

THE LAST WORD

To use an overworked phrase, I have both good news and bad news to report to the readers of Word Ways.

First, the good news: I have signed a contract with Dover Publications to produce a book of approximately 150 pages on wordplay based on past material in Word Ways. A preliminary manuscript was delivered to them at the end of January, containing chapters on OuLiPo, lipograms, hidden messages, word networks, transposals, the three ravens, linguists at play, word squares, palindromic poetry construction, word groups, high-scoring Scrabble, English and American placenames, British word puzzles, pangrams, state name wordplay, spelling rules, pencil-and-paper word games, logotopian lingos, and the last word. I hope that this will help reach logophiles who would like to subscribe to Word Ways but have not heard of it.

Next, the bad news: as readers of the masthead will have discovered, Dave Silverman has resigned as Kickshaws editor. Thanks, Dave, for a job well-done; you leave a hole that will be hard to fill, consistently coming up with fresh and interesting material for more than six years. For the moment, the column will continue on the guest editor basis established in 1976. It is difficult to know who might have the time and skill to write a guest column, so I am soliciting possible volunteers. More generally, whom would you like to see as permanent editor? Or do you prefer the guest approach?

This is a good time to define once more the material that goes into Kickshaws, and its relation to other parts of Word Ways. Kickshaws is a forum for logological material too brief to merit a separate article -- say, less than a page in length; under Dave, it was divided between essays and quizzes he originated, and items sent in by readers, including responses to earlier Kickshaws (reader response to articles appears in Colloquy instead). The line between Kickshaws and end-of-page fillers is more blurred, but the latter in recent issues have been restricted to factual notices of new books or articles of logological interest published elsewhere. Comments on the outside scene can also appear in Kickshaws, but more likely as part of an overall theme developed by the Kickshaws editor.