Several readers commented on Kyle Corbin's "High-Scoring Scrabble Revised" in the May issue; their remarks are summarized below.

Philip Cohen: By insisting that all words must be in a single dictionary, the manufacturer of Scrabble has intolerably restricted logologists in their search for high-scoring single moves; why should two dictionary-sanctioned words be barred from simultaneous use in a high-move strategy merely because no single dictionary contains both? Rules are important, and must be agreed upon beforehand in both logology and game play; however, except in official Scrabble tournaments, players ought to have the freedom to determine what rules make the game most interesting to them.

Jeff Grant (current New Zealand Scrabble champion): Although the Scrabble rules state that a word must be labeled as a part of speech, I feel this should not be interpreted too literally. If a word is shown as a variant of another word, which in turn is labeled a part of speech, then surely it is acceptable. Some dictionaries, notably the OED, do not always indicate the part of speech when it is obvious. With the Official Scrabble Players Dictionary there is no dispute, but with others the players must be flexible and use common sense regarding the admissibility of words. Incidentally, another 51-pointer allowed by Scrabble rules is PROZYGAPOPHYYSIS, below the line in Web 2 (also in the OED, but without a part of speech label).

Alan Frank: Kyle Corbin's rules for the admissibility of inflected forms run into trouble when applied to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eighth Edition, the official back-up dictionary in Scrabble tournaments for words of nine or more letters; it does not give any rules whatsoever for the formation of "regular" plurals and verbs. As Director of the Boston Scrabble Club, I intend to assume that all words of nine or more letters, listed with a noun or verb part of speech but no inflections, take the regular inflections for that part of speech.

Harry Partridge writes "How true it is that one man's delight is another man's delict. When I first saw this Ormonde de Kay stuff in Harvard Magazine I looked again to be sure the name wasn't Urban de Kay. How a human being can spend his time and erudition on that utter tripe is beyond me ... Strictly PPP (Pure Print Pollution)."
Many readers sent in comments on "Telephomnemonics". The Washington Post of February 27, 1981 lists an optician's telephone number as EYETEST. Leroy Meyers heard that a liquor store in lower Manhattan was refused the telephone number Whitehall 4-7539 because of the unfair advantage this would create. A friend of his had the telephone number ENACTOR, and the Cord Camera Shop in Columbus now has several telephone numbers ending in 2673. Frank Rubin cites HUBMAIL in Boston (the post office?). Richard Lederer of White Plains, New York could never remember his telephone number until he realized it spelled TAX GREG; every time he gives this mnemonic to someone, they look at him as if he were out of his mind. David Fellman of Rochester, Minnesota sent a copy of the Minnesota Zoological Society newsletter, Zoo News (they missed a bet overlooking ZooNooz), which gave the telephone number CARIBOU (or people wishing to sponsor (contribute to the care of) zoo animals. Boris Randolph tried dialing LINCOLN, CHEMIST, SEX PLAY, NEW YORK and HOLY PIG on his phone and found that all these numbers started ringing! Philip Cohen reports that the Change of Hobbit bookstore in Los Angeles has the telephone GREAT SF. Harry Partridge discovered GETHELP, a phone number for a home security firm in West Los Angeles, and saw on TV "be a big brother to some kid and dial BROTHER!".

Elsewhere in this issue, Darryl Francis presents words spelled with the letters ACEINORST, including the name CORA STEIN. Although this sounds very plausible, a search of telephone directories of large cities in the US failed to reveal any bearer. According to 1974 Social Security records, the name STEIN occurs once in 5000 names, and according to Leslie Dunkling's First Names First, the name CORA occurred once in every 10000 female names in 1950. Multiplying these together, CORA STEIN is a one-in-fifty-million occurrence among all the females in the US. But multiplication assumes that people named STEIN are, on the average, as likely as those bearing other surnames to adopt the name CORA, and this is not true -- STEIN is a Jewish name, whereas CORA (at least among people born about 1915) is overwhelmingly a black one. I'll be very surprised if a CORA STEIN is ever found!
Philip Cohen reports a number of new oxymorons in Merl Reagle's puzzle in the March 1981 4th Puzzler: accepts offers, misses catches, still moving, Little Giant (a 1946 Abbott and Costello movie), swell contract ('peachy pact'), to get her a part ('groan'), eat fast, and now then. Harry Partridge thinks that Judeo-Christian is one of the strangest oxymorons of all. Two of Leroy Meyers' favorite oxymorons are recorded live (from the BBC concert hall program) and normal deviates (part of title of A Million Random Digits With 100,000 Normal Deviates, published by the Rand Corporation in 1955).

William Sunners notes that LEON NOEL was the French ambassador to Poland at the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

Harry Partridge adds another word represented by O: standing O (for ovation), de rigeur in how-biz circles. He adds sardonically that a sure way of being standing-o-ed is to be a lousy actor and (a) have lung cancer, (b) wear a pacemaker, or (c) be over three score years and ten.

Frank Rubin notes that Kania should have been Kauia in the Kickshaws note on short multisyllable words. Going outside the rules, WWW is the name of a Boy Scout Honor society having 9 syllables in 3 letters.

"Wow! What a job!" says Philip Cohen of "Piaster Resistance" in the May issue. By consulting the OSN Gazetteers, Jeff Grant could have added several more; he notes Aste, Sae and A-Tse from the November 1979 Colloquy. Other words are sten (in the English Dialect Dictionary) and Tse-A (in American Indians North of Mexico). Darryl Francis points out that the 1000 words in PIASTER found by Jeff Grant are only a tiny fraction of the 13,699 possible "words" that can be formed by selecting one through seven different letters and arranging these in all possible ways. (A mathematical note: to calculate the number of "words" that can be formed out of n different letters, use the iterative formula \( P_n = n(P_{n-1} + 1) \) with \( P_0 = 0 \). Since most of these 13,699 "words" will never be found, he proposes a more manageable investigation: that of finding a word corresponding to each of the \( 2^7 - 1 = 127 \) ways in which one or more letters in PIASTER can be selected, not counting rearrangements. He notes that Jeff Grant found words for 121 cases, failing only with the all-consonant sets PR, PT, PRS, PRT, RST and PRST. Can anyone propose any set of seven different letters forming a word which yields words for all 127 cases? The meager supply of all-consonant words (Word Ways, August and November 1980) argues against success, but it might be doable using five (or six?) letters.

Leroy Meyers footnotes Martin Gardner's February Kickshaws about Major Minor: "When I was in Washington, the husband of one of my co-workers was a Marine Corps colonel. His principal assistant was a Sgt. Major -- not a Sergeant-Major, but a Sergeant whose last name was Major."
Darryl Francis and Jeff Grant caught the erroneous claim that IEIE is not a Websterian word -- it appears both in Web 2 and 3 under IE, though marred by a hyphen in the former. This was not Philip Cohen’s goof, but the editor’s, caught in too-hasty assembly of Kickshaws.

Yes, the longest Russian word typed with one finger only exceeds the seven-letter English record, according to Leroy Meyers: (ZA) NEI-MENIEM, meaning ‘in the absence of’, has nine letters.

Elsewhere in this issue, Jeff Grant presents a survey article on words having three or more consecutive letters. Philip Cohen footnotes this work with the observation that Shakespeare used one triple-S word: HOSTESSSHIP, in "The Winter’s Tale", Act IV, Scene iv, line 72.

Philip Cohen found "Triumphal Transposals" a fine article, with useful and interesting material. On the other hand, Alan Frank took objection to the claim that the anagrammed pen names of Rabelais and ColteIini are non-trivial transpositions. (The shuffling may be non-trivial, but the meaning is essentially the same.) Darryl Francis wonders why Professor Cloudesley failed to note the nine-letter STELLIFER-REFILLETS reversal in the February 1981 Word Ways; clearly, REFILLETS is a coinage on an equal standing with RE REVILED. William Sumners argues that a man who prepares desserts in a restaurant kitchen ought to be a DESSERTER, the reverse of RESTRESSED. Harry Partridge doesn’t believe that NATURAL NECESSITIES needs justification for its existence; it has a negative antonym, unnatural necessities, and the OED instances ‘instant necessities’ (1585). The last word comes from Charles Holding:

Not until I read Ravenscroft J. Cloudesley’s revealing article in the May issue, questioning the legitimacy of the transposal-pair, INARTICULATENESS!NATURAL NECESSITIES, was I able to stand back and look with awe at what I had created. I sleep now with the magazine under my pillow, blissful in the knowledge that the two plurals have attained the imprimatur of normal usage. This has been brought about by Cloudesley’s printed critical examination of the two words...”

Recently Alan Frank wrote a program to search for all subtransposals with no letters in common among the words in the Official Scrabble Players Dictionary (two words are subtransposals if the products of their letter-values, setting A = 1, B = 2, etc., are the same). 110 pairs showed up with scores of ten million or more, the largest-scoring examples being PERJURER-FLINTILY and PERJURER-NIHILITY at 489,888,000 and RUPTURE-HOLLOING at 228,614,400. These are inferior to the score reported for REGULARLY-CONDITION in the May Colloquy, which has since been matched by RUEFULLY-CONDITION. Another high scorer is CYCLIZING-RUMORED, at 557,247,600. If no repeated letters are allowed in either word, the best pair known is HOACTZIN-RUMPLY, at 23,587,200.

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Both Philip Cohen and Harry Partridge deplored the fact that no translations were given for the sentences in "Czechoslovakian Stutters" (and Sam Edelston deplored the misspelling of his name). Here are a few, provided by Harry Partridge:

The worm crawls out of the cheese that turned green (Cervyleze...)
My little llama licked the little poppy stalks (Mala ma...)
Behind the houses my mama has a little garden (Za domama...)
Did the lillies explain Lily's face? (Vysvetlili li...)

He adds "word order is so damned free in the Slavic languages that you can get effects that are impossible in English, but ... English is still the world's best and greatest language." (I'll drink to that!) Jeremy Morse constructs several fine English stutters:

After pubs started bringing in gin, ginger beer went out of fashion
Another, that hat hath a thankless air
The Irish republican having his emblem, and the English monarch His, this thistle must belong to the Scottish nationalist

Onomasticon follow-ups: Ed Wolpow found two more -FER words in Webster's Third, ANTIPESTIFER (part of antipestifer infection, a disease of ducks) and LACCIFER (a genus of insects). In similar vein, George Scheetz sent in the coinage ABORTICIDE (abortion) from the May 1 1981 issue of the Peoria newspaper Journal Star, and Kevin Cormicle found COSMOSCIDE (human extinction) in an advertisement in the April 27 1981 Wall Street Journal.

Philip Cohen found "Word-Crossed Characters" a lovely bit of non-English wordplay, flawlessly presented; Leroy Meyers thought it very clever. (But errors do creep in: 'Port' on page 73 should have been 'Fort'.)

Boris Randolph built a double compound word square (see page 75):

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<th>pare</th>
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<td>mere</td>
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Philip Cohen adds one more "What's Black and white and red all over?" answer to the May 1981 Colloquy: no-brand tomato paste.


Has fact caught up with fiction? Leroy Meyers footnotes "Missing the Point!!" by recalling a 1960 conference on mechanical translation where it was decided to award the two women attendees the title of Miss Translation.

Philip Cohen suspects that Darryl Francis's improvement of Palmer Peterson's STEERED IN to STEEPED IN is illusory; 'steered in' is almost certainly a lexeme in some reference, whereas 'steeped in' is not a two-word term in the quotations cited. And Leroy Meyers spotted the typo on the second line of the nine-square on page 125: it should, of course, read MUIERTVER.

Both Harry Partridge and Jeremy Morse feel that the subject of Latin words that look English has been incompletely explored: they suggest such additions as ABS, BALSA, BALES, INFER; ALE, BEER, MEAT, MEANS, MEANT, DENT.

Reading "Lying in Wait!!" in the February issue, Leroy Meyers was reminded of the ambiguity of the farm machine with the trade-name of Gravely Tractor -- is this used for digging graves, or for rooting out gravel?

Richard Lederer of Concord, New Hampshire belatedly sends in a few presidential anagrams to go with the February 1977 Word Ways article on this topic: JAMES E. CARTER / RECREATE JAMS, JAMES EARL CARTER / A RARE CALM JESTER and RONALD W. REAGAN / A WAN OLD RANGE.