

HIS FINAL BOW

This issue of **Word Ways** ends Dmitri Borgmann's articles, written not only under his own name, but also using the pseudonyms Merlin X. Houdini IV, Ramona J. Quincunx, Jezebel Q. Xixx, Mejnour Zanon. Rod P. Selden, and Ravenscroft J. Cloudesley.

Dmitri suffered from a heart ailment for some years before his death; did this prompt him to list fifteen synonyms for angina pectoris in the February 1985 *Quelque Chose*, and enumerate different modes of dying in "Death: A Logological Perspective" in this issue? A preoccupation with death can also be found in his correspondence. In February 1978, he wrote "my fighting days are over... I await my turn to shuffle off this mortal coil". When I wondered whether the letter's "foreboding tone" alluded to an "incurable disease" he replied "I am suffering from the incurable disease called 'life'".

I was somewhat startled by his March 27, 1978 letter: "Since today is my last day, I am making a point of getting this letter off to you before the impenetrable mists of eternity engulf me forever". And on April 24: "I have returned from the dead - but only briefly, for the sake of finishing the job [of improving his list of chemical element transposals]". His next several letters were all unsigned, and contained comments such as "Knowing that certain death awaits me, I venture fearlessly into the lethal radiation belt [seeking transposals of elements having radioactive isotopes]...With certain death from radiation poisoning staring me grimly in the face, I doggedly plod on toward my approaching doom...Curious notes found in the effects of one who sacrificed his life in the cause of advancing logology...The FINAL set of curious notes". Finally, a bewildering shift in the mode of demise:

Your putative correspondent was, by order of this court [letterhead of District Court, Sixteenth Judicial District, Juvenile Division, Miles City, Montana] executed on March 27, 1978, at 12:00 Midnight, for the crime of murder in the first degree. As provided by Montana law, he was hung. Accordingly, you could not have received any communications from him subsequent to the specified date.

Exactly twenty years ago, Dmitri Borgmann created **Word Ways** to "provide a forum for all people interested in word puzzles and in other recreational aspects of language...addressing itself to a broad spectrum of word interests". Farewell, Dmitri: though you have died, a part of you lives on.