ANAGRAMS, ANYONE?

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l have been asked by the editor to share my expertise on ana-
grams with the readers of **Word Ways**. But, actually, with a smid-
gen of modesty, I do not pretend to be an expert. l may have
had more experience than other puzzle creators, yet a good origin-
al anagram is still just as hard to creat as ever.

Perhaps there are some short cuts to ease the pain of construc-
tion which I shall soon detail. Before l do so, some general con-
cepts are in order. You need the motivation and the labor of love
in playing around with words. The mathematician juggles with fig-
ures, the musician interpolates notes, and the anagrammatist shuf-
fles letters.

lf you have the motivation, read on. Once you try to read the
words in your alphabet soup, enjoy making ONE WORD out of NEW
DOOR, then you are hooked - you are either a prime candidate
for the nuthouse or an anagrammatist. Sometimes I feel like both.

As far as l am concerned, and I have been concerned more than
forty years, l use some short cuts. I provide myself with plenty
of alphabet letters on blocks or tiles. You can use the tiles of
a couple of Scrabble sets if you wish. My tiles come from some
old anagram games, highly embossed and clearly visible.

l choose a base, such as the name EDDIE CANTOR, if l see an
appropriate keyword such as ACTOR in it. Using my tiles, l set
them up as E-D-D-1-E C-A-N-T-O-R so that no mistakes can be made.
lf you work with just pencil and paper, crossing out letters and
leaving letters over often results in errors. With these tiles, you
cannot lose sight of any letter and you can add or subtract as
will be explained later.

Remove ACTOR from EDDIE CANTOR and set the group aside on
a wide enough table or desk. The remaining tiles are D-D-E-E-1-N in
alphabetical order. l study these letters to discover related or
appropriate words to combine with ACTOR. l see DIED, DINED, NEED,
and so on. However I also see INDEED. Thus, l can form a complet-
ed anagram, ACTOR INDEED or INDEED ACTOR. Either way, l am
satisfied and l go on to making another anagram with a new base,
say AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI, wherein l espy HATE as a good keyword.
Finally, after much shuffling (the longer the base, the more the
possibilities) l conclude with LOOK, HAIL, 1 HATE MANY!

Now, about adding or subtracting on bases. If you find that
your chosen base does not yield a suitable anagram, you may ex-
tend it and try again or you may reduce it. Thus, GONDOLIER did

not resolve into an anagram, so 1 added the indefinite article to make A GONDOLIER which then was anagrammed as O, RIDE ALONG! On the other hand, SUPERMARKET proved a stumper until I added the definite article. THE SUPERMARKET then became RUMP STEAK THERE. As an example of subtraction, THE SECRET MISSION worked out much better by eliminating THE to yield O, CRISIS SENT ME!

Remember that there is nothing in any rule book on anagrams that says you must stick to your original base. If it yields no anagram, get off the base by adding or subtracting, or drop it altogether for a new one in lieu of any success.

Now, for a warning. Lost of bases will not break down into any anagrams, or anagrams that satisfy you. I set some high standards so that 1 have rejected many, many tries. 1 do not like, for example, the use of single letters like C to stand for "SEE", the use of apostrophes as 'T for 1T, or any letters left hanging. 1 often, however, use up left over letters with abbreviations, such as E.G., 1.E., and N.G., or exclamations, as AH, OH, SH! Another one of my standards is to set an anagram in the same grammatical relation as the original. Thus, if you are anagramming a noun, then avoid ·a verb; plurals and singulars .should not be confused; and so on.

By way of example, take the current slogan, 1 LOVE NEW YORK. Mayor Koch will hate me for this, but I get VERY O.K. NOW? LIE! Notice how 1 have used an abbreviation and an exclamation in this anagram (O.K., L1E). It makes good sense by being appropriate or relating to the original base used. New York has been striving to polish its tarnished image of a crime-ridden · and slum-infested metropolis, among other faults. Has it really done so? No, as the cynic in me proclaims anagrammatically.

Another fault I try to avoid in so-called anagrams is the lack of rearrangement or repetition of sequences in the original base. Thus, a magazine whose name I will not mention recently ran an anagram competition and presented an honorable mention prize to NIX ON RICHARD for RICHARD NIXON. Is it really an anagram? The letters in RICHARD and NIXON (for NIX ON) were not rearranged at all!

Unless you are a James Joyce or a Vladimir Nabokov, two famous devotees of anagrams, please try to retain the sense of the original base. Strictly speaking, anagrams where the sense is apropos, and transpositions where it is not, are often confused. The puzzle expert knows the difference. The so-called anagram dictionaries recently published are word lists of transpositions, and anagram games are based on transposals. So, remember that we are dealing with true anagrams here and not transpositions.

The best way to illustrate is to present the reader with some anagrams that 1 have had published in The Enigma (published by the National Puzzlers' League) over many years. Unknowingly, however, one may often compose anagrams that will duplicate what has been done before. To some extent that can be avoided by consulting files if you keep any, or a book such as Howard Berger-

son's Palindromes and Anagrams (Dover, 1973). That book includes an alphabetical list of over 300 of the best anagrams of the past.

Before l present my own, I would like, however, to criticize and improve one that has been used to titillate readers on anagrams. The previously-mentioned magazine brought up the story of a Frenchman, ANDRE PUJON, who found his name could be read as PENDU A RION (hanged at Rion). He committed a murder and then was hanged in Rion.

Apocryphal? Of course, since l found no such city in France as Rion (it's Riom, but that would spoil the anagram). Besides, l was unable to locate any Andre Pujon in French biographical dictionaries. It did remind me of Jerome Cardan, a famous 16th-century mathematician, who predicted by astrological means the date of his death, and as the story goes he committed suicide on that date.

Anyway, I decided to top that defective anagram with my improved version, DIANA PERSHING who was HANGED IN PARIS! Will the real Diana Pershing please stand up and verify this?

One of my own favorite anagrams is a sonnet I wrote on WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE. It's quite a challenge to do a multiple anagram such as this:

> A hard, howling, tossing water scene;
> Strong tide was washing hero clean.
> "How cold!" Weather stings as in anger.
> O, silent night shows war ace in danger!
> The cold waters swashing on in rage,
> Redcoats warn slow his hint engage.
> When general's star action wish'd "Go!"
> He saw his ragged continentals row.
> Ah, he stands - sailor crew went going,
> And so this general watches rowing.
> He hastens - winter again grows cold;
> A wet crew gain Hessian stronghold.
> George can't lose war with 's hands in;
> He's astern⁻ - so, go alight, crew, and win!

This was first published in the June 1936 Enigma and (with minor corrections) again in the December 1980 issue. I believe that a couple of other examples followed mine.

Here are an exaltation, not of larks, but of anagrams - a baker's dozen of mine. (By the way, what is the collective noun for a group of anagrams?)

1. 1 AM MODEL HAM (*8 *3)
2. BLAND SPIELER (1 11)
3. O, BRINGS AD (9)
4. REVEAL WHO SLAYED (*3 *6 *6)
5. THE APT END LAY (5 7)
6. PARROTS INACTION (15)
7. O, LISTEN, TERM THAT LIE! (4 2 2 3 *7)
8. I RATE HINT: MAY HELP TOTS (3 9 8)

9. FIE, SCOLD RAT (*5 *6)
10. TRACE SHOWER'S FATE (7 9)
11. I SCORE RETURN (12)
12. FACT: ITS SPEED IS OFTEN OUT (*6 *6 *4 *6)
13. TAINTED UNIONS (*6 *7)

The numbers in parentheses indicate how many letters are in each word, and a star indicates a proper name. Answers can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

PSEUDONYMS AND NICKNAMES DICTIONARY

This two-volume classic, now in its third (1987) edition, lists some 80,000 assumed names belonging to more than 50,000 people – revolutionaries, criminals, screen stars, writers, etc. Both the assumed name and the original name appear in a single alphabetic sequence, with each cross-referenced to the other. It's fascinating to browse through the books, noting the many colorful nicknames that appear on nearly every page: Old Usufruct, The Cold War Witch, The Bad Peanut, The Sockless Sage, Her Sexellency, The Assassin's Assassin, The Eleven Thousand Dollar Lemon, The Sheik of Malibu, The Spinning Spoon. And did you know that at least five U.S. Presidents were called His Accidency: Arthur, Cleveland, Fillmore, Johnson, Tyler? (Is there perhaps an even commoner presidential monicker?)

Logologists will be delighted to know that Dmitri Borgmann appears with his three Word Ways pseudonyms (Prof. Merlin X. Houdini, Ms. Ramona J. Quincunx, Mrs. Jezebel Q. Xixx) plus his National Puzzlers' League nom (El Uqsor).

The book can be used as the source of various parlor games: for example, ask someone to match a list of nicknames with their owners (try a related group of people, such as U.S. presidents, baseball players or pop singers). Or one can define logological investigations: for example, are all the Greek letters (Alpha through Omega) used as nicknames? Are there any persons that have more pseudonyms than Edward L. Stratemeyer (he has 77, from Henry Abbott to Clarence Young)?

The two books are edited by Jennifer Mossman, and are available from Gale Research Company for $225.