MEJNOUR ZANONI

A recent Word Ways article by Philip M. Cohen (May, 1980) eunuciates a new logological concept. For a word or name to be regarded as "interesting" it must have some property unique within the group to which it belongs. The article illustrates the concept by applying it to a well-known group of names: that of the 50 states of the United States.

I happen to be thoroughly opposed to the new concept, primarily because it is almost useless. More than 99 per cent of all English words do not belong to any comparatively small and sharply-delineated group. If the boundaries of a group are indistinct (the nations of the world, for example), or if the group is very large (the mammals, for instance), the concept is inapplicable. Many words, moreover, don't belong to any identifiable group at all, unless one is willing to accept such strange categories as "interjections" and "past participles of verbs". It isn't possible to fashion a universal principle out of literally nothing. However, the utility of the concept is not my immediate concern.

In making their presentation, the author of the article and his distinguished collaborators, including the editor of Word Ways, have violated the most fundamental principles of logology. If they are riding the wave of the future, then logology is dead. Consider:

1. The article presents solutions for only 34 of the 50 state names. Nature abhors a vacuum, and so does the logologist. If the group is the working unit, then any incomplete set of solutions is no solution at all. In school, a grade of 68 per cent is a failing grade. So it is in logology!

2. Principles are applied erratically, to suit the author's personal biases. Thus, ARIZONA and NEW JERSEY cannot be singled out as unique for using the letters Z and J, respectively, because these attributes are of the same kind. On the other hand, the solutions offered for ARKANSAS and KANSAS are two sides of the same coin, as are those for VERMONT and MONTANA. Since one solution can legitimately be used only once, the actual number of states for which solutions are presented is only 32 -- a 64 per cent rating, less than two-thirds of the total.

3. There are numerous errors among the solutions presented. For instance, MAINE is not the longest state name curtailable to a single letter (INDIANA is); ILLINOIS is not the only state forming a so-called clockword (NEVADA is another); and "main" is not the only homonym for MAINE ("maine" is another). Accuracy is the very first requirement imposed on any would-be logologist.

4. Some of the name characteristics listed are so obscure that even expert logologists may have had difficulty recognizing them. For instance, ARIZONA is the only state name with a horizontal reflection parallel to the "aca" of the nation's capital.

5. Most of the solutions were submitted in a personal letter to the editor of Vacation, a letter of the most fundamental principle of logology.

6. Even fully mathematical and somewhat strange, the article has its adherents. Is the process of solving it? The answer is no.

ALABAMA The one half of the ALASKA thought of the inhabitant of the ESKIMO square, called ARIZONA one of the very most other state structure. INDIAN, one of the few.

ARKANSAS The letter of the state.

CALIFORNIA An elephant from numerous virginius.

COLORADO COLOR A
be regarded in the group to applying it to a United States.

English words lineate the word, for instance, to belong to such strange, it isn't anything. How.

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satisfied. For instance, to a single forming a solution not the only is the very

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it is the only name of a state the capital of which (DENVER) is half golden and half silver.

CONNECTICUT  The only state name convertible into a sentence free of proper names and grammatically complete, all by way of a charade: CONNECT! . . . I CUT!

DELAWARE  That state name containing the longest palindromic sequence of nonidentical vowels.

FLORIDA  In relation to the Presidents of the United States, this state name is the only kangaroo word or marsupial, harboring the name FORD inside it.

GEORGIA  The only state name which is also the name of a constituent republic of the Soviet Union. Comparing these particular two nations is logologically significant because the abbreviation of "United States" (US) is a reversal of the abbreviation of "Soviet Union" (SU).

HAWAII  The only state name using five consecutive nonconsonants (vowels and semivowels).

IDAHO  The only state name accurately homonymous with a grammatically complete sentence free of proper names: I'D A HOE.

ILLINOIS  The longest state name forming another word by way of circular reversal (ILLISION). A shorter example is that of NEVADA - VENADA.

INDIANA  The only state name forming a link in an unbroken series of successive curtailments beginning with a nine-letter word (INDIANANS). IND is a poetic name for India; INDI is the genitive singular form of the constellation name INDUS, used in identifying stars in that constellation. Both of these words are in Webster Two.

IOWA  The only state name consisting exclusively of nonconsonants (vowels and semivowels).

KANSAS  The shortest state name which is also the plural of another word (KANSA, an Indian of a Siouan tribe).

KENTUCKY  The alphabetically last state name in a reverse-alphabetical list of such names (YKCUTNEK).

LOUISIANA  Although the state is in the United States of America, its name is the only one featuring the nation (USA) inside the state, perfectly centered and evenly spaced (every second letter).

MAINE  The only one-syllable state name.

MARYLAND  The only state with a name including a feminine first name, the capital of which (ANNAPOLIS) includes a different feminine first name. This characteristic may be generalized to all first names.

MASSACHUSETTS  The only state name containing the capital of another word which in turn contains the capital of another state name. It is unique in this regard.

MICHIGAN  The only state name containing the capital of another word which in turn contains the capital of another word which in turn contains the capital of another state name.

MINNESOTA  The only one-syllable state name with one letter ending.

MISSISSIPPI  The only state name containing the capital of another word which in turn contains the capital of another word which in turn contains the capital of another word that contains the capital of another state name.

MISSOURI  The only state name containing the capital of another state name.

MONTANA  The only state name containing the capital of another word which in turn contains the capital of another state name.

NEBRASKA  The only state name containing the capital of another word which in turn contains the capital of another state name.

NEVADA  The only state name containing the capital of another word which in turn contains the capital of another state name.

NEW HAMPSHIRE  The only state name containing the capital of another word which in turn contains the capital of another state name.

NEW JERSEY  The only state name containing the capital of another word which in turn contains the capital of another state name.

NEW MEXICO  The only state name containing the capital of another word which in turn contains the capital of another state name.

NEW YORK  The only state name containing the capital of another word which in turn contains the capital of another state name.
first names, masculine or feminine.

MASSACHUSETTS The longest state name which is also the plural of another word (MASSACHUSET, an Indian of an Algonquian tribe). The way in which the plural is formed -- by adding the digraph TS -- is unique in English.

MICHIGAN The only state name the corresponding name for the inhabitants of which state is formed by adding -DER. The customary endings are -ER, -IAN, and -ITE.

MINNESOTA The only state a town in which can be spelled by deleting one letter from the state name (MINNEOTA, in Lyon County).

MISSISSIPPI Each year, one of the participants in the Miss America beauty contest is MISS MISSISSIPPI. The 1980 Miss America happens to have been Miss Mississippi. The state name is the only one permitting the formation of a 15-letter term spelled with only 4 different alphabetic letters. The name ties the word SENSELESS-NESS for the English-language record.

MISSOURI The only state name from which the four titles of courtesy conventional in English can all be spelled: MR., MRS., MISS and MS. Also SIR, the French M. (abbreviation for "Monsieur") and the Spanish SR. (abbreviation for "Senor") are all extractable from this state name.

MONTANA The only state name more than half of the letters of which are clustered around the exact midpoint of the alphabet (in the range LMNO).

NEBRASKA The only state using a reversal of its name for various purposes (the AK. SAR. BEN Track in Omaha, sports events, stock shows, fancy balls, etc.).

NEVADA The only state name which can be reversed to spell the name of a town in the state (ADAVEN, in Nye County). Combined, the two form a 12-letter palindrome: ADAVEN, NEVADA.

NEW HAMPSHIRE The alphabetically first two-word name.

NEW JERSEY The longest state name using two semivowels ( W, Y).

NEW MEXICO The only state named for one of today's foreign nations (MEXICO).

NEW YORK That state name including the alphabetically last word (YORK) found in any state name.

NORTH CAROLINA That two-word state name the parts of which are most nearly equal in weight. The sum of the numerical values of the letters in NORTH is 75; in CAROLINA, 73 -- a difference of only two.
NORTH DAKOTA The longest state name featuring a tautonymic sequence of nonidentical vowels.

OHIO The only state name divisible into a series of English interjections (O, HI, O): a palindromic sequence, to boot.

OKLAHOMA The only state name that can be used to form a three-part tautonym: OKLAHOMA, OKLAHOMA, OKLAHOMA (the city of Oklahoma, in the county of Oklahoma, in the State of Oklahoma). Oklahoma City was formerly known as Oklahoma (Funk & Wagnalls unabridged, 1945 Edition).

OREGON The only state name which is the product of terminally eliding a standard English word (FOREGONE).

PENNSYLVANIA The longest state name bearing a curious relationship to the name of the largest city in the state (PHILADELPHIA): both names are spelled with the same number of letters (12), are pronounced with the same number of syllables (5), and begin and end with the same two letters (P, A).

RHODE ISLAND The only two-word state name neither part of which appears in any other state name.

SOUTH CAROLINA That two-word state name with a higher numerical letter value total than any other (156). The number happens to be an integral multiple of the number of letters in the name (13).

SOUTH DAKOTA The longest two-word state name without any liquid or nasal consonants (L, M, N, R).

TENNESSEE The only state name featuring three "almost" consecutive letter pairs (NN, SS, EE): only one other letter intrudes to mar their consecutivity.

TEXAS That state name the consonants and vowels of which are numerically furthest away from each other: the average value of the consonants is 21, that of the vowels only 3, for a difference of 18, equal to more than two-thirds of the alphabet.

UTAH One of the counties in Utah is UINTAH. Yet, it is the name UTAH which is in the name UINTAH. No other state name enters into such a paradoxical relationship with a county name.

VERMONT The four-letter combining form ending the name of this state is also the four-letter combining form beginning the name of its capital (MONTPELIER). The relationship is a unique one.

VIRGINIA The longest state name which is also a given or first name.

WASHINGTON The longest state name transposable into an English dictionary word (NOWANIGHTS).
BRAIN GAMES 2: 160 MIND-BOGGLING PUZZLES

Will Shortz, editor of Games Magazine, has done it again -- published a sequel to his thoroughly entertaining Brain Games (reviewed in the August 1979 Word Ways). Available in paperback from Simon and Schuster for $4.95, it contains 24 timed tests of the sort introduced in the first volume, plus eight kinds of puzzle diagrams in novel formats -- crosswords in the form of spirals or roses, partially-filled-out crosswords whose missing letters can be rearranged to spell out a quotation, crosswords in which eight-letter words pivot around hubs, three-dimensional grids in which one traces out words by adjacent-letter moves, and pairs of crosswords in which corresponding lines are transposals of each other. A sampler:

1. If OMAHA is in tOMAHAwk, what 8-letter word contains UTICA?
2. Cross out 12 letters from this scrambled alphabet and spell a word: avgmhbpsdecxtrkoqslvyn
3. What English word meaning 'waste', converted to Pig Latin, becomes a word meaning 'waste receptacle'?
4. Fill in the blanks in e--e--e--e--e, the quality of a popular party hostess
5. What word means both 'not as rough' and 'cause to feel pleased or honored'?
6. Fill in with homonyms: It is -- a mystery why the -- priest wears -- socks

WEST VIRGINIA The only state name beginning with a direction which is not counterbalanced by another state name beginning with the opposite direction.

WISCONSIN The longest state name exhibiting a palindromic consonant-vowel pattern (CVCCVCCVC).

WYOMING The alphabetically last state name.

The foregoing list of unique state name characteristics excludes coined words entirely. It includes only one reference to a transposal, a reference which could have been eliminated by identifying WASHINGTON as the only state name identical with the name of a United States President. It includes only three qualities of a purely numerical character (in the cases of NORTH CAROLINA, SOUTH CAROLINA and TEXAS).