

COLLOQUY

Don Hauptman wrote the *New York Times*:

To the Editor,

“Pun for the Ages” by Joseph Tartakovsky (Op-ed, March 28) is an entertaining and informative review of the positive and negative aspects of wordplay, and well-timed in its proximity to April Fool’s Day.

But he doesn’t mention one relevant and important point. America is facing a crisis of escalating illiteracy. In 2007, a report by the National Endowment for the Arts concluded that students’ reading skills are stagnating or falling, and that employers routinely complain that new hires are unable to write clearly or even to comprehend what they read.

How can this problem be addressed? Humor is a powerful motivator. Wordplay can encourage reading and language learning at all levels. Young children love puns and playing with words helps them expand their vocabulary and master language skills.

Adults from other parts of the world who study English delight in the multiple meanings of many words.

As for the writer’s contention that puns are sometimes greeted with groaning and scorn instead of laughter, remember what diamond cutters say: “They can’t all be gems!”

DON HAUPTMAN
New York, March 28, 2009

*The writer is the author of *Cruel and Unusual Puns* (Dell, 1991), a celebration of spoonerisms*

O.V. Michaelsen says:

I didn't claim authorship of the palindrome "R. E. Lee, potato peeler." That was a mistake. Lederer liked that one and might have gotten it from my first manuscript. He liked a FEW things in it and kindly included ideas and a long sentence written by my editor, before my book was published. A lot of material in his foreword to that book was taken from Antony B. Lake's *A Pleasury of Wordplay* (1975). I was elated the Mr. Lederer managed to mention my name in the foreword, but not so pleased with his anagram of my name: "Manic, he loves." "Love's machine" would have been more flattering. I guess my anxiety disorder is perceived as manic.

I found the palindrome “Robert E. Lee, potato peeler” in a 1983 issue of Dr. Crypton’s Science Digest column. The palindrome was credited to “Crossman, Jr.” Now it’s an anonymous written “classic.”

To my knowledge, the anagram "G. Dubya = Bad guy" is mine. I submitted it to an anagram Website in 2001.

Nearly twenty years ago, Ken Elrod mistakenly credited me for material I submitted to his Mensa SIG newsletter Word Fun. In my letters to him, I carefully gave credit with each item.

In '94 to '95, the editor of the Mensa International Journal allowed me a small corner of a page devoted to form puzzles, but did not allow the space to include my sources. A few members of the NPL jumped on the Word Fun and M. I. Journal problems without considering the possibility that the mistakes were not mine. Some Krewe members were convinced that I was a con man of some sort. They're bright people, but not quite ENOUGH.

JonArno Lawson submits the following poem written in nine lines, the first line is a one-letter/word line. The second line has two two=letters words, the third has three three-letter words, etc. up to nine.

The Crowd by Numbers

I
on my
own see now
what must have been
clear other nights, stars, comet
trails - orbits unfold across dreams, people collect, passive, orderly - observe horizon
melting skyward tranquil. . . peaceful. Suddenly, enormous night sky scatters watchers
outwards wandering separated homegrown multitude, aimlessly ambitious, traverses
limitless distances.

Simon Norton comments on the February issue: I discovered some errors in my own article:

- (a) In my list of period patterns the one for $u=4$ was omitted. It is (6,6,6).
- (b) In the 6th line of page 48 the equation should be

$f_{2^{n-1}} = f_{2^n} / f_{2^{n-1}}$. I think I must have mistyped the last underline as a minus sign as that's how it has come out.

A few other errors: In Julie Sussman's double crostic, the answer to E is given as Tow Low. However the usual name is Tow Law. Interestingly when googling "tow low" I came across a website "Subterranea Britannica" which mentions Tow Low, but I think it's just a typo. Incidentally the words "law" and "low" have the same origin.

And in the Webster quiz clue 37 is wrongly numbered 36, and the real 37 is omitted. Also while clue 12 is no doubt literally true, I think it's a bit misleading as I got the impression that the whole phrase was supposed to fit in the alphabetic sequence which it doesn't.

For Clue 9 I found another word that fits in the alphabetic sequence and whose meaning could plausibly have changed from that quoted by Webster: Buttery.

I solved the back page puzzle instantly. The solution satisfies the stronger condition that all the broken diagonals also transpose to Tourmaline. In any layout where the rows, columns and diagonals including broken diagonals never repeat a letter, the occurrences of each letter must make up a knights move lattice.

Oscar Thumpbindle replies: Simon Norton is quite correct. Here is a solution that tiles the plane. Notice in the middle 5x5 square that the five vowels are Knight's mini-tours and so are five consonants. For information about these ideas see "Magic Square Magic" in the May, 2000 issue.

TO	ME	IN	RA	LU	TO	ME	IN	RA	LU	TO	ME	IN	RA	LU
AN	UR	LO	ET	MI	AN	UR	LO	ET	MI	AN	UR	LO	ET	MI
EL	IT	MA	NU	OR	EL	IT	MA	NU	OR	EL	IT	MA	NU	OR
MU	NO	RE	LI	AT	MU	NO	RE	LI	AT	MU	NO	RE	LI	AT
RI	LA	UT	OM	NE	RI	LA	UT	OM	NE	RI	LA	UT	OM	NE
TO	ME	IN	RA	LU	TO	ME	IN	RA	LU	TO	ME	IN	RA	LU
AN	UR	LO	ET	MI	AN	UR	LO	ET	MI	AN	UR	LO	ET	MI
EL	IT	MA	NU	OR	EL	IT	MA	NU	OR	EL	IT	MA	NU	OR
MU	NO	RE	LI	AT	MU	NO	RE	LI	AT	MU	NO	RE	LI	AT
RI	LA	UT	OM	NE	RI	LA	UT	OM	NE	RI	LA	UT	OM	NE
TO	ME	IN	RA	LU	TO	ME	IN	RA	LU	TO	ME	IN	RA	LU
AN	UR	LO	ET	MI	AN	UR	LO	ET	MI	AN	UR	LO	ET	MI
EL	IT	MA	NU	OR	EL	IT	MA	NU	OR	EL	IT	MA	NU	OR
MU	NO	RE	LI	AT	MU	NO	RE	LI	AT	MU	NO	RE	LI	AT
RI	LA	UT	OM	NE	RI	LA	UT	OM	NE	RI	LA	UT	OM	NE