HARMONIOUS OPPOSITES

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1973 Word Ways articles by Mary J. Youngquist and R. Robinson Rowe have taken pairs of words opposite in meaning and scrambled them into phrases or sentences unrelated to the original words in meaning. The problem presented to solvers has been to unscramble them and find the original pairs.

A careful examination of the scrambles reveals the fact that there is something odd about them. First of all, the obvious goal of such scrambling should be to produce words, names, or other dictionary entries. real or at least simulated. Yet, of the 100 original scrambles in these two articles, only one has achieved this goal -- SOUTH WESTER. Surely, it ought to be possible to do better than that!

Naturally, not all pairs can be scrambled so successfully. If it is impossible to achieve the highest level of success, one must turn to a secondary goal: scrambling the opposites into 'phrases or sentences that are both meaningful and cohesive. The authors of the two previous articles have displayed a remarkable indifference to this secondary goal, the attainment of which is mandatory. Because this secondary goal can always be achieved, failing to reach it is not logologically acceptable.

Many or most of the original 100 scrambles exhibit faulty grammar, deliberate misspellings, an excess of internal punctuation, invented names, extreme tenuousness of thought or even a complete absence of thought, and related defects.

It need not be so. To substantiate my view, I have taken 100 brand-new pairs of opposites, scrambling them properly. The new scrambles are presented below. The correct solutions are to be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

The scrambles are arranged in order of letter length, beginning with the shortest ones (four letters) and ending with the longest ones (fourteen letters). The greater the number of letters in a pair of opposites, the easier it is to turn them into an acceptable scramble, but the more difficult it is for the solver to find the original words. For both reasons, I have stopped at the fourteen-letter level.

Those scrambles representing genuine dictionary entries -- there are 24 of them -- are indicated by means of a single asterisk. Those
scrambles representing simulated dictionary entries -- there are 17 of them -- are indicated by a double asterisk. Accordingly, 41 of the 100 scrambles have reached the primary goal. The remaining 59 scrambles have achieved the secondary goal of being both meaningful and cohesive: they involve a minimum of proper names and of internal punctuation, and both grammar and spelling are perfect.

Which is the most difficult scramble to solve? In my opinion, it is number 95.

1. daze*  
2. heat*  
3. arise*  
4. nosey*  
5. radon*  
6. Albert*  
7. germal*  
8. Lowden*  
9. too new  
10. ion trap*  
11. lewison~  
12. overmen*  
13. a desman  
14. Pa swore  
15. spurt on!  
16. befriend*  
17. doweling*  
18. foldouts*  
19. genderer*  
20. oversaid*  
21. Parkdale*  
22. tail ends*  
23. ten-armed*  
24. wardlike*  
25. flailers*  
26. hut tiler**  
27. name tabs**  
28. subyield**  
29. a red knit  
30. arm maids!  
31. a shy dear  
32. ten dikes  
33. lot ached  
34. old fines  
35. she has to!  
36. song data  
37. tie a crew  
38. tie maces  
39. forefined**  
40. impactees**  
41. lead mines**  
42. pavedness**  
43. semifloor**  
44. a thief led  
45. a wet rider  
46. damn dudes!  
47. deck a land  
48. hated fans  
49. lace lions!  
50. blow earth  
51. the morons  
52. wares sank  
53. yes, I mourn  
54. heart lines*  
55. insect care**  
56. rebateward**  
57. rum-browned**  
58. twin lakers**  
59. world-borne*  
60. a deep curse  
61. a supertuft  
62. handy clips!  
63. can a pin fly?  
64. err on those  
65. fast oaring  
66. field crime  
67. madly cured  
68. mere devils  
69. reputed oil  
70. see the shot!  
71. swear or lie  
72. watch Edsel  
73. stepparents*  
74. a final creed  
75. a popish deer  
76. "die!" I sing out  
77. his elf trips!  
78. offer a beret  
79. rice vendees  
80. seat marvels!  
81. see hell, Dora!  
82. ten dour hags  
83. tribes tweet  
84. true antlers  
85. war on litter!  
86. yet so proper  
87. counterseals*  
88. superconduit**  
89. uncolledness**  
90. a Nepali purse  
91. I hate rooters  
92. inexact rente  
93. pure hit shows  
94. gremlin-raised**  
95. star-promising**  
96. ogle not a three  
97. shiver, entente!  
98. to finger a yine  
99. a created tavern  
100. I swear tar is wet!