A SECOND LOOK AT WORD CYCLES

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In the May 1969 issue of Word Ways, David Silverman discusses Word Cycles. He says that "cycles of three . . . are harder to come by, and cycles of two, e.g., BOAT HOUSE, are downright scarce". This is the kind of statement that immediately raises my hackles and sends me to the dictionary in search of a refutation, particularly when the problem seems so trivial.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Silverman does not define the criteria for a valid word cycle, for it would then be easier to give examples. Should the resulting two pairs of words both be entered as a single word in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, as BOATHOUSE and HOUSEBOAT? If so, bicycles are not hard to find, e.g., SHOTGUN and GUNSHOT, or HUNTSMAN and MANHUNTS. Examples can even be generated from Mr. Silverman's tricycles, as in WATCHDOG and DOGWATCH.

Perhaps he would prefer that the two reversible words be shown in Webster's in both cases as a two-word entry. Examining his list of tricycles, I find that such is the case with WATER WING, SALT WATER and others. If this is his criterion, then an acceptable bicycle would be WATER ICE (WATER ICE appears as an entry in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Fifth Edition, and ICE WATER in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, Second Edition).

It may be that it is not even necessary that the two-word phrase appear as an entry in Webster's at all, and that it need only be a phrase in common parlance. This is true of Silverman's TABLE SALT. Then a possible bicycle could be LIGHT GREEN or STEW MEAT.

It can be noted that all of the words discussed by Mr. Silverman are compound words; that is to say, they are composed of two syllables each of which is a complete word in itself. The question arises in my mind: can a two-syllable word be found which is not a compound word, whose syllables reverse to form another word? Several of these can be found, e.g., ROWING (INGROW), EDDY (DYED),
ANGLE (GLEAN), RECENT (CENTRE), but in all these pairs the second word is found to have a different syllabic structure from the first. Posing then the additional qualification that both words must maintain the same syllabification, the only word I have found which meets the requirements is MANGER (GERMAN - not the proper noun). While I am sure that others must exist, this would seem to be the form of word cycle which is "downright scarce". Could we call it a unicycle?

QUERY

J. R. Sweeney lives in Radburn, New Jersey, and R. J. Sweeney lives in Hillside, Teaneck, and West Creek, New Jersey, according to recent telephone directories. What could be more fitting, since J. R. (or R. J.) Sweeney is an anagram of New Jersey? This suggests the following logical research: (1) construct plausible personal names by anagramming the letters of a state name; (2) locate persons with that name in a telephone directory within the state. Can readers assist in this task? Some plausible names are: N. W. Yorke (New York); Carol L. Fain, Flora L. Cain, Colin A. Fair (California); O. L. Gager (Georgia); Earl Wade (Delaware); A. K. Barnes (Nebraska); D. A. Flori (Florida); T. Saxe (Texas); R. D. Layman, M. A. Landry, L. Maynard, Mary Land (Maryland).