

KICKSHAWS

This special issue of Kickshaws is an anthology of material taken from the columns of the National Puzzlers' League publication, the Enigma. It was collected as a byproduct of a history of the League which celebrated its centenary in 1983. In the excerpts cited below, authors are identified by their NPL pseudonyms instead of their real names.

Remarkable Names of Real People

Long before John Train assembled his collection of curious names under the above title (see *Word Ways* review, August 1978), League members were busily collecting specimens of their own. The earliest item appeared in December 1911, when Molemi reported that a Mr. Dove had recently become engaged to a Miss Heron, and that the local telegraph operator and blacksmith were respectively surnamed Love and Hate. Not to be outdone, Arcanus in February 1912 reported a "swinging metal shield over a local 'tooth-tinker's' stairway entrance in Iowa City" inscribed Doctor Lawyer, Dentist. In November of that year, an anonymous article reported:

During an address of the new superintendant of Pittsburgh's schools, one recent cold day, in the Carnegie Music Hall, the teachers who sat hatless and without wraps, remarked how comfortable the auditorium was. Some scientific experts found this balmy condition was due to the cooperative action on the thermometer of these educators seated on the stage: Prof. S.L. Heeter, Supt.; Prof. A.E. Frost, University of Michigan; and Frank E. Frees, member of Pittsburgh Board of Education. The graduations of temperature were thus productive of an upward tendency.

In December 1913 Donatello wrote:

For reasons unexplained by officials of the directory company which recently took a census of Chicago, the occupation of each of the following persons was placed after his name: Peter Oven, baker; Chas. H. Penny, purchasing agent; Wm. Plane, machinist; Thos. Raw, meat market; Herman Rumstick, saloon; W. Seen, police; John Running, engineer; Aaron W. Shadow, detective; Andrew Steelhammer, tool maker; Anna Turban, milliner, and John J. Volt, motorman.

He also cited a dispatch from the St. Paul Daily News:

In Danville, Tenn. "Outlaw Bros., Successors to Outlaw, Gamble & Steele"

In a Columbus, Neb. hotel "Mabel Swift, Public Stenographer"

In June 1925 the Enigma reported:

Ben J. Min sends the picture of a young Missouri University lad

whose name, according to the newspaper, is Void Null ..

The following issue contained an article, "The Mysterians", by Atlantis, with this intriguing tidbit:

Said Doc Ecod: .. there are people with palindromic names, too. Leffel and Leffel are engaged in the grocery business in Lima, Ohio. Eva Cave, Mary Byram, and Noah Sharon [actually, he meant Norah] are names that have been culled from city directories. I am not personally acquainted with the ladies named, but if they are as interesting as their names, it would be a great pleasure to meet them.

A generation later, palindromic names were still of interest. In March 1952, Fred Domino noted:

A short time ago, [Y. Knott] stumbled across the following palindromic name and address: BEN A HAM, OMAHA, NEB. He declined to submit it to the Enigma, as he said it had a familiar look.

Two years later, Roger M'Gregor (in real life, the famous British logologist Leigh Mercer) was asking the League whether anyone had ever come across an EDNA LALANDE. And "there is a haunting echo in the name Michael Carmichael Carr".

In March 1946 Molemi returned to the onomastic scene, writing in "Mystic Zigzags":

Almost everyone has at some time encountered at least one verbal curiosity in the way of personal names. My contribution to the list is that of CHASE ROOF, a pupil of mine at Yeatman High School, St. Louis. He was a fine boy, and received his odd monicker long before the Chase Roof was widely advertised as the city's finest place to dine and dance on a summer evening.

He was still watching his school roster in March 1949, when he delightedly encountered a student named Delores Ninelist (in NPL parlance, a nine-list is a list of nine-letter words assembled in reverse alphabetical order to facilitate the construction of 9x9 word squares). Grulla responded to Molemi's curiosa in August-September 1946:

In St. Louis, Missouri, too, lives Orange Green; and Beatrice Brown of New Orleans became Beatrice White by marriage. Another of the White family is Secession White of New York City. How does Rosa Brosa strike you? Catherine E. Twentyman is married, but as far as I know to only one husband. H. Unger hails from Buffalo .. Itis Akin, Albany, Ga., vies with Wash Basket. Another Chicagoan is Eleanor Schmoak. Mae B. May of Fayetteville, N.Y. prompts me to "Maybe Mae B. May be Mae B. May". Some others are Rose Bush, Beacon, N.Y.; Robert Rasbury, Monroe, La.; Jack Jilson; Samuel Kornfield, Brooklyn; Come Jutras, Lewiston, Me.; Minus Woodruff, Nashville, Tenn.; Jodax Schmidt, Rome, N.Y.; Zephyr Redd, Macon, Miss., and last but not least, Prestle Baker from Kentucky.

To my mind, one of the strangest onomastic stories unfolded in the December 1932 Enigma:

Several months ago I noticed the name T.G. Gurdis in a drug journal. Mr. Gurdis is a retail dealer in patent medicines, cigars, toilet articles, cameras, stationery, and incidentally drugs. He calls himself a DRUGGIST, not a pharmacist. I wrote to Mr. Gurdis and asked him if he had ever noticed his anagrammatic name. Mr. Gurdis replied that he had never noticed that his name T.G. Gurdis and DRUGGIST contained the same letters.

Hail to the Chief

With a presidential election almost upon us, it is instructive to see what our puzzleistic predecessors did when confronted with the task of anagramming an unpromising name like WOODROW WILSON. Here is Amaranth's effusion (slightly edited) of November 1912:

O, Woodrow, when thy parents sought
 A fitting name for thee to bear,
 How did they come to call thee what
 Caused anagram-makers to despair?
 Three Ws - a quartet of Os!
 I find no anagram therein;
 And yet, beshrew me, I suppose
 One might evolve - OO! LOW WORDS WIN!
 If on the woolsack thou hadst cast
 A sheepish eye (no pun I pull),
 Then would the anagram come fast,
 To this effect - O, WORDS WIN WOOL!
 Or wert thou but a single swain
 Who for some fair dame's hand did sue,
 Then might a puzzler soon attain
 Something like this - LORN WIDOWS WOO!
 But as it is, my palsied hand
 Doth falter as it seeks my brow.
 Among my failures take thy stand,
 Unfruitful name! LORD, I SWOON - WOW!

Although Amaranth could not foresee it in 1912, Wilson was in fact destined to woo a lorn widow, Edith Bolling Galt, and marry her in 1915. Wilson's immediate successors, Warren Gamaliel Harding and Calvin Coolidge, were respectively anagrammed HIM LAGGARD? A REAL WINNER! by Jo Mullins in October 1920, and A COLD LOGIC VEIN by Ed Ward in March 1926.

Calling all Cryptanalysts!

The following item appeared in the "Chat" column of the August 1916 Enigma:

The police department of Lima, O., is greatly puzzled over a cryptic message received in connection with the robbery of a Western Ohio ticket agent. Here it is: WAS NVKVAFT BY AAKAT TXPXCK UPBK TXPHN OHAY YBTX CPT MXHG WAE SXFP ZAV FZ ACK THERE FIRST TXLK WEEK WAYZA WITH THX.

This was never solved by any League member in subsequent issues. However, it appeared several years before the cryptogram became a popular feature in the Enigma. I have no information as to whether this crime was ever solved; no doubt the perpetrators are all dead by now. If any reader succeeds in solving it, I'll pass the solution along to the Lima police.

A Cryptographic Fable

She was a puzzleress. This means that she was one of a select group whose lives centered about words. Not the power, the color, the music of words, but a sort of curious sleight-of-hand by which their component parts may be juggled into countless different forms. They called it the Mystic Art.

The puzzler tolerated rebuses, liked anagrams and charades, enjoyed the various mysterious-looking form puzzles, and adored cryptograms. She browsed near-sightedly among her reference books, and counted the world well lost for a perfect-solving list.

She was wooed by a puzzler, but she had little time to spare from her dictionaries, and he was growing old and fat. So she denied his suit.

Then she found the cryptogram! It was short, but it was baffling. She could not solve it; it absorbed her. She neglected to eat, to sleep. Her uncombed hair streamed in her eyes, she bit her pencil points and chewed off the rubbers. A growing pile of cabalistically-scribbled papers piled higher and higher about her. When she was reported to be on the verge of insanity, the puzzler put his head in at the door cautiously.

"I've solved the crypt," he announced.

"Give me the key!" shrieked the puzzleress, stumbling wildly to her feet.

"I will," he replied, "for a wedding present!" and prudently shut the door.

The puzzleress wrung her hands and paced the floor, scattering papers like autumn leaves before her despairing feet. A frightful struggle was taking place in her soul. She could not marry this fat, ugly, calculating old man! But oh! that cryptogram! That wonderful, mysterious, elusive cryptogram! Frantically she essayed its solution once again, with mad determination. Feverishly she worked, while midnight came and passed. When the clear dawn broke she threw the remains of her pencil across the room and wept. She was conquered. Then she sent the puzzler this message: "The sooner, the better."

After the binding words were spoken her husband laid a folded paper in her hand. Swiftly slipping away from the wedding guests she sped to her sanctum and opened the paper with trembling fingers. It was the key to the crypt!

With eager haste she fitted it to the jumble of letters that had

nearly driven her to distraction, and trembling with suspense and hope deferred, she leaned forward to read the gem for which she had bartered her mind, soul and body. And these were the fateful words:

"Andalusian, Brahama, Dominique, Langshan, Leghorn, Minorca, Plymouth Rock, Wyandotte - delight poultry keepers. Proper methods insure financial success." [I.C. Dimly, September 1916 Enigma]

Another Challenge

Did you ever take the alphabet and try to make a complete sentence of twenty-six words, commencing the first word with A, the second with B, the third with C, etc., thru to Z? For example, any boxer can demand easy fights, etc. It is quite interesting. Try it. Lateo will give One Dollar for the best effort.

This notice appeared in the July 1914 Enigma. Four months later, the winner was announced:

The competition for Lateo's dollar was quite keen and after due deliberation Lateo makes the award to Francolin for the following: At British college, directly east from Goa - Haidarabad, India - Jothan Klopstock, learning music, notifies orchestras playing quaint rhapsodic sambucas, to use violins, wind-instruments, xylophones, yals, zithers.

Shakespeare the Acrostician?

Was Shakespeare a puzzle-constructor? Generations of scholars combing through the Bard's works have come up with such nuggets as Hamlet's "a little more than kin and less than kind" as a clue for the rebus K1N1 [see Henry Dudeney's 300 Best Word Puzzles, Puzzle 230], "answer me in one word" as a clue for the rebus ME, or "I can no other answer make but thanks" as a clue for the rebus THANKS. I find these examples by Hoho in the May 1948 Enigma less convincing than a remarkable acrostic noted by Leigh Mercer in the July 1964 Enigma. In Act III, Scene 1 of the play "A Midsummer Night's Dream", Titania says:

Thou shalt remain here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a spirit of no common rate,
The summer still doth tend upon my state;
And I do love thee. Therefore go with me.
I'll give thee fairies to attend on thee;
And they shall fetch thee jewels from the deep, ..

Remarkably, the initial letters of these lines (the first two from line 4) spell out the name of the speaker!

As noted by Oedipus in the May 1949 Enigma, the first four lines of Sonnet 131 initially spell out the name of a US president:

Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,
As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel;
For well thou know'st to my dear-doting heart
Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel ..

I can't get too excited about this discovery, for a check of his sonnets reveals several other four-letter words, and numerous three-letter ones, including SAM in Sonnet 134 and FAY in Sonnet 81. Perhaps we should believe the acrostic message in Sonnet 20: AH, A WAG?

Quickies

Remardo in February 1926 paid tribute to Skeezix, an earlier puzzler, by citing the following mock-Latin verse as being the most mystical construction ever published:

| | |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| Justa sibi dama ne | (Just as I bid a man elucidate |
| Luci dat eas qua re | a square, |
| lbi dama id per se | I bid a maid persevere to do |
| Veret odo thesa me | the same) |

In May 1945 Cryptox composed a clever poem on heteronymous -OW words:

There comes to me a question, your ear toward me bow,
 Pray listen to my ditty and do not start a row -
 I've lots of words peculiar, enough to fill a mow -
 And thoughts crowd in upon me, like piglets by a sow.
 So lay aside your weapons, let no one draw the bow,
 And sit yourselves around me, all neatly in a row,
 On clover leaves and timothy, all ready for to mow -
 Alas, we must be moving, the farmer wants to sow.

In November 1975, Seabee devised the following story based on successive anagramming of PALINDROMES:

I am Lord Pen's old mare. (Pins, more pins, lad!) Romans plied prime land. So, span old mire! Pad slime! Nor dream in slop! (Morn is paled as I pen, m'lord.) Primal nodes in sample rod, a modern slip. Model sprain in sloped arm; no limps, dear. Males drop in, open Dr.'s mail. Some Dr.! Plain and simple or sold prime, an open rim, lads, mars old pine. Promise land!

Sesquipedalia

Members of the NPL have, over the years, been almost as fond of long words as odd names. The earliest example I am aware of is this item from February 1914:

In Germany, as well as America, no motor car is considered fully equipped unless it carries a geschwindigkeitmesser. This tall, burly word is exploited by the Studebaker foreign sales department in literature for the use of its Berlin branch. Geschwindigkeitmesser is Hohenzollern for speedometer.

A Dutch jawbreaker was revealed in October 1967:

Wanna play straatwandelstokorolschaatshockey? It's a Dutch kids' game of roller-skate hockey (rolschaatshockey) played in the street (straat) with a stick (wandelstok). The game is new to

the Dutch, who do most of their skating on canals in the winter-time.

In the same issue, Oedipus noted the 42-letter chemical term monoethanolaminedinitrocyclohexylphenolate, used for killing mites.

Long words were occasionally referred to during the 1930s as well. In January 1934 Ayemcee sent two to the editor: the 43-letter name of a 1918 subscriber to Liberty Bonds in Chicago, and the 44-letter name of a Massachusetts lake well-known to later logologists. This may have stimulated Bill to send in a crypt for the following issue which decoded "'Believe it or not Ripley' says that 'proantisubstantiationistic' is the longest English word in existence. Can you beat it?" Ab Struse in February 1939 commented "Add to your list of long words the following: 'anthropomorphologically' (23) and 'chromphotolithographically' (27)". Kingsley was reported to be the coiner of necrobioneopaleonthydrockthonanthropopithekology, meaning the science of life and death of man and monkey in bygone times.

The longest one ever to grace the pages of the Enigma, however, appeared in Oedipus's "Puzzleana" column of May 1949 - the well-known nonce-word of 179 letters from Aristophanes' comedy, "The Ecclesiazurae", meaning "a goulash composed of all the left-overs from the meals of the last two weeks".

BUY, SELL, TRADE

The editor has available the following books which he picked up in second-hand bookstores:

William Bellamy, A Century of Charades, Ninth Edition,
1897: \$4 postpaid

J. Walker, The Rhyming Dictionary of the English Language
E.P. Dutton, 1936: \$4 postpaid

Howard W. Bergerson, Palindromes and Anagrams, 1973: \$2

Send SASE for return of check (if book already sold), or telephone editor (201-538-4584) to check on availability.