

TWO NEW TRANSELETION PYRAMIDS

A. ROSS ECKLER
Morristown, New Jersey

The August 1979 *Word Ways* article "Word Roots and Branches" showed how the 17-letter Websterian word ANTICEREMONIALIST could be successively transeleted down to a single letter: remove E and rearrange the remaining 16 letters to obtain NONMATERIALISTIC, remove N and rearrange the remaining 15 letters to obtain RECITATIONALISM, and so on. Unfortunately, it was necessary to include one non-Websterian word, RECLAMATIONIST (used in a 1946 Saturday Evening Post article), in the sequence.

From their appearance, such sequences can be properly termed transeletion pyramids. It has been conjectured that no transeletion pyramid exists consisting entirely of boldface entries from Webster's Second or Third editions. However, if one also allows inferred forms (noun plurals, past tenses of verbs, participles, comparatives and the like), Kyle Corbin of Raleigh, North Carolina has shown that an all-Webster transeletion pyramid of this size is possible to construct:

A N T I C E R E M O N I A L I S T
N O N M A T E R I A L I T I E S
O R N A M E N T A L I T I E S
I N T E R L A M I N A T E S
M A T E R N A L I T I E S
M A T R I L I N E A T E
T R I L A M I N A T E
T E R M I N A L I A
L A T I M E R I A
M A T E R I A L
T A L I E R A
R E T A I L
A L T E R
R A T E
T E A
A T
A

He has also constructed a second transeletion pyramid, having no words in common with the first, in which only one word is not locatable in Webster's Second or Third: INTERNATIONALISE, a British spelling found, for example, in Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary.

M E T A N I T R O A N I L I N E S
 I N T E R N A T I O N A L I S E
 I N T E R L I N E A T I O N S
 R E N O I N T E S T I N A L
 I N T E N E R A T I O N S
 I N T E R N A T I O N S
 S A N T O R I N I T E
 I T I N E R A N T S
 T R A N S I E N T
 S T R A I T E N
 N A S T I E R
 A R I S E N
 R A I N S
 S A R I
 S I R
 I S
 I

Can anyone construct an all-Webster transdeletion pyramid starting with a word of 18 letters? In the May 1986 Kickshaws, Will Shortz presented a German transdeletion pyramid starting with a 19-letter word, GUTSARBEITERZEUGNIS, meaning "farm worker's report". Note that this even contains the relatively intractable letter (at least in English) Z!

A PUZZLING YODEL

Most crosswords appearing in newspapers are unsigned, or (as in the case of the *New York Sunday Times*) authored by a large number of different constructors under the supervision of an editor. In either case, the puzzle constructor has little opportunity to enjoy feedback in letters from his solving audience, to learn what sort of puzzle-tricks they like or detest. Barry Tunick and Sylvia Bursztyl, appointed co-constructors of the Sunday crossword for the *Los Angeles Times* in 1980, are exceptions to the above rule, and have built up a love-hate (mostly love) relationship with thousands of crossword fans. The reactions of these fans to their puzzles, plus tips on how to market and construct crosswords (Bursztyl fills in the letter-grid, Tunick writes the clues), forms the contents of their jointly-authored book of 128 pages, Cross-Word Crosstalk (Capra Press, \$8.95 paperback). The meaning of the title of this review? One of Tunick's favorite clues is peak performance = yodel.