

# THE PALINDROMICON

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The Palindromicon is a collection of over 2000 palindromic terms accumulated over many years of searching. Most of the words listed can be found in major English reference works; however, many are drawn from more obscure sources, and a good number of the best inferred examples are also entered. Trade-names have been included, as well as a few two-word terms. Given names, surnames and full names of people are listed, but not abbreviations, acronyms, numerals, symbols or names containing initials. A substantial number of foreign-language palindromes are also cited, together with various nonce-words from the likes of Finnegans Wake, by James Joyce.

Less than half the terms listed in William Sunners' pamphlet 1551 Palindromes have been accepted for the Palindromicon. The main exclusions are words contrived from Latin or Greek roots, such as DUOCOUD, EDOLODE, LETOHOTEL, REGNOLONGER, STELLA WALLETS, etc., and numerals, signs and symbols, like 262, CCCC and Δ.

Another large palindrome collection is that of the fabulous Professor Cloudesley (mentioned in Language on Vacation), whose secret file apparently recorded 250 specimens of more than 7 letters, back in 1965. Nothing has been heard of the reclusive Professor in recent years, but if he is still alive the corpus of long palindromes could well be considerably expanded. Incidentally, the Palindromicon contains 270 examples with 8 or more letters.

Dmitri Borgmann was a tremendous help with this undertaking, as he was able to contribute many palindromes from his own extensive reference library. We enjoyed a brief but prolific correspondence, which was sadly ended with Dmitri's death. The final letter I received from him was dated the day before he died. It must have been one of the last he ever wrote.

A palindrome dictionary was something near to Dmitri's heart, but it was a project he never found the time to work on. His assistance was of inestimable value, and I have no hesitation in dedicating this proliferation of palindromes to him.

Here is a small sampling from the Palindromicon: ten 7-letter specimens which to the best of my knowledge have not been previously exhibited.

- APPAPPA a plain one-piece costume for summer wear (Japanese)  
 DYSESYD old Scottish past tense of the verb 'disese', to distress  
 (Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue)  
 EARLRAE a New Zealand racehorse (New Zealand Studbook)

- GNIPING cropping or nipping off with the teeth (English Dialect Dictionary)
- HAZIZAH term connected with the rite of total immersion (Encyclopedia Judaica)
- NOAGAON populated place listed in the Official Standard Names Gazetteer of Bangladesh
- OHOPOHO town in the Ovamboland region of southwest Africa (Times Atlas of the World)
- RETATER a French word meaning 'to touch or feel again'
- TEJIJET a wadi in the Sahara (Encyclopedia Britannica)
- YSAMASY a nonce-word on page 493 in Finnegans Wake

### WHAT'S IN A NAME?

*A great deal, according to Leonard Ashley, who has written a fascinating book with this title, available in hardcover for \$18.95 from the Genealogical Publishing Company of Baltimore. If you know a little about a subject, it is not hard to write a book. However, if (as Ashley does) you know a great deal about a subject, you are acutely conscious of the choices to be made: how to capture the essence of the vast scholarship that has gone before?*

*Ashley touches all bases in onomastics, from personal names to place names, from brand names to names in literature. He inundates the reader with a cornucopia of odd and clever names, but he does more: he shows how onomasticians collect and evaluate their data, and he hints of debate and controversy behind the scenes (how far can the onomastician go in interpreting novelists' choice of names for fictional characters? to what extent is your life affected by your parents' choice of a name for you?).*

*He does not hesitate to offer pungent opinions on naming:*

- \*Never tell anything in a code name (like Operation Overlord) unless it can be calculated to deceive effectively*
- \*No names are as psychologically revealing as the ones that we give our pets [see **Word Ways**, November 1974]*
- \*Pretentious names often draw attention away from pedestrian products (Frusen-Glädje ice cream is actually made in Utica, and tastes like it)*
- \*In researching place name origins, never jump to conclusions; too many place names have explanations that are simple, neat, and wrong*

*The **Word Ways** editor doesn't fare too well: first name initials are "wimpy or would-be" and Jr. "is a detestable name for a growing boy."*

*The book concludes with a section on naming the baby, in which he offers 12 sensible rules. Although one may quibble about specifics (is Sally a social climber, or Lois a pushover but pretty?), a rough consensus exists on "good" and "bad" names, and holders of the latter may suffer from such stereotyping.*