PALINDROMIC CHARADE SENTENCES

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The construction of palindromes is an extremely old entertainment among word lovers and requires no introduction. Much newer are charade sentences which were introduced by Howard Bergerson in Word Ways and most recently discussed there by Hearst Sill Rogers in the February 1977 issue. In the February 1977 Word Ways there appeared a series of "double" palindromes by the writer of this article. Some readers have doubtless recognized the double palindrome as being merely a pair of charade sentences composed with the additional constraint of being palindromic or, more simply, of being palindromic charade sentences. I believe this to be a new form of amusement worth noting more fully.

Certainly the composition of palindromic charade sentences is a fascinating though invariably trying problem. Progress toward eventual solution is frustratingly slow, hampered by a multitude of blind alleys all of which must be carefully explored before being abandoned in favor of more promising alternatives. This trial-and-error procedure is mostly simply undertaken if the problem, once clearly in mind, is so set up as to be most easily accessible during composition.

Solution proceeds quadrilaterally. That is, a letter added at one position is automatically added at three others. If these four points are designated as a, b, c and d, they can best be arranged as follows:

a

b
c
d

The points a...b and c...d represent the ends of the two palindromic sentences we are constructing. Between them will be identical palindromic letter-strings which can be broken into words one way to produce the first sentence and in another, yielding different words, the second. The same word may occasionally appear in both sentences, but never in the same position. Our task, then, is to choose such letters as will create such a string.

The first letter should be one with which words not infrequently begin or end. As P fulfills this requirement, let it become the first (and last) of our string, our diagram being

a P
c P

P b
P d

In the past frequent and truly true in the a word in left (positions b c of the first requirement. Using it, our

a P

b P

Our

b P

This is a useful fragment which will satisfy the first required by the word at position b. Of course, P L of PUPIL is our I and L. A good choice produces the following:

a P U P I L

c P U P I L

Thought, the seventh and eighth a P U P I L

c P U P I L

Much later we finally conclude:

a P U P I L

c P U P I L

The terminal E is admitted at the moment.

Now we must see if they have. The brief stories are may not be relat
In the past, palindromists have discovered the importance of using frequent short words in their constructions; the same is especially true in the present case. The second letter should either complete a word in left-to-right sequence (positions a and c) or in reverse (positions b and d), or be generative in the formation of others. If the first requirement is to be met, one letter available to us is U. Using it, our diagram becomes

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a PU UP b
  c PU    UP d
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We now have the useable word UP at positions b and d and the useful fragment PU at a and c. Our task now is to choose a letter which will satisfy the requirements noted in the paragraph above. Choosing P, we have either PUP or P UP (PU P is obviously without value) at our four positions. As PUP seems worthwhile either as a word or word fragment, we decide to use it in three positions while retaining P UP for the fourth, the diagram becoming

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a PUP UP b
  c PUP PUP d
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This is a crucial point in the development of the two sentences as the letter-string has begun its separation into the varying words required by the charade constraint. We decide to retain PUP as a word at positions a and d and as a word fragment at c. At b we have, of course, P UP. Reference to the dictionary suggests that the word PUPIL is our best alternative, our fourth and fifth letters becoming I and L. A good deal of experimentation as to final positioning produces the following diagram:

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a PUP IL LIP UP b
  c PUPIL I PI PUP d
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Thought, trial and retrial bring forth L, I and F as our sixth, seventh and eighth letters to produce the following words:

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a PUP ILL IF FILLIP UP b
  c PUPIL LIF FILL I PUP d
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Much later, after frequent pauses for rest and refreshment, we finally conclude with

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PUP ILL IF EROSE SORE FILLIP UP
PUPIL LIFE ROSE SO REFILL I PUP
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The terminal E of EROSE and ROSE represents the extra letter permitted at the mid-points of palindromes.

Now we must punctuate the lines so as to clarify whatever meaning they have. Finally, it may be necessary that we compose such brief stories as are needed to justify each of the pair which may or may not be related in subject. The completed exercise then is:

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PUP ILL? IF EROSE, SORE FILLIP, UP!
PUPIL, LIFE ROSE SO REFILL I, PUP!

In the first sentence a young dog regurgitates an exciting but weathered old bone; in the second, a schoolmaster, caught boozing by one of his charges, defiantly replenishes his glass.

The procedure is not easy nor the results without imperfections, but the writer of palindromic charade sentences feels great satisfaction on the completion of a pair. At the same time he will approach his next attempt with increased confidence as experience makes him more comfortable in the form. Thus, using the method described above, one may start with the letter O and produce a letter-string which divides into

ONER! I'D EVILER GO, DOG, RELIVED I RENO!
ONE RIDE VILER? GOD, OGRE, LIVE! DIRE, NO?

In the first sentence a man is tempted by his devil to return to a dissolute life in Nevada, but refuses; in the second, he realizes damnation is his fate in any event so implores his earthly devil to flourish.

Just as the gambler is drawn to Reno, those who enjoy working with words will find many hours of pleasure in the composition of palindromic charade sentences.

A PUN MY SOUL

A. G. F. Lewis (27 Odds Farm Estate, Wooburn Common, High Wycombe, Bucks HP10 OLA, England) is the author of a slim paperback volume on puns which he offers for one dollar postpaid. Samples (some with illustrations by "Nipper") include: Though I lost my temper / And yelled at everyone / In the motorist's shop / I couldn't get a solenoid. If they asked me what / Shakespeare called the Globe / I'd politely say / a wooden O. Strictly for pun aficionados.