IF VICIOUS VER HORSES...

The hero was brave and strong and willin' She felt his chin -- then wed the villain

In the May 1972 Word Ways, readers were invited to supply Albert Wilansky of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania with V-W homophonic pairs as illustrated by the 1953 Burma-Shave advertisement above. The following more-or-less definitive list has been compiled by Stefan and Betsy Burr, Murray Pearce and Mary Youngquist:

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vet     wet    very    wary    verst    worst
vow     wow    veal    weal    verse    worse
veil    wall    vein    wane    very    weary
vine    wine    veer    wler    viper    wiper
vend    vend    vive    weave    vicar    wicker
vest     west    vault    Wale    vizard    wizard
vent     went    veldt    welt    verily    warily
vile     wile    visor    wiser    vassal    wassail
Veep    weep    valse    waltz    vicious    wishes
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A few additional pairs are doubtful, as they depend upon variant pronunciations or contractions:

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vision wishin'  vermin wormin'  villain willin'
vox      walks     vaunted wanted
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V-W pairs need not be restricted to the first letter:

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revoke    rewoke    rover    rower    svelter    swelter
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Perhaps the most unusual V-W pair is one in which V and W exchange places with each other: VIEW - WEAVE.

Ask Mary Youngquist what a V-W homophonic pair is, and she'll tell you it's vair von verdigris in sound vitta second except for the first consonant. In similar vein, she has constructed the following one-acter to make the whole matter perfectly clear:

The Mask of the Green Urn
(other vise known as The Veered Vizard of Verd Vase)

Dramatis Personae:

Daughter (a skinny, pale little kid, a Von Dyke indeed with a vee neck and vetoes)

Mother (a small bird-like woman, always veery, but no visor)
D: I'm a vision to go out -- is this the coat you vaunt me to verify do?
M: No, it has too much vair and you'll get velvet in all that rain. You'll just get veteran colder the longer you stay out, and your cough'll be verse. Then violin bed tonight you'll need vicks in your nose.
D: Vi, how can candles cure a cold?
M: Oh, you silly thing, I mean Vicks Vaporub! (Vow! I'll vignette in this kid-battle! Villa lecture help? She's all vase very and tries vermin herself out of duties. Her father and I verilities over her poor school grades, too.)
D: Velma, then I'll stay in for a little vial, until my two brothers come home. Then vessel probably go out, and vault (or volley), too.
M: O.K., I'm going to do dishes in a viol and I'm looking for a viper. Then sit here in the vicar chair next to the vain Scot in the kitchen, and I'll tell you a story about Don Vaughn, the great lover, and his carousing. He, in a vacillate three roast pigs and toasted the guests in red vines. Enough to make a grown man Veep!
D: Ma, you verso right! If I vent now I'd get vet! Better to be still vile you viva fairy tale. But Venice Fa coming home?
M: I guess he'll virus a day ahead -- he's vending his veryy vase in the vest now. And that reminds me -- to greet him, shall I put on my new vigor not? He doesn't like vim an' frowzy lookin'.