iji -- (writes "E. S. M.") and, on looking into the matter, I found that the islands spell their name that way because of Queen Victoria's insistence. When King Cakobau ceded his country to Great Britain in 1874 the question of a name became important -- and more so because there were several in existence. After studying them -- Viti (the native word for the group), Feed-gee, Feejee or Fiji (the Tongan form of Viti), and Fisi (the Samoan version) -- the Queen chose Fiji, because, she said, she liked the three dots over the "iji".

Unfortunately for Victoria she did not live to see the opening up of Africa and the discovery in Tanganyika of a town called Ujiji, nor the development of Australia of the Menindie Water Storage Scheme and the creation of Lake Mijjie.

We all have our tragedies. Leigh himself discovered the angel in chANGELess, but died without ever noticing the devil in vauDEVILLE.

PALINDROMES Transposals

As Philip Cohen noted in the May 1980 Word Ways, it is very easy to rearrange the letters of a longish word into many different phrases. I have extracted 120 rearrangements of PALINDROMES from a letter Dmitri Borgmann sent me over a decade ago. His most surprising discovery was that these eleven letters scramble four common prefixes: DIS-, EN-, MAL- and PRO-.

Coined Words: spinodermal, prison-lamed, pralinedoms, dermospinal, parson-limed, Polanderism, pain-molders, Spain-molder, midpersonal, presalmonid, moral-spined, maldisponer, malprisoned, land-promise, pro-Melisand, endoprismal, semordnilap, dromiplanes

Anagrams: plain 'dromes, darlin' poems, I am splendor, splendor I am, aim: splendor

Personal Names: Pearl D. Simon, Sid O. Perlman, Linda P. Morse, Milo P. Sander, Dino S. Palmer, Mrs. Linda Poe, Odin S. Palmer

Place Names: Lemon Rapids, Melon Rapids, Monel Rapids

Phrases: ripe almonds, a mild person, random piles, modern pails, limp and sore, ironed lamps, Nora's dimple, limed aprons, Emil's pardon, Daniel's prom, a solemn drip, Nimrod's plea, Marlin's dope, Dolan's prime, alpine dorms, Nepali dorms, Persian mold, ironed palms, April's demon, Leonard's imp, Pindar's mole, moldier pans, Poland's emir, spiral demon, oil and sperm, damn spoiler, primal nodes, sampled iron, Palermo's din, Paris dolmen, Renaldo's imp, mop islander, Rodin's maple, lion dampers, pale Nimrods, mire and slop, Linda's proem

Sentences: Poe's ran mild; spend or mail; Norma lisped; drop in, Selma; Daniel romps; on, mad lisper; pre-man is old; ponder, Islam; parole minds; I'm Lena's prod; Lord, I'm aspen; dream

on, lips; pardon Selim; "and" impels "or"; Marines plod; plod, Amneris; marlin posed; solder an imp; dispel a morn; Ramon lisped; simper, Dolan; prison, me lad; lo - prime sand; lempiras nod; smolder, pain; promise land; pre-man: solid; Dilmore naps; Marlo sniped; Marlon spied; lords pain me; mend Polaris; no lamp is red; is no palm red?, Rodin's ample; I lop Ned's arm; Lima ponders; Delians romp; do, re, mi - plans?, I spar old men; lo - Dan rips me; Dan implores; implore sand; slap me, Rodin; I damn lopers; normal, I sped; Milo panders; prod menials; males drop in; spoil, red man; Nimrods leap; mares plod in; Nimrod leaps

A Most Kingly Antique Exclamation!

Long-time readers of Word Ways may remember that I transposed INELUCTABLENESS into NINE BLUE CASTLES in the February 1969 issue; though not a dictionary word, I think that its meaning is clear enough (irresistibility). I came across AMYLOHYDROLYTIC more recently, while working on palindromes; needless to say, I was thunderstruck to see CITY, HOLY and LORD (or LORDY) all in reverse in the same word. The word is listed in Webster's Second without definition; the Editor suggests that it pertains to the hydrolysis of starch (for example, diastase hydrolyzes starch into maltose and dextrin). Taken as a whole, then, the phrase can be viewed as a comment on the irreversibility of a certain chemical reaction; but the transposition of this phrase ought to appeal more to the poet than the scientist.

My reaction to the transposal discovery took the form of a reverie which John McClellan of Woodstock, New York was kind enough to illustrate for me. I would rather have that McClellan original than any Botticelli, Picasso, J. C. Leyendecker, James Montgomery Flagg or Virgil Finley, but I send it to the Editor to top off these Kickshaws because the only chance it can have to live forever is in the pages of Word Ways!



AMYLOHYDROLYTIC
INELUCTABLENESS!

NINE BLUE CASTLES!
A HOLY CITY,
MY LORD!