

## THE POET'S CORNER

*From time to time, Word Ways receives a variety of short poems related to recreational linguistics, some original, others previously published. As poetic output cannot be easily predicted, these will be presented on an irregular basis.*

Kay Haugaard of Pasadena, California wonders how one should write a better business letter in the era of ERA:

"Dear Gentlemen" placed at the head of a letter  
 Ignores gentle women; but can one do better?  
 Perhaps "gentle people" will satisfy some;  
 How about "gentle persons"? To me they sound dumb;  
 Both are contrived and in fact sentimental  
 (Who nowadays labels a person as gentle?),  
 But even if gentle they surely are not,  
 "Dear Persons" ("Dear People"?) is not very hot.  
 "Dear Ladies and Gentlemen" formerly worked,  
 Though its lengthy pomposity made me quite irked.  
 There must be an address that sounds somewhat better  
 When writing an unknown person a letter.  
 Linguistic shortcomings have cast such a pall  
 I think I will simply begin it "Dear Y'All."

Vatsala Muralidhara of Fair Haven, New Jersey is the author of the following:

When all's said and dONE, my brains can't be beat:  
 A wheaTWOrm, I know, is destructive of wheat;  
 To THREEp is to wrangle, or assert with elan;  
 A FOURgon, I'd say, is the name for a van.  
 I'll bet you a FLVER that you've never heard  
 Of SIXte in fencing (a marvelous word!).  
 SEVENTy million or more know my name;  
 Even hoboEs on frElGHT trains discourse on my fame!  
 An asiNINE query: can anyone state  
 Why octopus TENTacles number but eight?

The following free verse by Kay Francis of Novato, California is somewhat reminiscent of the January 1 entry in Willard Espy's An Almanac of Words at Play:

The JAnGle of the off-key music  
 did nothing to soothe her FEBrile brow  
 but the sexy, sleazy MARimba beat  
 was almost, but not entirely, APROpos  
 to the weird, MAYbe even surrealistic  
 JUNgle that totally surrounded her

as she sipped her tall frosty JULep  
 while wondering how to avoid AUGmenting  
 the SEPTillion thoughts that invaded her mind  
 when the music, if you could call it that, rose an OCTave,  
 destroying the NOVelty of it all,  
 which, she DECided, was a very good thing.

Each line of the following poem by Jeff Grant transposes the letters of STEINLAGER, which supported the Kiwi challenger KZ7 in the America's Cup competition of 1986-7. The yacht was defeated by the United States entry, Stars and Stripes, which thereby earned the right to meet the Australian defender.

Let a singer  
 Star in glee:  
 "Line-Stager",  
 Sing'er tale.  
 Leanest rig,  
 Regent sail  
 - Set in regal,  
   Gentle airs;  
 Rest in gale.  
 (Silent rage)

Enlist gear,  
 Relate sign.  
 Agile stern,  
 Its general  
 Great lines:  
 - Gest l learn

Steinlager  
 Enlarges it.  
 "Green, l last"  
 lngest real  
 Stinger Ale!

Ears tingle,  
 Let sea ring.  
 "Line-Stager"  
 'er tale sing!

Angler-site,  
 Strange lie.

Sail'er, gent!  
 - Tiger's élan,  
 - A steel grin.  
 Let's regain  
 Rite angles;  
 Let's rage in!