

BORGMANN RESURRECTUS

Although Dmitri Borgmann died on December 7, 1985, his work lives on for awhile. The editor has a collection of unpublished articles sent to *Word Ways*, and it is from this that the present memorial issue has been assembled. There is more: a final installment is scheduled to appear in February 1988, the 20th anniversary of the inaugural issue of *Word Ways* under his editorship.

Dmitri was fascinated by the numbers 22 and 7, perhaps because 22/7 is a well-known approximation to the mathematical constant pi. In late 1984, he told me that 203, the sum of the positional values of the letters in DMITRI ALFRED BORGMANN, is $7(22 + 7)$. Readers of the February 1985 *Word Ways* will recall his advocacy of article titles consisting of positional values summing to 227. Howard Bergerson recently noted that 22 and 7 are, respectively, the day of the month on which he was born and the day on which he died!

One cannot be sure how much Dmitri believed in these matters, for he did have a sense of humor. For instance, in January 1985 he wrote "I have succeeded in proving that I am the Antichrist." How so? For each letter of DMITRI, he took its positional value in the alphabet, added 114, and subtracted the square of its position in the name; for example, T is equal to $20 + 114 - (3)^2$, or 118. The sum of all six letters yields 666, the Biblical number of the beast. He concluded "A new career is opening up before my unbelieving eyes!" (A little later, he proved that I was the Antichrist by an even simpler calculation; adding 102 to each of the positional values of the letters in ECKLER, he again generated the number 666.)

Despite his often-voiced antipathy to mathematics, numbers fascinated him. In another bit of levity, he wrote in early 1985:

..the four *Word Ways* issues of 1984 had Tables of Contents including, respectively and successively, 19, 18, 17, and 16 entries. The February, 1985 issue continues this downward arithmetical progression by listing only 15 entries in toto. I assume that this is the start of a long-term trend. If so, the May 1988 issue will have a Table of Contents including only one entry... If I have foreseen the future correctly, may I plan on being the author of that final, 62-printed-page article? It will be the final *Word Ways* article since the Table of Contents in the August, 1988 issue will have nothing in it - meaning that there will be no such issue. I feel confident of my ability to produce the manuscript of 125 or so typed pages that you will need for this one, final article. Just say the word, and I'll get busy on it. It won't take me long to produce it, even though I have

not yet settled on the exact topic with which the article ought to deal. A title such as "Logology: The Ultimate Force Behind Recorded World History" gives you an idea of the lines along which I am thinking for that 62-page article. Let me know.

Alas for his theory, the next two issues produced 19 and 23 articles! There is a simple explanation for the fact that the Festschrift issue contained only 15: Dmitri abhorred short articles ("I would think that a reader of *Word Ways* interested in a given subject would want to know more about it than can be said in the space of 1 or (usually) 1½ pages. I know that I feel that way"). To back up his belief, he enclosed an extension for the shortest article he had recently submitted.

Dmitri delighted in sending letters under a wild assortment of letterheads. I don't know where he got them all, but they included the British Investment Group Ltd. (International Development of Energy and Armament Systems), Tryco Inc. (of Claremore, Oklahoma, with Lavell Chisum president), K K & M Investments (Santa Clara, California), Olowu Group of Companies (International Mortgage and Money Brokers, .. Estate Owners & Poultry Farmers, International Traders [sic] and Agents, based in Nigeria), and the Divine Immortality Church (Dmitri A. Borgmann, D.D., Ordained Minister). For several years in the late 1970s, he garnished his letters with a variety of labels, ranging from American flags to Mad-Magazine-like squibs ("Vote for a 2½-Day School Week," "Silence! Genius at Work"), with used foreign postage stamps, and with various business cards from other individuals.

His landmark article on the history of palindromes and the SATOR square, appearing in *Word Ways* in 1979-1980, was sent to me under the name of David R. Williams, a member of the National Puzzlers' League who had been mentioned in passing in *Word Ways* shortly before. It took a letter to Williams to satisfy me that I had been spoofed.

Some of his humor was a bit ponderous. I received an article "Logology on Trial" by Zanoni Mejnour, who purported to be one of the "immortal custodians" of logology. According to the article, the Sacred Council of Logology, convening on Christmas Day in an underground chamber of the Great Pyramid at Giza, had excommunicated the *Word Ways* editor and several authors for "high treason" - the "sin of debasing logology, of dragging it down into the cesspools of degradation and depravity such as were heretofore unknown." In particular, he excoriated the selection of illustrative words in the Eckler-Francis article "Word Transposability" of November 1978, asserting that 26 of the 48 words were aesthetically offensive by virtue of being hyphenated, capitalized, obsolete, dialectal, foreign, and the like. This state of affairs, he argued, had come about because of slavish adherence to dictionary words; in contrast, "true logologists apply real standards of word selection to their work." Knowing that satire is seamless, he indignantly scorned dismemberment: "Not acceptable. Kill the rejoinder entirely!! My texts are published unchanged, or not at all!"