

## CALENDAR ACROSTICS

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The February 1969 issue of *Word Ways* quoted a very old acrostic poem of twelve lines in which each word at the beginning of a line started off with the abbreviation of a month:

JANet was quite ill one day.  
FEBrile troubles came her way.  
MARtyr-like, she lay in bed:  
APRoned nurses softly sped.  
MAYbe, said the leech judicial,  
JUNket would be beneficial.  
JULeps, too, though freely tried,  
AUGured ill, for Janet died.  
SEPulchre was sadly made.  
OCTaves pealed and prayers were said.  
NOVices with many a tear  
DECorated Janet's bier.

Here is a more up-to-date version, designed to be recited by anyone who wakes up with a hangover the first day of the new year:

JANgle bells	jangle bells	jangle all the way!
FEBrifuge,	aspirin,	start this New Year's day.
MARK me down	for a clown --	I had the whole gang over;
APRicot	brandy's what	gave me this hangover.
MAYbe I	erred to try	whiskey laced with rum;
JUNiper's	jollier,	drunk <u>ad libitum</u> .
JULeps waft	me aloft	on a vodka chaser;
AUGHT of saki	leaves me rocky	the ensuing day, sir.
SEPTic all	alcohol	is, the stuff of devils:
OCTopi,	elephants	interrupt my revels.
NOVelties	from D. T.'s	pall; I end my song
DECently:	I shall be	sober all year long.

No one seems to have tried to do the same thing with the days of the week. The following free verse will tell the reader why this is so:

I start my week with Wednesday, for it is easy to find words  
beginning with WED --  
Well, three: Wed, itself; Wedding, and Wedge. The next  
day, THUR,  
Gives Thurber, as well as two incense-words: Thurible, and

Thurify. FRI  
 Is no problem either -- Fricassee and Frizzle are two good  
 ones that day -- and as for SAT,  
 Why, there are dozens of Sat words, some rather ugly: Satan,  
 Saturnine, Satyriasis, for instance. SUN  
 Yields Sunder, Sundry, and Sunk, while MON  
 Is as rich in words as Sat; of these, Money, is my favorite.  
 It's TUE  
 That's the stopper; the only words beginning with Tue are  
 Tuebor, "I will defend," the motto of Michigan, and  
 Tueiron, a pair of blacksmith tongs.  
 Which is why I start my week with Wednesday.

#### SPELLING BY MAJORITY VOTE

The August 12, 1974 Bell Labs News described a computer program devised by researchers Robert Morris and Linda Cherry to aid an author proofreading a document for misspelled words. It first prepares a count of the number of digrams and trigrams of each type appearing in the document (thus, once is tabulated under the categories .o, on, nc, ce, e., .on, onc, nce, and ce.); then it scores each word in the document by the average "unusualness" of the digrams and trigrams contained in it. The authors aver that high-scoring words are much more likely to be misspellings than low-scoring ones, and back this up with an experiment in which 23 misspellings (such as nd, erroronously, suer, poiter, bwirte, mutiliated, dapt, accordinng, typpical) were detected among the 100 highest-scoring words in a 108-page document written at Bell Labs. However, the program cannot detect misspellings which transmute one word into another (such as the very common confusion between affect and effect, or principal and principle), so manual proofreading is still necessary.