

GARY GRAY, MEET EDNA DEAN

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Names with interesting logological properties are a source of fascination to the logologist, particularly if they belong to real-life individuals. This article describes the results of a search through more than one hundred telephone directories of U.S. cities or metropolitan areas, in quest of people whose first name can be transposed to form their last name.

To avoid wasting time looking for names that would be unlikely to show up, it was necessary to do some preliminary spadework. I used two references to identify likely combinations to look for: for first names, Leslie Dunkling's First Names First (Universe Books, 1977) gives the number of occurrences of a name in a representative group of ten thousand persons of that sex born in the U.S. in the 1950s; for last names, the 1974 Report of Distribution of Surnames in the Social Security Number File gives the number of social security card holders bearing a given surname. Naturally, not all first names or surnames are tabulated; there are about 2200 given names in Dunkling, and slightly over 3000 surnames (all those having at least ten thousand card holders) in the social security file.

If the number of occurrences of a given name (in ten thousand) is multiplied by the number of social security card holders having a specified surname, the product is more or less proportional to the number of people with that name listed in a group of telephone directories. The proportionality factor will not be the same for each name for a variety of reasons, one of the most important being that people in the telephone directory may have been born anytime from 1900 to 1960, a period during which relative popularities of many given names varied enormously (how many Kevins were born in 1910, or Henrys in 1950?). As one can see in the table below, the proportionality factor varied quite a bit; the actual numbers of names found in telephone directories ranged from a third of to three times the number predicted by theory, with a few even wider of the mark.

I located 163 Gary Grays in the telephone directories I examined, by far the commonest example of an individual with a transposable name. In fact, the total of all other persons with transposable names did not equal the Gary Gray count. Dunkling estimated 171 Garys in ten thousand U.S. male births in the 1950s, and social security records gave 239 thousand Grays, for a product of 40,869,000. Dividing this number by the 163 Gary Grays that I found, one can use as a rule of thumb that a name with a pro-

duct of 250,000 ought to appear about once in the set of directories I searched. Generally, I used this number as a criterion to decide whether or not a name was worth searching for.

The table below lists the names that were checked, with the actual numbers found in the first column and the expectation (the theoretical product, divided by 250,000) in the second column:

Gary Gray	163	163	Norma Moran	3	2.5
Ronald Arnold	47	71	Edna Dean	10	0.9
Eric Rice	9	21	Arnold Roland	2	0.7
Ronald Roland	9	10	Lewis Wiles	1	0.4
Amy May	0	10	Leon Noel	5	0.3
Neal Lane	4	5	Albert Bartel	4	-
Roland Arnold	9	4	Erich Reich	2	-
Dale Deal	2	2.7	Romeo Moore	1	-

The three names at the end of the table with no entry in the expectation column either fell below the Dunkling cutoff (Erich, Romeo) or the social security one (Bartel). A few other non-rated names, such as Reba Baer, Albert Bartle, Ernest Nester and Ernest Senter, were also checked but without success.

Amy May was the biggest disappointment in the entire search: ten were predicted, but not a single one was found. Part of the difficulty, no doubt, is the fact that women, particularly in large cities, have tended to list themselves by initials in order to avoid harassing or obscene phone calls. It is surprising, therefore, that ten Edna Deans were found, eleven times as many as predicted. Perhaps people named Edna are not perceived to be as harassable as ones named Amy, and therefore have not felt compelled to change their listings.

For the record, I list a number of other transposable names that may well exist, but are sufficiently rare to make telephone directory searches rather tedious: Edna Dane, Earl Lear, Dolly Lloyd, Shane Hanes, Thor Roth, Ronald Landor, Dennis Sinden, Albert Tarble, Hosea O'Shea, Sidney Disney, Errol Lorre, Edwin Winde, Tracy Carty, Pearl Arpel, Merle Elmer, Erwin Winer, Leah Hale, Lena Lane, Bela Abel, Ernst Stern, Brad Bard, Ruby Bury, Marc Cram, Lyman Manly, Agnes Sagen, Claus Lucas, Elsa Sale, Ruth Hurt, Theron Thorne, Debra Beard, Duane Auden, Ernest Sterne, Angel Lange, and Gwen Weng. I am indebted to Mary Lois Dennison, John Henrick and Les Irish for many of these.

Jeff Grant found 22 transposable names among more than two million registrants on the New Zealand electoral rolls: Gary Gray 6, Colin Nicol 5, Ronald Arnold 5, Jean Jane 3, Eric Rice 1, Norma Moran 1, and Kura Karu (of Maori ancestry) 1. In addition, he also received a letter from a man in Wellington whose father was Erich Reich. If the U.S. generates transposable names at the rate New Zealand does, one might expect at least 2,500 such individuals. Finding them is, of course, another matter; social security files must contain many, but these are not open to the public.