

# KICKSHAWS

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Readers are invited to send their own favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Associate Editor. Correspondents who wish a quick acknowledgement should provide a self-addressed postcard (a stamped card is requested only if the contribution is filled with calumny, hauteur, scorn and invective). Unless questions are posed as Challenges (a euphemism for problems that the Kickshaws Editor was either too lazy or too inept to solve), their resolutions will be found in the Answers and Solutions section at the end of this issue.

## Wordbotchery

In his alternate capacity as bird-watcher, Word Botcher swears to this incident: he had brought his portable tape recorder to the San Diego Zoo in order to supplement his library of bird chatter, but was sidetracked in the Simian Section by the Capuchin Monkey cage, where he observed the monkeys staring in perfect silence at the human spectators for several minutes at a time. Suddenly and without apparent stimulus one of the older males would gabble rapidly at his fifty-odd cage mates. After he finished, all the others would immediately gabble back, for all the world like the chorus in a Greek play or like a congregation doing responsive reading. Then a minute or two of silence followed by a similar exchange. After another five minutes or so a different monkey would take the pulpit and the responsive reading would again take place in two or three cycles. This was better than bird-calls, and Word Botcher turned on his recorder, almost immediately coming to the end of a tape cassette and finding to his discomfiture that he had no empties. After a short mental debate in which he rejected the thought of erasing 45 minutes of mynah screeches and toucan shrieks, he left the zoo and began cruising along for a place to buy blank cassettes. The first one he came to had a lettered sign from which the first letter had been lost. It read APE RECORDERS.

On another occasion Word Botcher saw the following double feature advertized on the marquee of a theater in Marina Del Rey: THE SKIN GAME and DELIVERACNE. Items like this are not liable to escape Botcher's attention, since, like Sean Reddick of Silver Spring, Maryland, he is always on the lookout for them. Generally a modest man, Botcher has one point of vanity: he boasts that he has never seen a restaurant menu in which he could not spot an error. If he doesn't quickly find a misspelling, he'll find a run-on such as "al aKing" or "Tornados of Beef", a real boner. As for common short-order-house

errors such as "Hamburger Steak in Smothered Onions" (isn't it the steak that is smothered?), he disdains to use them on the theory, confirmed by years of experience, that any eatery capable of that sort of howler is bound to have spelling errors in its menu.

Doubting his blanket premise, we wagered him the price of a dinner for four at one of Hollywood's poshest restaurants, that he would find their menu error-free. Throughout the meal he studied the menu the way a lawyer studies a merger agreement, and by the time dessert arrived his expression was so downcast that we couldn't refrain from ordering a round of Courvoisier at his expense. But it turned out, like the rest of the tab, to be at ours instead, for during the second cup of coffee he found a missing circumflex. Ordinarily this would not have counted, but unfortunately for us, all the other entrees requiring diacritics had received them, so he won fairly on the ground of consistency.

Since then, we've become a menu-vetter too, and we have concluded that the next time you look at a menu (provided it is not for a state occasion at Buckingham Palace -- and even then it is suspect), if you fail to find a mistake, you're not trying hard enough.

### Updates

In the last issue we listed nine euphemistic synonyms for goddamn and solicited others. This item aroused far more response than any previous kickshaw, and the following additional entries were received: G. D., dodfetch, dodgast, gorram, dadblast, goldurn, goldast, goldam, odrot, dad-bing, dad-blame, dad-gash, dad-snatch, gosh-darn, ding-blast, dad-rat, and even God-bless. As the Potpourrieur observes, every form ending in -darn has a variant ending in -durn and vice versa, while dad- and dod- are nearly always interchangeable, so the complete list is very large indeed. Darryl Francis points out that The American Thesaurus of Slang reveals an absolute torrent of such words.

Howard Port of Clinton, New York has added to the long sandwich synonyms given last time (Dagwood, Poor Boy, Submarine, Hero, Hoagie, Grinder). He suggests Blimpie (New York City), Tunnel (Clinton, N. Y.) and Wedges (pronounced wedgies, on the Hamilton College campus). Any other trade names in your bailiwick? One reader submitted Reuben, but that's a hot sandwich, usually made of melted cheese over corned beef or pastrami -- not the same thing at all. Of course, one could name his pet submarine sandwich Reuben.

Apropos of another pair of kickshaws in the August issue, The Logophobe of Sweeny, Texas submits (based on the Kipling gag):

He: How do you feel about necking?

She: Don't know. What did he write?

(Poor fellow probably didn't even get a Giss.)

Logophobe's Dog-Latin motto to be hung over a door bell: "Si non convivare, Noli tintinnare". We thought at first that it was translated "If you don't drinkle, Don't tinkle", but that's terrible -- "swing" and "ring" fit much more nicely.

The Flash responded admirably to our Challenge Section. Re shift-words (which form new words on moving the initial letter to the rear) Flash's ECHOIC - CHOICE is one of the most surprising examples imaginable. Not one letter has the same phonetic function in both words. Agreeing that EMANATE may be the longest "worthy" shiftword (neither shift nor original is an inflected form), Flash suggests that SPECULATION may be the longest unworthy shiftword. A copy of Chadwick's Thesaurus to any reader who can beat either of these words.

ATE, TEA and EAT are double shiftwords in that each becomes a new word either after moving the initial to the rear or the terminal to the front. Readers are challenged to produce a double shiftword of four letters or more, worthy or unworthy.

Flash has what may prove to be the longest pair of non-crashing isomorphs in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: CONCEPTUALISM - EXCEPTIONABLY. (Isomorphs are one-to-one encipherments of each other, and a crash of two words is the occurrence of the same letter in the same position of both words.) In order to better Flash's 13-letter pair, don't look for any help by concentrating on isograms. Jack Levine's List of Words Containing No Repeated Letters has entries that are non-crashing and of greater length, but not one seems to be current enough to appear in the Collegiate. After all, how often do you hear words like AMPHISTRONGYLE, DIMETHYLFURANS, or PRECOMBATINGLY? No, the best hope seems to be to look in the same author's List of Pattern Words of Length Thirteen To Sixteen. In the fourteen-letter section concentrate on likely words with only one repeated letter (or at most two in order to have enough raw material to work with). Pick out the few that give promise of being in the Collegiate and, among the ones that do appear, hope that at least two are non-crashing. Rotsaruck.

Our definition in the last issue of an n-way k-tuple successive word deletion was garbled so we'll do it right this time. Start with a word of any length, such as PILGRIMAGE. From the interior excise the consecutive letters GRIM. Having joined the loose ends, excise the word LAG, which again consists of consecutive letters, at least one of which came from each of the two pieces left after the first deletion. That leaves PIE, which, you will note, contains the initial and terminal letters of the original word. The number of words (in this case, three) into which the original word is split is k; thus PILGRIMAGE (GRIM, LAG, PIE) is a triple deletion. Faith and Ross Eckler discovered that PILGRIMAGE is a rare animal in that it admits another triple deletion, all three words of which are different from those involved in the first deletion (RIM, GAG, PILE). This makes it a two-way triple deletion, i. e.  $n = 2$  and  $k = 3$ . We challenged the readers to concoct a three-way double. Flash provided STONABLE which yields ON, STA-

BLE; TON, SABLE; NAB, STOLE. We also asked for a one-way quadruple and Flash fired back REGIMENTALED which splits into either MEN, IT, GALE, RED or MEN, IT, GAL, REED. Note that this is not a two-way quadruple since the two deletions involve words in common. Finally, we sought another two-way triple deletion, but no reader supplied one, so we repeat the challenge and add to it two more: a one-way quintuple and a four-way double. We don't really expect any response on this, except possible some congenial abuse and good-natured invective.

### Word Pairs

There are innumerable two-word combinations such as SWAN DIVE in which the two components have been coupled so frequently that the probability is high that if either is given on a standard word association the immediate response will be the other. Most, but by no means all, of these doublets have been given dictionary status. ROMAN CANDLE and ROMAN COLLAR appear in Webster's Collegiate, but not ROMAN NOSE or ROMAN HOLIDAY. From baseball you will find DOUBLE-HEADER and DOUBLE PLAY but not DOUBLE STEAL. On the quizzes that follow, care has been taken, in the few cases in which non-dictionary combinations were chosen, that they be at least as current and recognizable as the average combination found in the Collegiate. Combinations of three types are used, employing either the run-on form as in POSTHASTE, separation as in POST OFFICE or hyphenation as in POST-HORSE.

If you were given the words BOWL, PRINT and WAVE and asked to find one common antecedent word for all three that formed in each case a well-known pair, the chance is about 90 per cent that you would quickly come up with FINGER, and about 9 per cent that you would draw a blank. (We may be underestimating the caliber of our readers, but as in the quizzes below, we've used the Westwood Word Herd for our estimates of par, and we have no basis of comparison between the Herd and the readers at large.) The 1 per cent remaining we allot to the possibility that the reader might arrive at an acceptable antecedent other than FINGER.

If instead you were given BIRTHDAY, COFFEE and LAYER we assess the probability that you would find the common successor which when added at the right of each word makes a popular pair at 100 per cent. CAKE, of course. LAYER alone might be enough of a clue. In the unlikely event that you find a cook (an alternate solution) for any of the following quizzes that satisfies you, count yourself right in your desperate attempt to beat or match par (total par = 38).

#### Quiz A Antecedents

Find for each triplet a word that makes a common pair with each of the three when placed on the left (par = 8)

- |                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. hunter sauce slave | 3. bug pot weed  |
| 2. gum lamp level     | 4. beer fry talk |

- |                      |                     |
|----------------------|---------------------|
| 5. blood grass point | 8. brew front work  |
| 6. car fish iron     | 9. letter lock pan  |
| 7. angle field whale | 10. line paper test |

#### Quiz B Successors

Find for each triplet a word that makes a common pair with each of the three when placed on the right (par = 8)

- |                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. fee fish ring     | 6. brown cap key     |
| 2. bank false foot   | 7. lung silver weak  |
| 3. duty line warrant | 8. back break ground |
| 4. spirit sea water  | 9. air court fire    |
| 5. root small spruce | 10. black free short |

#### Quiz C Guessing Game

The difficulty is increased on this quiz in that you are not told whether the solution word is an antecedent or a successor. This is balanced by the fact that there are only ten solution words, each of which appears once in each role (par = 16)

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. duck sand snow     | 11. boot black skip   |
| 2. fly sand white     | 12. fly opera power   |
| 3. duty fancy scot    | 13. dog fire tower    |
| 4. fish grass horse   | 14. arms hole wine    |
| 5. dark saw sea       | 15. date fold tiger   |
| 6. candle light loose | 16. lance love verse  |
| 7. hammer knife pot   | 17. club hot web      |
| 8. black dog stop     | 18. back rip see      |
| 9. free pass treaty   | 19. feed half throw   |
| 10. drop fire log     | 20. chase weight work |

#### Quiz D Mixed Bag

On this last quiz each tetrad calls for a word that is an antecedent to two of the words and a successor to the other two, in no particular order. If you think that having four clue words instead of three makes this quiz easier than the ones preceding, have another think (par = 6)

- |                          |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. boot lamp magic out   | 6. head officer party squall |
| 2. main power salt white | 7. dry horse leaf wheel      |
| 3. brick fish free white | 8. hook house life train     |
| 4. back brand trap watch | 9. block cheese line mast    |
| 5. box brass head wagon  | 10. gas maid pot star        |

#### Reprise

This test is open only to those who achieved par on the preceding quizzes and have not quite had a bellyful of word association. The forty words below can be sorted into ten tetrads, each word of a tetrad forming a well-known (usually dictionary) pair with a common word which serves in all cases as antecedent. The problem would be impossible if it were not for the fact that the ten antecedents are gen-

erically related. Find one antecedent and you've found them all. Once you have the antecedents, sorting the test words into the correct groups of four is routine (par = 100 per cent).

bath	courage	linen	pastry	towel
bayonet	cross	massage	puzzle	treat
bear	delight	meatball	salad	turnip
blue	fire	moss	steak	uncle
bull	fly	movements	terrier	wall
cabbage	gift	olive	thistle	watch
cheese	lantern	omelet	toast	whiskey
chimes	leave	oven	tobacco	window

### More on Synonymic Reversals

Dmitri Borgmann adds to the small list of synonymic reversals given last August (TAP PAT and BOK KOB). He mentions POT TOP which can both be found in Web II with the definition "to outdo" and NIP PIN, with the definition "to seize". He also claims priority on TAP PAT, which appears on page 44 of Language on Vacation (Scribner's, 1965). Crossing the language barrier, he notes that EL is the Spanish masculine definite article and LE is the French masculine definite article. To this he adds APE EPA, the latter being the Welsh word for "ape". He tops that with ARIE EIRA, the first being the Romanian word for "threshing-floor" and the second being the Portuguese word for "threshing-floor". Bet you can't top that.

### Two Word Games

The first game described below may be original, though we have a hunch that it is not. We are frequently victimized by parallel invention or, worse, a conveniently bad memory. The second game is definitely new.

#### Ghost Transposals

This game is played like Ghost, except that each player on his turn attempts to add a letter to the previous set that will produce a word (using an agreed-upon dictionary as authority to settle challenges) after transposal. First player starts with a two-letter word (all letters are one-letter words, but permitting them would enable first player to stymie the next player with a C or a Q opening unless a large dictionary is used). Any number can play, and it is suggested that the more players, the smaller number of gigs required to knock them out. With three or four players, the five demerits required to oust a Ghost player seems about right; with eight players, just one gig to knock a player out would make a lively game. Gigs are levied for failure to produce a combination that permutes to a word on one's turn or for losing a challenge. A typical sequence: First player chooses OX. Next player adds P (POX). Next player adds Y (POXY). Next player adds E (EPOXY, which may or may not be in the agreed-upon dictionary). Next player ponders and either finds a word or adds a bluff letter like L or T that appears to have possibilities. The next player might not challenge if he can add a letter and achieve a word himself. A gigged player starts the next

round unless he was ousted by his last gig, in which case his successor starts it. The game ends when only one survivor is left.

The Bloodhound could undoubtedly devise a winning strategy in the one-gig two-player version for any dictionary you could name. In both this game and the following one, the Bloodhound, the Genesee Bard and the Potpourrieur could all create beautiful situational problems.

### The Forehead Game

Each one of four, five or six players sitting around a table writes a four-letter word on a slip of paper. Each player then scotch-tapes the paper to the forehead of the player on his right. Each player sees the words of all of his opponents but not his own. In turn, the players must announce a word with one letter taken from each of his opponents' words, or else he must take a guess at his own word. If he guesses his word (or a transposal of it) he wins; if he misses, he is ousted but his word remains on the table. The players are equipped with writing materials to keep their own records as well as those of their opponents. No word or transposal thereof may be announced more than once.

There are at least three occasions when a player should take a stab at his own word: (1) when he reaches a point (owing to the poor play of an opponent) when he knows all of his letters, (2) when he is no longer able to announce a word likely to appear in the agreed-upon dictionary, (3) when the only announcement he can think of will put an opponent into the first situation.

The skill factor in this game is largely in the choice of word announcements. Obviously, letters that appear in only one opponent's word should be avoided as long as possible. However, this tactic doesn't do you much good (except with respect to your own word) unless your opponents follow the same principle. As for the choice of your right-hand opponent's word, it is good practice to give him repeated letters and a rare word to boot, but giving your neighbor TUTU won't help much if all your other opponents had easy-to-guess words like ZINC pasted on their foreheads. The only skill factor that cannot be diluted by the ineptitude of your opponents is the ability to reason from limited data. At a certain point in the game, let's say that your opponents' announcements have told you that you have an F and moreover the neighbor who precedes you in play has just announced a word that tells your other neighbor that he has ZNC. Your hand is forced -- you must take a guess at your word. You note that only one L, one R and one M appear in your opponents' words. Why, after several rounds, has nobody used these letters in xes announcements? Probably because you don't have any of these letters. Why have E and I been announced so frequently when you can see only one of each? Maybe because you have one or both. Furthermore, your left-hand opponent has had considerable experience at this game -- very likely you have a doubled letter. It could be T as in TUFT, but then E and I might not have gotten so much play. You take a flyer with FIFE (or FIEF). Alas, your word turns out to be FESS, but your reasoning was sounder than your opponents' play. Like bridge, you will find that this game is more en-

joyable against players of equal caliber to you.

### Miscellany

Maxey Brooke observes that Brooklynites (and many other denizens of the English-speaking world) reverse their Rs, pronouncing CURL like "coil" and vice versa. How then, he asks, do they pronounce TURMOIL? Probably "distoibance", we feel.

Murray Pearce adds to the type-name list in the last kickshaws:

Red-haired Polish orphan, ad-	Glorioski
dicted to belladonna	
Dog belonging to above	Arf

Two issues back we related how we thought MISLE was a verb meaning "to deceive" until high school days, when we were informed that we had reasoned incorrectly from the past tense MISLED, thus creating an inadvertent back-formation. Darryl Francis writes that the truth of the matter is that we were right to begin with and were mizzled by an interfering chemistry teacher, adding that one has only to look in Web II or the OED to verify that MISLE is a dialect variant of mizzle (v.t. "to confuse, to muddle, to mystify, to give wrong information"). Talk about coincidence. This is evidence enough for anyone that MISLEAD is the back-formation! And LEAD is a back-formation of MISLEAD! How about that?

Philip Cohen updates the list of pronunciations of OUGH discussed in the May 1971 and February 1974 Kickshaws. According to Web III, TROUGH can be pronounced to rhyme with FA, BROTH or SOFT. In its plural form, TROUGHS can also rhyme with DOVES or the oth sound of MOTHER followed by an S. HOUGH can be pronounced with the Scottish ch sound of LOCH, preceded by the a of FA or the o of NO. Web II adds two other sounds: HOUGH can rhyme with LOCK, and SOUGH with GOOF. The total number of OUGH sounds now stands at 19, and we doubt not that there are more pronunciations. A visit to various places in Scotland would most likely unearth a few vowel sounds not yet noted in this list. Likely candidates are owg, oog (with both the oo of BOOK and of COOL), and owch (with the Scottish ch).

Phil also sent a long new member of the class of vowelless words, the Yurok Indian place-name RNRGRRGRN. According to Calif. Univ. Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology 16.234, it means "where they get sweathouse fuel", a fact obvious from the pronunciation. Another vowelless word from the same source is TSRKTSRYR, which we believe is a variant spelling of Aliquippa.

### Code Breakers

From Robert Graves' Goodbye to All That: "Because of a rumoured invasion of the north-east coast, . . . all fit men of the Third Garrison Battalion were ordered to move at twenty-four hours' notice to York. A slight error, however, occurred in the Morse message from War



Office to Western Command. Instead of dash-dot-dash-dash, they sent dash-dot-dash-dot, so the Battalion was sent to Cork instead, where, on second thoughts, it seemed just as much needed as in York, so there it stayed for the remainder of the War."

In The Years With Ross, James Thurber relates that in 1919 he served in the communications section of the American Embassy in Paris during the peace negotiations at Versailles. In transmitting messages, one of the code clerks was so lazy that it was not uncommon, for example, after he had looked up the code group for "quote" (say it was PRKXL) to save himself the trouble of looking up the code group for "unquote", writing UNPRKXL instead. This is amusing to most Gold Bug enthusiasts, but we've noticed that professional cryptanalysts all wince when they hear it.

### Challenges

1. Choose any five consonants in such a way as to get the maximum possible double-fivers. The latter term means a pair of five-letter words appearing as main entries in any dictionary and using between them the five consonants chosen and the five vowels AEIOU. Transposals of one or both five-letter words do not count as additional double-fivers. If LPRST are chosen, one double-fiver is SUITE POLAR and another is LOUPE STAIR. But once the latter is used, no double-fiver may use the word ASTIR. If you get a fairly long list, please send it on.

2. Are you surprised at how few double-fivers you got? It's the same excessive-vowel phenomenon so familiar to Scrabblers. The big problem in the first challenge is to find five-letter words with three (or more) vowels. On the second challenge, your list should be much longer. Choose any ten letters and separate them into as many double-fivers as possible. As before, two double-fivers may not be transposals of each other but must involve different sets of letters. We predict that those who take up this challenge will pick six consonants, either all from the set CLNPRST or with five from that set and one from the set DHM. Naturally, the four vowels will be AEIO.