

## THREE ACRO-FABLES

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### The Acronym

Once upon a long time ago, on the tiny Mediterranean island of Mynorca, an old peasant turned to his son and said, "Acronyms Can Relax Our Nerves -- Yes, My Son?" To which the son replied, "By Any Logologist's Or Namester's Estimate, Yes!"

Truer words have never been spoken, to coin a phrase. Or, to phrase a coin, the father and son made a lot of cents. Quite a lot, in fact: oil was discovered and the peasants renamed Mynorca "Arconym" in honor of the American oil company that bought the whole island, lock, stock, and barrel.

Nouveaux riches on Arcmony (Arco's money), the peasant and his son moved to Macro, NY, bought a Mycron-A computer, and composed A Curious Romance Of Names Yielding Meaningful Signs. One of the most remarkable logological novels ever processed, this work consisted of two texts, the second of which could be constructed by reading only the initial letters in the words of the first. Perhaps the work's length (some twelve miles of printout), and the unavoidable absence of punctuation in the second text, explain why no one except its authors actually read the novel.

Fortunately, however, one need neither run nor read for twelve miles in order to enjoy the pleasures of acronyms, for Acronyms Constantly Recur On Numerous -- Yea, Multitudinous! -- Sites. In army conscription notices, for example, and in many rock 'n' roll songs, to underscore the point.

### On Marking Time

Consider how we mark time.

Even a schoolchild knows that AM and PM were named after Agatha and Paul Mycrona of Macro, NY. Remember how it happened? Right there on "Good Morning, America"? The Mycronas' kitchen .. the breakfast dishes .. the sound of loud snoring from the bedroom .. and Mrs. Mycrona saying to millions of Americans glued to their sets throughout this great country of ours, "I guess I'm a morning person. But Paul just isn't."

Few will forget that moment. But even fewer realize that our twelve-month calendar was also named after an American. A California disc jockey, to be precise. Here's how it happened.

Archaeologists Can Recover Old Neanderthals .. Yucatan Masks

.. So why not calling cards? Like the one that turned up earlier this year when scientists began hacking tarmac up and down the freeways of Los Angeles, hoping to find out, "Was there life before Hollywood?" Lo and behold, there, in a graduate student's shovel, lay a calling card with the following name embossed upon it:

J. JASON, DJ (FM-AM)

It didn't take the scientists long to realize that Jason's card was an acronym for the months of the year, or to conclude that he must therefore have named the months after his own name and profession. Such are the rewards to be obtained in pursuit of logological knowledge!

Not only that. On the back of Jason's card, written in what must have been his own handwriting, appeared the words Lovable Emily, Australian Prancer. Emily must have been Jason's fiancée. She was obviously a foreigner, probably a ballerina, possibly a kangaroo, and therefore almost certainly the inventor of the leap year. What a pair they must have been, Jason and Emily, driving along, making up months and years, just like that!

### The Lucky Strike

Finally, to return to yesteryear, remember the ads for Lucky Strike cigarettes? LSMFT = Lucky Strike Means Fine Tobacco. Among the reinterpretations that I remember from my childhood are an all-purpose description, Long Short Medium Fat and Tall, and a boys'-locker-room joke, Loose Sweaters Mean Floppy Tits.

Now imagine a city in the United States (that's us, of course). A city full of billboards and street signs: Air Conditioners Reconditioned, Old Natural Yogurt, Main Street, that sort of thing. And graffiti urging citizens to vote left, think right, and nuke the gay whales for Jesus. A city in which every high school band member wants to play the symbols, and where only a mute would wear a blank T-shirt.

In short, a very verbal place.

Imagine further a bank, on Main Street, whose owner decides to erect a huge advertising sign. Across the street is a shoe store, whose owner responds in kind. To which the banker replies. And so on. All in a Lucky Strike mode:

Bank: Let's Save Money For Tomorrow

Shoe Store: Let's Spend Money For Today

Bank: Let Shoe Maker Fold Tongue

Shoe Store: Let Swindling Money-lender Fold Tent

Bank: Loans, Savings Mean Financial Trust

Shoe Store: Loan Sharks Masticate Fair Trade

Bank: Lousy Shoes Mash Fragile Toes

Shoe Store: Let's Stop Making Funny Titles

Which they do. Not because they've run out of slogans. Not because the police chief says to each of them, "Cease And Desist, cad!" Not because the city's French bread maker complains to them, "You are a pain in the neck! My words [mes mots]! What is the Moral Of This Story?"

No. The reason they quit crossing Word-swords Is This, to wit: Time spent Dreaming Up "Dysacronymic" Signs that will not be duds means Less Spent Monitoring Finances. The results? A matter of record: 33 1/3 % Reduced Profit Margins = Lower Profits.

So the Story Has A Moral, after all. Not a sham, not a pain, not French champagne, but A Pithy Truth, Appropriate, Pertinent, Timely -- in other words, doubly apt, namely: Less Sloganeering Makes Faster Turnover. To this day that slogan hangs over the lanes at the city's most renowned bowling alley. You know the one I mean. Not Dick's 'n' Harry's, downtown across from Ron's, Macy's, and the Phoneme Company. Nor the alley For Intelligent Dogs Only, where the balls are taught how to roll over.

I mean the one in the subverbs. Near the Suffix County line. Sam Crony's and Marc Sony's jarringly decked-out Japanese-American Roll-o-rama. Where, above the tatami-mat lanes, hang huge pictures of Mama Crony, Marc, Sammy, 'n' orca whales. Where one can play games between games -- quaffing Bud or sake, conjugating a spare geisha -- without paying any syntax. Where customers stuff sushi into the finger-holes to tip the pinboys. And where keglers who misspin and miss pins cry, moan, and carry on as if to turn the place into a bawling alley, belying its true name.

Which is, of course, The Lucky Strike.