

KICKSHAWS

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Kickshaws is currently being assembled by a series of guest editors. All contributions should be sent to the editor in Morristown, New Jersey.

Ghost Words

Lexicographers are human, and as a result their dictionaries contain errors, not many to be sure, but lengthy lists of errors in Webster's New International Dictionary, Second and Third Editions (Web 2 and Web 3) have been presented in past issues of *Word Ways*. These errors consist for the most part of misspellings, words out of alphabetical order and missing cross-references or variants mentioned in definitions. Even the fact that a word is missing (WOULDN'T in early printings of Web 3) has been cited as an error. A rarer type of error is the inclusion in a dictionary of a non-word or "ghost word," a term coined by etymologist Walter Skeat in 1886. On occasion such inclusion is not an error but a hoax, admitted or not, on the part of the compiler. The most famous of such words is ZZXJOANW, the last word in the Dictionary of Terms section of the Music Lovers' Encyclopedia compiled by Rupert Hughes in 1903 and revised and newly edited by Deems Taylor and Russell Kerr in 1939. Purporting to be a Maori word defined variously as "drum," "fife," and "conclusion," the legitimacy of the word was thoroughly demolished by Philip Cohen in "What's the Good Word?" in the November 1976 *Word Ways*.

As an example of an admitted ghost word, look up KELEMENOPY in A Browser's Dictionary by John Ciardi. Ciardi defines this word as "The one essential trope neglected by classical rhetoricians: a sequential straight line through the middle of everything, leading nowhere. 'Teddy Kennedy's careet has been the classical kelemenopy of the American twentieth century.'" Ciardi points out that the word is "Based on k-l-m-n-o-p, the central sequence of the alphabet, having ten letters before and ten after it. Hence, a strictly sequential irrelevance. 'Kelemenopy' is from my own psychic warp, to see if anyone would notice, and because I have always dreamed of fathering a word."

Both ZZXJOANW and KELEMENOPY, if they existed, would be highly prized by logologists, the one because it is the last word in any dictionary, the other because it contains six consecutive letters of the alphabet in proper order (real words, such as KILMARNOCK or LLMNOPHILE, have at most five).

The Oxford English Dictionary provides a list of Spurious Words, most of which owe their existence to misreadings or mistranslations

on the part of early lexicographers. These errors were unquestionably copied by many of the later well-known dictionary makers. In his Handy-Book of Literary Curiosities, William Walsh describes the process for one of the words in the Oxford list:

ABACOT, a spurious word which by a remarkable series of blunders has gained a foothold in the dictionaries. It is usually defined as "a cap of state, wrought up into the shape of two crowns, worn formerly by English kings." Neither word nor thing has any real existence. In Hall's "Chronicles" the word "bicocket" (Old Fr. bicoquet, a sort of peaked cap or head-dress) happened to be misprinted "abococket." Other writers copied the error. Then Holinshed improved the new word to "abococke," and Abraham Fleming to "abacot," and so it spun merrily along, a sort of rolling sone of philology, shaping itself by continual attrition into something as different in sense as in sound from its first original, until Spelman landed the prize in his "Glossarium," giving it the definition quoted above. So through Bailey, Ash, and Todd it has been handed down to our time,—a standing exemplar of the solidarity of dictionaries, and of the ponderous indolence with which philologists repeat without examining the errors of their predecessors.

Since Walsh's book was published in 1904 his "our time" is over 80 years ago. Web 1, published in 1909, shows ABACOT as a misspelling of BYCOCKET, but by the time of Web 2 in 1934 the ghost word had disappeared from the dictionary.

My favorite ghost word is DORD. This "word" is in Web 2 defined as "density," and its existence is explained by Robert Hendrickson in The Literary Life & Other Curiosities. DORD began life as an error made when transcribing a card that read "D or d" (meaning a capital D or small d) "for 'density'". Merriam-Webster caught the error after Web 2 was published, and DORD does not appear in Web 3 as a main entry. Showing a surprising willingness to refer to their own errors, Merriam-Webster cites the ghost word DORD (along with PHANTOMNATION) in their Web 3 definition of the term "ghost word." Since neither word appears as an entry in Web 3 (and neither should, of course) the two citations are not very illuminating.

Pet Names for Potholes

Do spring thaws and freezes get you down, turning your favorite route to work into an obstacle course? Helen Gunn of Hamilton, New York keeps her blood pressure down by christening the larger potholes in her town, the ones that she can neither drive around nor straddle:

Crazy Crack	Spasm Chasm	Pitiful Pit
Corner Cavern	Devil's Dip	Holey Terror
Axle Canyon	Hell's Kitchen	Satan's Sink
Good Grief Gulch	Sneaky Hollow	Greater Crater
Goodyear Gully	Hapless Abyss	The Last Crevasse

Can readers come up with additional names?

Initialisms

Giuseppe Verdi, one of the leading Italian composers of the 19th century, was born in a divided Italy. He was a patriot and a spokesman of Italian aspirations which led to conflicts with the Austrian censorship. Many of his operas expressed patriotic sentiments, in spite of the censor, under the guise of dramatic propriety. He was the unofficial musician laureate of those patriots attempting to establish an independent Italy united under Victor Emmanuel II, King of Sardinia. Verdi's name was used as the basis for one of the patriotic slogans: Vittorio Emanuele Re D'Italia. Perhaps it helped - Emmanuel made it to the throne.

In 1968 General Motors first marketed the Chevrolet Nova. Over the next few years the various GM divisions each manufactured and sold a car that had essentially the same body as the Nova. General Motors says the following relationship is entirely coincidental:

N ova, made by Chevrolet
 O mega, made by Oldsmobile
 V entura, made by Pontiac
 A pollo, made by Buick
 S eville, made by Cadillac

This is an exhaustive list of Nova clones which makes it very difficult to buy GM's claim of coincidence.

Crosswords

Crossword puzzles have played an important role in many mystery novels (including the current series by Resnicow with puzzles by Henry Hook), but I have seen only one crossword, a cryptic at that, in a science fiction novel. In Giants' Star by James Hogan, a cryptic crossword is not only presented in full, but the author spends two pages describing the thought processes of the solver. Naturally, as in the usual mystery story, the completed crossword serves to pass on a hidden message. Are there other science fiction stories that use crossword puzzles as integral parts of the story?

Useless Definitions

In some cases the dictionary doesn't provide much assistance when you look up a word to learn the meaning. If you look up SENSIFACIENT in Web 2 you will find no definition at all despite the fact that this word is a main entry with etymology. Equally useless is the definition of RAFTMAN in the same dictionary: "A craftsman." In his Dictionaries, The Art and Craft of Lexicography, Sidney Landau quotes his favorite medical definition. In Butterworth's Medical Dictionary the definition of FROG TEST is "a test used to indicate pregnancy, in which a frog is used." One hesitates to ask just what should be done with the frog, and by the way, whose pregnancy is being tested here? The frog's?

The editors of Web 3 decided that "the primary objective of precise, sharp defining" could be met only by a new technique using

"completely analytic one-phrase definitions." Unfortunately this technique at times conveys little or no meaning to the average dictionary user. As a single example take the word PHONEME as defined in Web 3:

The smallest unit of speech that distinguishes one utterance from another in all of the variations that it displays in the speech of a single person or particular dialect as the result of modifying influences (as neighboring sounds and stress); the "p" of English "pin" and the "f" of English "fin" are two different phonemes.

If the term PHONEME is not yet meaningful to you, try reading the definition in Web 2; it's too long to reproduce here but it conveys considerably more meaning.

Miniquiz

Quickly now, what do the cities of ALBANY, SANTA MONICA, ALIQUIPPA and FRANKLIN have in common? See Answers and Solutions.

Webster's Ninth

Do you find it shocking that the many innocent people who look up MOTHER GOOSE in Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (9C) might by accident happen to read the immediately preceding main entry? Of course, I don't need to tell you what that entry is, do I? And, speaking of 9C, doesn't it surprise you that the computer-world terms of FRIENDLY and USER-FRIENDLY aren't included? (However, FRIENDLY in this sense of "easy to understand" is a main entry in 9000 Words, and the quotation cited at that entry contains the phrase "user friendly.") Another interesting note is that 9C does not show XEROX as a verb, although 8C did. Are people no longer using this as a verb, or was corporate pressure brought to bear?

An Accidental Pangram?

Swensen's, a national restaurant chain specializing in ice cream dishes, has a menu consisting of eight or ten entrees described in extenso. Who but a bunch of National Puzzlers' League members attending a Colorado convention in 1985 would think to check these descriptors for pangrammaticity? In fact, they found not one but two which qualified, the Fiesta Salad and the Cable Car Kid's Meal:

From south of the border, may we introduce Swensen's Fiesta Salad! A large tortilla shell is formed into a bowl and filled with mixed salad greens. Diced tomato and a combination of grated mild Cheddar and Monterey Jack cheese surrounds layers of taco beef filling, guacamole and sour cream. A black olive completes this unique salad extravaganza. Your choice of salad dressings or salsa. Muy bueno! \$4.25

Swensen's quality sized just right for kids. Choose your favorite-hamburger or grilled cheese. We serve them both with shoestring

fries in our Cable Car Box. Plus a special Swensen's bonus - a ticket for a free single dip cone to enjoy on the ride home. \$1.89
Kid's cup of milk or soft drink. \$.45

The first descriptor contains 324 letters and the second, 225. According to the editor, a random-letter generator using English text frequencies has a probability of .002 of generating a pangram in 200 letters, and .06 in 500. He adds "Let's for simplicity assume that there are ten 300-word menu messages, each with a pangrammatic probability of .015; then the probability that two or more pangrams will occur is only .0094."

Coincidence - or a playful copywriter? You be the judge.

What's in a Name?

We have all seen unusual names chosen by rock and roll groups, and **Word Ways** has presented lists of such names before. Just to bring you up to date, here are some more, my favorites from a list clipped by my teen-age daughter from the magazine *Star Hits*:

Bow Wow Wow	Half Man Half Biscuit
Electric Pandas	Meat Puppets
Chewy Raccoon	The Cucumbers
Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band	Prefab Sprout
Destroy All Monsters	Lime Spiders
Was (not Was)	Strawberry Switchblade
Medium Medium	Agent Orange
The The	Alien Sex Fiend
The Celibate Rifles	Crime and the City Solution
Aztec Camera	Dead Neighbors
Haircut 100	Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds
Anti-Nowhere League	The Three O'Clock
Bad Brains	The Pookah Makes Three
Severed Heads	

Says *Star Hits*, "All names guaranteed real."

Word Squares

Recently, **Word Ways** presented a word square made up of ten-letter words. Although not constructed with ten unquestionable English words, the construction feat is nonetheless impressive. I was privileged to be a friend of Palmer Peterson, known to the National Puzzlers' League as "Sherlock Holmes" (see "Palmer Peterson, Master Formist" by Philip Cohen in the February 1980 **Word Ways**), probably the best of all the "formists" who have ever lived. He doubted that a truly "acceptable" ten-square would be built until someone first mastered the double nine-square (in a double square the vertical words are different from the horizontal words). No one has yet built a double nine-square, and he didn't think anyone ever would. Since the nine-square still remains the leading edge of square construction, we are unlikely to find many squares of that size exhibiting common everyday words. Two or three of the thousand or so nine-squares ever constructed have been point-

ed out as exceptional, but even those contain obscure words. A small number of eight-squares have come closer to achieving the desideratum of a large word square with all common words, but the best eight-square I have ever seen has not (to my knowledge) been pointed out before. It was published in 1902 by Charles B. Stewart ("Esperance"). Seven of the eight words are common, and the eighth, EAST EDEN, is a small hamlet in New York located east of Eden.

Once someone can produce a nine-square constructed with equally-common words, I will be ready to start believing in an all-English ten-square. Since, to the best of my knowledge, there are presently only two living persons in the entire world who have ever built a nine-square, I don't expect to see large numbers of new ones churned out, and I very much doubt I'll see a nine-square with nine common words.

A Word Hexagon

Much logological effort has been devoted to the construction of word squares; however, it is equally possible to construct word triangles or word hexagons. Because these forms interlock in three directions instead of just two, it is far more difficult to devise really large specimens. In June 1986, Games magazine sponsored a contest involving the construction of a fourth-order word hexagon (one containing 37 spaces, and 21 different words of four to seven letters), using boldface uncapitalized words or inferred forms from Web 3, and allowing words to be written in either direction. The winner, Stephen C. Root of Westboro, Massachusetts, constructed the hexagon at the left of this page.

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      T A
    A N O C N A
  S A R R E N A
  I N O' M E N T
  S U T E R R E S
  H S T N A S
    S A T A

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Right and Left

I have a friend who has difficulty in distinguishing left from right. Although she is far above normal in intelligence and problem-solving ability, the concept of left/right does not come naturally to her. As a result she makes use of a number of memory aids and has noted an interesting phenomenon. In choosing whether to call something "right" or "left" the thing or action being described is often spelled with either four or five letters. In many cases, the "left" (four letters) choice is a four-letter word and/or the "right" (five letters) choice is a five-letter word. This provides my friend with a number of convenient aids. Here are some examples, where either the left word is four letters long or the right word is five letters long, or both.

PORT and STARBOARD
 FORK and KNIFE, SPOON (placement on the table)
 HOOK and SLICE (golfing terms)

AD and DEUCE (court identifiers, in tennis)
 TRUE and FALSE (answer locations on tests)
 PASS and DRIVE (lanes on a highway)
 RING (wedding ring is on the left hand)
 SHAKE (right hands)

When she dances with her husband he is on LEAD and thus starts with his left foot. Since she is the WOMAN she starts with her right and if they dance CHEEK to cheek their right cheeks touch. She has trained her dogs to HEEL - that is, to walk on her left.

A related memory trick is that odd-numbered highways generally go NORTH or SOUTH, whereas even-numbered highways go EAST or WEST. And when unsure about which is which, remember that the SALT is the one with MORE holes. (Pepper has fewer holes, not less.)

The most obvious failure of the right/left rule concerns which faucet to turn to get COLD water. But, as my friend points out, the rule still works in many restrooms where BOTH taps deliver only icy-cold water.

Since LEFT and EVEN have an even number of letters, and RIGHT and ODD have an odd number, perhaps readers can think of ways of extending the mnemonic.

Threesomes

Using 9C as a source, if I give you the dictionary definitions of three consecutive main entries can you state what the entries are without resorting to the dictionary? For example, if I gave you Accomodate/Taken advantage of/Challenge mentally, you would immediately see PUT UP, PUT-UPON, and PUZZLE. Try these, and remember you get no credit unless you get all three words in each case.

1. Establishment which provides lodging/Polyphonic choral composition/Nocturnal insect
2. Young swan/Northern constellation/The piston chamber in an engine
3. Teenage girl/Tiny/Begin
4. Designed for use by an amateur or hobbyist/A school for training in various arts of self-defense/Trademark of an electrical device that eliminates noise from recorded sound
5. Small crowbar with a claw for pulling nails at one end and a slight bend for prying at the other/Small singing bird/To move with a violent twist
6. What is essential and basic/A scatterbrained or stupid person/Nothing
7. To put to use/An embellishing note preceding an essential melodic note/To fix or act officially

For answers, see Answers and Solutions.

Driver Training

In this part of the country when someone refers to a STOP STREET he means a through street on which you can drive without having

to stop at every intersection. But that's not what Webster says the word means. The same definition appears in Web 2, Web 3 and 9C: "A street on which a vehicle must stop just before entering a through street." So either North Dakotans don't know what they're talking about (not a strong possibility) or Merriam-Webster has been wrong for over 50 years (that's probably it). I'll grant you that I agree with the dictionary definition of THROUGH STREET, "A street on which the through movement of traffic is given preference." But somehow around here STOP STREET has come to mean the same thing.

Clippings

A recent (August 11, 1986) issue of Newsweek contained two interesting language-related items on the same page. I learned that the slogan "Capitalist Tool" is a copyrighted trademark of Forbes magazine, so you Marxists out there should get permission from Malcolm S. Forbes before using the term. A group of MBA students from Northwestern's J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management is preparing to market cotton boxer shorts decorated with the slogan "Capitalist Tool." Yes, they did get an exclusive license from Mr. Forbes.

In an article on the rock group Sigue Sigue Sputnik, the founder of that group, Tony James, describes his calculated marketing plan with which he successfully promoted his group as involving "hi-tech sex, designer violence." I think designer violence is just the phrase we need to adequately describe the image projected by modern-day heavy metal rock groups. Look for it in Web 4.

Categories

What do the words in each of these lists have in common?

1. cat dog fox hen
2. dogs lord nun pope
3. gin mug pot why

For answers, see Answers and Solutions.

Geography Quiz

If I give you ----AL-- and tell you to fill in the blanks in order with the name of a country and that when you have done so the result will be a second country, it won't take you long to add AUSTRIA to AL to get AUSTRALIA. Here are six more:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. -----N REPUBLIC | 4. ----1A |
| 2. --EL--D | 5. ---TE-ALA |
| 3. ---AW- | 6. --PHUTHA----- |

Pretty easy, right? As originally presented in a philatelic newspaper, the quiz included fourteen more entries, but all included one or more "countries" that do not now exist but at one time issued stamps. Stamp collectors use the word "country" in a loose sense to describe any entity issuing legitimate postage stamps. Thus, the United Nations and East Berlin are both "countries" to

philatelists. For bonus points, identify the country in the above quiz that is not recognized by the UN as an independent entity.

Food for Thought

The other day, I came home from the office at the end of my day and as soon as I entered the house my daughter said what sounded like "Squeet." Later, one of her friends came over and the friend's first question to my daughter was "Jeetjet?" What's going on here? Do you know of any other similar utterances?

Headlines

Word Ways has presented strange newspaper headlines before. Recently I saw for the first time a book entitled Squad Helps Dog Bite Victim, compiled by Gloria Cooper and edited by the Columbia Journalism Review. As the title may imply, this is a collection of headline bloopers. My favorites:

WAR DIMS HOPE FOR PEACE
 STUD TIRES OUT
 ALBANY TURNS TO GARBAGE
 FORMER MAN DIES IN CALIFORNIA
 CARCINOGENS CAUSE CANCER SAYS BOOK
 JUVENILE COURT TO TRY SHOOTING DEFENDANT
 SURVIVOR OF SIAMESE TWINS JOINS PARENTS
 DEAD MAN NOTED AMONG REALTORS
 IRAN EXECUTES 7 MORE, CANCELS SCHOLARSHIPS

Needs a Nickname

According to Sports Illustrated (September 15, 1986) the University of California claims the college football player with the longest name is defensive tackle Gerardus Mauritius Natuitasina Tuatagaloa. How about GM for short?

Meaningful Words

Some words have particularly fascinating definitions. One's reaction is amazement that there is a word for that. Here are eight of my favorites of these super-specific words:

ATTUS a Latin surname for persons who walk on the tips of their shoes (see etymology of Attidae)
 BIG-ENDIAN pertaining to the big end of an egg
 DHARNA a method of appealing for justice by fasting to the point of death while seated at the door of the one considered as the offender
 NOSARIAN one who argues there is no limit to the possible largeness of a nose
 QUALTAGH the first person one sees on going out from home on a particular day
 SHREWSTRUCK struck by a shrew (the animal)
 UCALEGON a neighbor whose house is on fire
 WALLABY-PROOF not defined, but presumably able to repel wallabies

All of these words can be found in Web 2.

Of course, it's even more fun if one can work these words into conversation in a natural way. Peg Primak of Medford, Massachusetts reports that when leaving her business partner's house she found her car blocked by a fire truck. So, she went back to inform him that he had a ucalegon. Her other chance-in-a-lifetime was telling a friend that his recently-purchased used couch was NOV-ANTIQUÉ ("new but yet old," in Web 2). She added "It was a joy not only to get the chance to use the word, but in one of the few settings possible [a National Puzzlers' League get-together] where the majority of the people in the room knew what it meant."

Miniquizzes

The usual three-letter abbreviations of the names of the months make use of nineteen different letters of the alphabet. The full names of the months make use of twenty-one different letters, only two more. These two, in alphabetical order, form the abbreviation for one of the fifty states. Quickly now, these two letters are?

Q, of course, is the only letter of the alphabet that does not appear in the names of the fifty states. The fifty two-letter postal abbreviations for the states make use of all but two letters of the alphabet, Q and what?

Speaking of the two-letter postal abbreviations, there are a few that are not very familiar. What are AS, CM, and TT?

On Enforcing Language Purity

Throughout the ages people have had strong feelings about maintaining the purity of their native tongue. Here, from Kay Haugaard of Pasadena, California, is a tale of a rather extreme measure taken during the Middle Ages, according to a story taken from a collection of Celtic tales known as the Mabinogion. "The Dream of Maccsen Wledig" tells how Cynan and Gadeon "...set out and conquered lands and castles and cities, and they slew all the men, but the women they left alive... And they determined to cut out the tongues of the women, lest their language be corrupted."

And we thought the Academy Francaise was strict!