KICKSHAWS

FAITH W. ECKLER
Morristown, New Jersey

Kickshaws is being assembled by a series of guest editors during Dave Silverman's sabbatical in 1976. During this year, all contributions and comments should be sent to the editor in Morristown, N. J.

Acronym

When the regular Kickshaws editor announced his sabbatical, he left no instructions for the substitute editors. If he had, they might have gone something like this: Keep It Clever, Kids; Subscribers Have Amazing Wits. Silverman. Speaking of acronyms, the attempt to define the word self-descriptively continues (see the February 1973 Kickshaws). E. T. Manning calls our attention to a letter from J. R. Lowdeslager in Science News of January 31, 1976, suggesting the ultimate acronym: Abbreviated, Coded Rendition Of Name, Yielding Meaning. Anyone want to help us reinvent the wheel?

From The Mailbag

The other day the subscription department received a new order from Denis Robinson of Highwood, Montana. He wrote as follows:

Welcome aboard, Denis; we hope you'll change your mind and send us some more bons mots. Another new subscriber, Joseph Dillon III of Gladstone, N. J., writes his letters to the N. Y. Times. He comments on the derivation of New Jersey placenames (no, they don't come from the language of the Lenni Lenape Indians as the etymologists have always thought). He suggests that Netcong is the place where a great ape was caught in a stout wire mesh, and Whippany obviously refers to the corporal punishment meted out in the schools there. He calls this silly sport Toponymic Pseudetymology, and we hope that soon Mr. Dillon will be writing his letters to us.
Bartlett's Less-Familiar Quotations

In today's jet-age world, we don't have time for the flowery phrases in which our ancestors cloaked their thoughts. On the other hand, there's no excuse for the sloppy jargon which has become the lingua franca of so much of today's youth. The Age of Eloquence gives way to the Age of Insatiable Banalities (to use Dave Silverman's favorite transposition), and we are all the poorer for it. Consider these examples:

Then

"I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach"
(Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

"The word must be spoken that bids you depart / Though the effort to speak it should shatter my heart"
(George W. Young)

"God's in His heaven / All's right with the world"
(Robert Browning)

"Great is life . . . and real and mystical"
(Walt Whitman)

"Joy was swept over my eyes . . . a fiery broom sweeping out of the skies like a star"
(Casimir Wierzynski)

Now

You turn me on!

Get lost!

A-OK!

Groovy!

Outa sight!

We could continue, but you get the point. Sorry about that, Bartlett!

Test Your Wits

Seems like it's about time to give you all a quiz. How about this dandy from Charlie Bostick of Ashton, Maryland? Below is a set of words having a common property which you must discover. You will then be able to add something to each word. Hint: the answers (given in Answers and Solutions) are given in alphabetical order.

apple  needle  comet  revenge  peak
restaurant  tour  soliloquy  raiders  complaint
lamp  rainbow  hideaway  ark  bower
ghost  island  choice  razor  folly
ass  tomb  alley  box  rebellion
aunt  travels  vineyard  pence  mother

We know there are lots more; don't bother sending them to us.

Here's another quiz, sent us by the Logophobe of Sweeny, Texas who calls it a Tauto-Quiz. If an extra-efficient building manager is a SUPER SUPER, what do the following definitions bring to mind?

1. opposed
2. in favor of
3. behind
4. ahead of
5. 1/1000

With a little...
Leon Bankoff is very quick with the quotable phrase. Only last week Dave Silverman asked him if he knew Esperanto. "Like a native," he shot back. Bill Ballance, when asked to use "conscience-stricken" and "meretricious" in sentences, came up with "Don't conscience-stricken before they're hatched" and "Meretricious and a Happy New Year". Finally, Erma Bombeck gives the ultimate comeback for the conventional greeting "How are you?" She replies, "Well, I have a 50-50 chance, thank you."

**Alphabet Soup**

Here's a nifty challenge from Ralph Beaman. There's a ten-letter word you probably know well. Let numbers represent its letters (but note that any possible repeated letters are not disclosed by repeated numbers) . Here, from Webster's Second, is the word and some of its divisions, with syllabic divisions indicated by hyphens:

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>12-34.5678-90 (vegetable soup)</th>
<th>1234 (ore deposit) + 567890</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(last hill of range) = 12 (tone E) + 34 (not) + 56 (quiet!) + 7890 (ice patch)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Too difficult? Here is the same word from Webster's Third:

```
| 123-45678-90 (vegetable soup) | 123 (Fukien dialect) + 45-67890 (hormone) = 1 (blood antigen) + 23 (pull) + 456 (nest) + 7890 (rain pipe) |
```

While most of the words are specific to the reference, some, of course, may be found in both works. Using both series you should be able to guess and then verify the words given. If not, see Answers and Solutions. Ralph's rather proud of finding a four-syllable word that divides into two one-syllable words -- if you can find another word which does better, then you may skip this problem.

**Rhopalic Word Divisions**

Consider the set of words having increasing lengths as indicated:

1. German B natural
2. without
3. alas!
4. monk parrot
5. ciliary body (prefix)
6. paraffin hydrocarbon
7. a very wet air
8. thoroughly mixed human
9. a very wet line of skins
10. undersized torpedo boat

With a little thought, this kind of thing could become addictive.
A rhopalic word is one that may be divided into a set of words of lengths one, two, three, etc. Now consider the set I, AGO, OMELET, ADORATIONS. This is, if we may coin a phrase, a rhopahorhopalic set. Above we saw a 21-letter example of a rhopalic word, but before we can add it to our rhopahorhopalic set, we must find a 15-letter rhopalic word. We shall award the title Commander of the Rhopalic Divisions to the reader who furnishes the best (most common words) 15-letter example.

Incidentally, didya know that rhopalic comes from a Greek root meaning "club-shaped"? Do you feel we’re beating you over the head with this?

Extending Language's Vacation

Tom Pulliam recently took another look at the Bible of logophiles Language on Vacation by Dmitri Borgmann. There he spotted among the letter patterns the alternade. This is a word whose every other letter aids in forming two new words. For example, FLEETNESS may be set down as indicated in the diagram to the right. Instead of reading each second letter of a word, we can read every third one to create what is known as a trinade. A simple example of one is given by PRESAGING: PSI, RAN, EGG.

And so it goes for quarternades, a reading of each fourth letter. Dmitri has furnished us with 12-letter examples of this, but Tom feels the need to produce at least one example of a 16-letter one: LARGEHEARTEDNESS: LERN, AHTE, REES, GADS

An Even Longer Vacation

Among "Pangrammatics and Codes", Borgmann acquainted us with the art of enciphering words by shifting their constituent letters uniformly along the alphabet to form new words. For example, the letters of CHEER, shifted forward seven spaces along the alphabet, produce the word JOLLY. Dmitri also offers entire word squares which may thus be shifted. The square at the upper left is turned into the square at the upper right by shifting each letter forward along the alphabet exactly ten spaces. Pulliam again has gone Borgmann one better by producing a 4-by-4 word square thus enciphered. The square at the upper left is transformed into the square at the upper right by shifting each letter thirteen spaces along the alphabet. It certainly is convenient that A-N and E-R are exactly thirteen letters apart!
Syllabic Crosswords Revisited

In the November 1975 Kickshaws, Dave Silverman posed the problem of creating syllabic crosswords. Ralph Beaman interpreted the problem one way in the February 1976 Kickshaws. Joan Jurow of Wan-ague, N.J. has offered a different kind of solution which we suspect is more nearly what Editor Silverman had in mind. Two sets of definitions are supplied -- one for the individual syllables, and one for the complete words.

1. The soul (Egyptian religion)
2. Yellow ocher
3. Against
4. Spring of the year (obs.)
5. Gentleman (slang)
6. Homo sapiens
7. Annamese measure

Across
1. Garden herb
3. Tending to a focus
6. Having resolute qualities

Down
1. Pork product
2. Eminent kickshavian
5. With tenderness

Amazing Facts Department

We recently came across an amazing and little-known bit of etymology. We learned that IDIOT comes from a Greek word meaning "a person not holding public office". Somehow we never would have predicted that. Seems like most of the idiots are in office.

It's Only Money

Let's face it -- my daughter Susan doesn't trust banks. Each week she cashes her paycheck and squirrels the money away in her room. She was putting it in the Encyclopedia under M for Money, but that seemed too obvious, so she has had to devise some new hiding places. Now when I want to borrow some money, I have to consider first whether it's filed under:

```
As sets Gold Nest-egg Unguentum aurum
Bankroll Hoard Oofish Valuables
Cash Income Pelf Whereithal
Dollars Jack Quids Xeraphin
Earnings Kelter Riches Yellow boys
Funds Lucre Spondulics Zillions
Mazooma Treasure
```

Some days it's easier to go downstairs and print up my own.

The above list has some imperfections. Lacking a general term beginning with X, we've had to use a specific currency (Indian). ZIL-LIONS works only by analogy with MILLIONS, and we've really gone
way out with U: UNGUENTUM AURUM is listed in Farmer & Henley's Slang and Its Analogues as a synonym for PALM-GREASE which is itself a synonym for money.

Perhaps the most interesting word in the above list is SPONDULICS (also SPONDULICKS or SPONDULIX). The earliest reference I can cite is to be found in a family letter written in upstate New York in 1856: "Ma has gone to Newport to get a frame & other spondulics to make me a winter bonnet". Here the word would seem to mean "notions" in the sense of sewing supplies. The OED, defining the word as "money, cash", gives 1857 as its earliest citation: "He lost ... All the brass and all the needful, All the spondulix and buttons". From its association here with buttons, one could believe that the word was still being used for some kind of sewing equipment. Farmer & Henley quote an 1863 reference: "I first became acquainted with the word in the United States just twenty years ago. Spondulics was ... an enlarged vulgarisation of greenbacks". Just to round out the record, Webster's Second says "origin uncertain" and by Webster's Third it had become "origin unknown".

Why did we bring all this up? Just because it's an interesting question about a curious word. No source suggests an etymology other than American slang. Did the word spontaneously generate? If so, where, how, and with what meaning? Readers are invited to send us the results of their own researches.

A Single Exception?

Numerous exceptions to two well-known orthographic rules (I before E except after C; Q is always followed by U) have been examined at some length in Word Ways. Stefan Burr of Morristown, N.J. recently called our attention to a pronunciation rule which apparently has but one exception: the letter F has a non-f sound in the single word of (and its compounds whereof, thereof and hereof). Can anyone find another exception? (A warning to nit-pickers: silent FI's, as in Neufchatel cheese, don't count.)

Underground Donkeys

Ralph Beaman called our attention to the following gem from John Ciardi's column in the November 15, 1975 Saturday Review: An Annapolis midshipman taking a course in Spanish wrote that Sancho Panza "always rode a burrow". His Spanish professor wrote in the margin: "Burro is an ass. Burrow is a hole in the ground. As a future naval officer, you are expected to know the difference."

Blendous

Lewis A. Lapham of New York, N.Y. points out that PUDENDOUS is not the only -endous word joining the well-known trio STUPENDOUS, HORRENDOUS and TREMENDOUS: the rare word BLENDOUS, found in the Oxford English Dictionary (but not in Webster's), is derived from the German blenden meaning "to deceive". For the record, the
only other -ndous words in Webster’s Second are NEFANDOUS, INFANDOUS, REPANDOUS, MIRANDOUS, FRONDous and the curious COGITABUNDous.

The Last Word

Finally, we offer what we hope will be the last word on a couple of earlier Kickshaws. Under the heading of Deja Vu, we remind readers that in the February 1975 edition of this column, Editor Silverman told us how to write four million rhymed couplets without batting an eyelash. Compare that with the feat described elsewhere in this issue achieved by Raymond Queneau who enables us to write one hundred thousand billion sonnets (in French, yet). Surely that rates the prize offered by Mr. Silverman who will now have to prove that Chadwick’s 290-volume reference shelf really exists.

Then there’s Shiftwords. First introduced in this column in August 1974, Shiftwords are words which remain words when the initial letter is moved to the end. Countless examples have been shown, including GELATIN, EMANATE and STUMBLING. The keen-eyed Word Buff found one recently in the N. Y. Times Puns and Anagrams crossword of March 21, 1976 by Mel Taub. The definition given: “The old south won’t give in”. The answer: “HOLDSOUT”. Come on now, logologists—are you going to concede?