

OMAK ME YOURS TONIGHT

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In the May 1973 Kickshaws, Dave Silverman commented how much he enjoyed my Ballad of the Evergreen State (subtitled Ilwaco Million Miles for One of Your Smiles), the first ten verses of which were quoted in the May 6, 1972 Saturday Review. Subsequently, the editor wrote me asking permission to share the poem with Word Ways readers.

With one exception, the place names I abuse in the following poem were taken from Washington State Place Names by James W. Phillips, published by the University of Washington Press (Seattle, 1971). The bulk of them derive from Indian words which sound as if they should mean something in English, but don't.

The deja vu quality of these names can be captured best by reading the ballad aloud. Pronounce them in the way that comes closest to making sense. The true pronunciations are listed with the provenances of the words as a postscript.

Chet suffered sore from Acme;
Yet (so I'm Tolt) all day
Upon his Fife he'd Toutle
And brush the girls away.

He loved to Walla Walla
In breakers warm and wet.
In all Duwamish waters
Would splash and Wollochet.

And was he brave? Wenatchee!
Also Elochoman -
Till Latah he fell in with
A Lilliwaup named Anne.

Olalla Palouse was Annie.
Lor' Lummi, wasn't she, though!
She had Asotin something
That should have laid Chetlo.

Chesaw him in Dewatto,
A-floating on his back,
With Tatoosh on his Tumtum
That made her lips go smack.

Now Whatcom over Annie?
 'Twas love, Attalia that.
 Her heart went Hamma Hamma,
 And her teeth went Klickitat.

She said, "You are Malott, dear;
 Wynoochee kiss me, pet?"
 The Mattawa, her ardor
 Was not returned by Chet.

So Anacortes Chester,
 Thurston to Havermale.
 But he replies, "Tonasket!
 Ohop Off! Hit the trail!"

"Naselle me your embraces,"
 She begs him with sweet moan;
 "My family's Algona,
 And I must sleep alone."

With Metho in her madness,
 Once more the girl began:
 "I Sekiu and you only;
 Alava you," Spokane.

"Though men and maidens Canby
 Olequa in God's view,
 You're free to Sauk and kick me.
 Go on - Satsop to you.

"My itch Tacoma to you is
 Mowich than e'er I've had.
 Draw close to me and Scatchet,
 Or else I shall go mad."

"Come Offut," quoth Chet Coulee;
 "Pysht Pysht! We must refrain.
 Shoo! Skagit! Having walked here,
 Newaukum home again!"

Then Anne began to Yellepit,
 And soon she Yelm some more:
 "Tahuya think you're talking?
 You Blewett! Now it's war!"

Back to Leland she dragged him,
 And gave poor Chet La Push.
 She Twisp his nose, and Chucka-
 Nut pie in his mush.

She slapped his cheek, Kapowsin!
 " Oh, Memaloos!" he cried;
 " Elwha-cha doing that for?
 Dosewallips hurt my side!"

She Kickit him. He hollered,
 " Wawawai! Let's cry Queets!"
 A few Moclips she gave him;
 He grovelled at her feets.

" I Wauna be yours only -
 Yes, Anatone," Chet said,
 " For all I've done to hurt you."
 In a Semiahmoo they were wed.

Moral Utsalady who knew how to do it;
 First you Coweman, then hug him tight.
 You'll Seattle work. Now I leave you;
 Tillicum back, Towal a good night.

Omak, OH-mak. From omache, "good medicine".

Iwaco, il-WAW-koh. Name of an Indian chief.

Acme. Named for a hymn-book.

Tolt. From H'lalt; the meaning is not given.

Fife. Name of the founder.

Walla Walla, WAW-luh WAW-luh. From Walatsa, "running water".

Duwamish, doo-WAH-mish. From dewampsh, "the people living
 on the river".

Wollochet, WAH-luh-chet. From wal-atch-et, "squirting clams".

Wenatchee, wuh-NACH-ee. From wenatchi, "river flowing from
 a canyon".

Elochoman, ee-LOH-ku-min. From Ithumin, name of an Indian
 village.

Latah, LAY-tah. From Lahtoo, "the stream where little fish are
 caught".

Lilliwaup, LIL-uh-wahp. "Inlet".

Olalla, oh-LAL-uh. From olallie, "many berries".

Palouse, puh-LOOS. From the Palus Indians.

Lummi. Name of an Indian tribe.

Asotin, uh-SOH-tin. "Eel Creek".

Chetlo, CHET-loh. "Oyster".

Chesaw, CHEE-saw. Named for a Chinese miner.

Dewatto, de-WAH-toh. "Home of evil spirits who make men crazy".

Tatoosh, ta-TOOSH. Perhaps from to-tooch, "thunderbird".

Tumtum. From thum(p)-thum(p), "heart".

Whatcom, WHAHT-kuhm. Name of an Indian chief meaning "noisy
 water".

Attalia, a-TAL-liuh. Named after an Italian village.

Hamma Hamma, HAM-uh HAM-uh. From hab'hab, a swamp reed.

Klickitat, KLIK-i-tat. Either "robber" or "beyond".

Mallot, muh-LAHT. Name of a pioneer.

- Wynoochee, weye-NOO-chee. "Shifting", as the course of a river.
- Mattawa, MAT-a-wuh. "Where is it?"
- Anacortes, an-uh-KOR-tis. Spanish-sounding version of Anna Curtis. Thurston. After Oregon Territory's first delegate to Congress.
- Havermale, HAV-er-mayl. Named after an early minister.
- Tonasket, tuhn-AS-kuht. Named after Chief Tonascutt.
- Ohop, OH-hahp. From owhap, "water rushing out".
- Naselle, nay-SEL. After the Nasal Indians.
- Algona, al-GOH-na. From algoma, "valley of flowers".
- Methow, MET-how. From the name of an Indian tribe.
- Sekiu, SEE-kyoo. "Calm water".
- Alava, AH-lah-vuh. Named for Jose Manuel de Alava, commissioner for Spain at the Nootka Convention of 1790.
- Spokane, spoh-KAN. From an Indian who identified himself as "chief of the sun people".
- Canby. Named for Major General Canby of the U.S. Army.
- Olequa, OH-luh-quah. "Where salmon come to spawn".
- Sauk, SAWK. From the Sah-kee-ma-hu Indians; no meaning is given.
- Satsop, SAT-suhp. From sachap or sats-a-pish, "on a stream".
- Tacoma, tuh-KOH-muh. The meaning of this Indian name is unknown.
- Mowich, MOH-ich. "Deer".
- Scatchet, SKA-chit. Variant of Skagit. The meaning is lost.
- Offut. Family name of two brothers who were early settlers.
- Coulee, KOO-lee. From French couler, "to flow".
- Pysht, PISHT. "Fish".
- Skagit, SKA-jit. The meaning is lost.
- Newaukum, noo-AW-kuhm. "Gently flowing water".
- Yellepit, YEL-uh-pit. The name of an Indian chief.
- Yelm. From chelm, "heat waves rising from the earth".
- Tahuya, tuh-HOO-ya. From ta and ho-i, "that done", referring to some notable but forgotten occurrence.
- Blewett. Named for Edward Blewett.
- Leland. Acronym for a woman's name.
- La Push, luh-POOSH. Indian adaptation of French la bouche, "the mouth" (of a river).
- Twisp. From twitisp. The meaning is not given.
- Chuckanut, CHUHK-uh-nut. The meaning is not known, or recorded.
- Kapowsin, kuh-POW-suhn. Again the meaning is not recorded.
- Elwha, EL-wa. "Elk".
- Dosewallips, dohs-ee-WAH-lips. From the name of a legendary Indian who turned into a mountain.
- Kickit, KICK-uht. Though this word does not appear in Phillips' book, it is the name of a peninsula jutting into Puget Sound.
- Queets. From the Quaitso Indians.
- Moclips, MOH-klips. A place where Indian maidens were sent to undergo puberty rites.
- Wauna, WAW-nuh. "Strong and mighty".
- Anatone, AN-uh-tohn. Name of a legendary Indian woman.
- Semiahmoo, sem-ee-A-moo. Perhaps from a word for "half-moon".
- Utsalady, uht-suh-LAD-ee. "Land of berries".
- Coweman, kow-EE-muhn. From ko-wee-na, "short man".
- Seattle, see-AT-uhl. Name of an Indian chief.
- Tillicum. From tilakum, "friend".