A GEOGRAPHY LESSON

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In the May 1968 Word Ways the word ARJUZANXESQUE made its first appearance on the logological scene. The word, a coined one, meaning in the style of, or characteristic of, the French town ARJUZANX, was deemed necessary because it exhibited the four most infrequently used letters of the English language, J, Q, X and Z. This word coined by us can now be considered redundant. We have found a genuine -- yes, genuine -- word which employs the four letters J, Q, X and Z. The word in question is ZIQ-XHAFEJ. This is the name of a small village about six kilometres north-north-east of Kavaje, in Albania. We found this in a 1946 gazetteer of Albania with the definitive title A Gazetteer of Albania. This was prepared by the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Use, a body similar in function to the United States Board on Geographic Names. We suggest that you remember this JQXZ word well. We doubt whether further genuine examples will appear for many a long day.

Just as we coined the word ARJUZANXESQUE as a stopgap JQXZ word, so too we can coin a JKQXZ word, where these are the five most infrequently used letters in the English language. Webster's Second Edition lists the suffix -LIKE, meaning having the characteristics of. Thus, ZIQ-XHAFEJLIKE means having the characteristics of the small Albanian village ZIQ-XHAFEJ. This is certainly a memorable word (assuming that you can remember it). We suggest that you try to slip it into your conversation now and then. No one will know what it means, but it will sound impressive.

An even better JKQXZ word can be coined by noting one of the alternative spellings of ZIQ-XHAFEJ listed in the aforementioned gazetteer. The spelling to be noted is ZIKXHAFAJ. The hyphen has disappeared, the Q has become a K, and the penultimate letter, an E, has become an A. To this word we now add the suffix -ESQUE, meaning in the manner or style of. ZIKXHAFAJESQUE, an adjective describing something possessing the characteristics of ZIKXHAFAJ, is preferable to ZIQ-XHAFEJLIKE as it does not have that ugly hyphen.
In Dmitri Borgmann’s first book, *Language on Vacation* (Scribner’s, 1965), it was suggested that the first place name, alphabetically, in the United States was AA JUNCTION, in Johnson County, Arkansas. Mr. Borgmann improved on this in his second book, *Beyond Language* (Scribner’s, 1967), by offering AAB YE, which is in Norman County, Minnesota. There the situation remained until we ventured upon a recent gazetteer of Alaska. The gazetteer in question is completely identified as follows: *Dictionary of Alaska Place-names* (Geological Survey Professional Paper 567), by Donald J. Orth, published by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1967. This gazetteer lists AAAT'S BAY as an alternative to the lackluster AAT'S BAY. Consequently AAAT'S BAY is the first place name, alphabetically, in the United States. Its location was given as 55°55' N., 134°15' W. How long will it be before someone somewhere improves on AAAT'S BAY?

Logologists have, in the past, spent a considerable amount of time searching for words which use one particular letter many times. For example, see Dmitri Borgmann’s article in the February 1969 Word Ways, "The Multiple-Letter Word Hunt". As an example of a word containing four Q’s, the word QUINQUEQUAVERSAL was offered. This, however, suffers from the glaring defect that it is only a derived word, that is, not a genuine word.

Surely there must be a better four-Q word than this derived monster! We set out to locate one. The obvious line of research was to investigate very detailed gazetteers of foreign countries. We scoured Maltese, Arabian and Albanian gazetteers by the score (the place names in these countries tend to possess weird and wonderful letter combinations). We consulted numerous gazetteers for other countries. This was all to no avail -- we just could not turn up a four-Q word. Having come this far in our researches, we just could not give up. So, we set about examining various specialist dictionaries (for example, American Indian tribes, musical instruments, chemical compounds, medical dictionaries). You name it, we examined a dictionary of it. Still no luck, though.

Then, for some reason which we find difficult to account for, we decided to undertake a truly massive state-by-state search of place names in the United States. If Massachusetts can possess a lake whose name is spelled with 15 G’s, as it, indeed, does possess, then surely somewhere in the U.S., remote from the great urban centers, there must exist a four-Q place name.

We turned page after page, thumbed index after index, checked map after map. Then, almost on the verge of giving up our search,
we stumbled on a gazetteer of Alaska, so extensive that it possessed over a thousand pages. On examining this particular work, we found listed under the Q-section the word QAWIQSAQQ. Here was what we had been searching for. Success! Remember this word well, treasure it. It is, in all probability, the only genuine four-Q word that you will ever see.

But what is QAWIQSAQQ? It is an alternative spelling of KAWIKSAK, a bluff in Alaska, situated at approximately 68°11' N., 164°15' W. And the gazetteer that lists QAWIQSAQQ? A Dictionary of Alaska Place-names (Geological Survey Professional Paper 567), edited by Donald J. Orth, and published by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1967. This is the very same gazetteer from which we took AAAT'S BAY, mentioned previously. QAWIQSAQQ is all the more remarkable for being situated in the United States, and not some obscure country with a cockeyed orthography for its place names. Furthermore, the name is taken from a Government publication of recent years, and not some decades-old atlas or gazetteer. A truly remarkable word!

Dmitri Borgmann has pointed out to us that the suffix -ESQUE can be attached to QAWIQSAQQ to get a beautiful, even if derived, five-Q word: QAWIQSAQQESQUE. This means in the manner or style of QAWIQSAQQ. If an afternoon in late fall can be WASHINGTONESQUE, then there must be something that can be described as QAWIQSAQQESQUE. Better that if you can!