

# LOGOLOGICAL RESISTENTIALISM

A. ROSS ECKLER

Morristown, New Jersey

In his book The New Official Rules (Addison-Wesley, 1989), Paul Dickson has collected from correspondents a large number of aphorisms, principally of the following varieties:

- (1) rueful reflections on how Nature conspires to thwart you: if anything can go wrong, it will (the toast always falls on carpet buttered side down)
- (2) cynical advice to the naive on how to deal with those who are at best indifferent to your welfare, and at worst are actively trying to promote their own at your expense

In the February 1988 **Word Ways**, the late Dmitri Borgmann relates how the first variety prevented him from finding the placename DEERNECK for an 8-square, and called it an example of Resistentialism (originated by some French intellectual, although Sir Jeremy Morse thought it was originated by the British humorist Paul Jennings).

Dickson's book contains only a few examples that can be called logological; can **Word Ways** readers add to them?

Just as some art exists only for its own sake, some words exist only for the sake of crossword puzzles (Lopez) [see review of The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Crossword Words, August 1983]

There are more entries in the first half of the alphabet (Law of Diminishing Enthusiasm)(VerNooy) [see "The Middle of an Alphabetic List," August 1984]

There are a number more that relate to proofreading, writing and word usage:

Proofreading is more effective after publication (Barker)

Never look up a word you cannot spell; never spell a word you cannot look up (Balusek)

When trying to decide if the word is spelled ie or ei, I'm wrong 90 percent of the time (Murray)

Double negatives are a no-no (Johnston)

The intellectual tone of a paper is improved when it has at least one word in it that is unfamiliar to the reader (Kohn).

Articles on writing are themselves badly written (Umhoefer-Dyer)

If you footnote every seventh line, you will never be accused of plagiarism (Phillips)

Even more advice is lavished on the mundane occupation of writing a letter:

There are more Js and Zs on my typewriter keyboard than the English language requires (Laver)

The key always goes on Saturday night (Clark)

If you accidentally put the carbon paper in backward, you will type a perfect letter (Campbell)

Self-sealing envelopes don't--except when you have accidentally left the letter out (Cox)

Troublesome correspondence that is postponed long enough will eventually become irrelevant (Albrecht-Alexander)

When you are ready to reply to a letter, you will lack at least one of the following: (1) a pen (or pencil or typewriter), (2) stationery, (3) postage stamp, or (4) the letter you were answering (Hale)

When writing a personal letter, as soon as you begin a new sheet of paper, you will run out of things to say (Costello)

Always address recipients of typed correspondence as "Dr." --you will be either correct or flattering (Poole)

No matter what your interest, one of Dickson's correspondents has probably commented on it. The editor noted at least seven comments related to statistics, and even two about hiking ("Don't give up high ground 'til you know you're over the pass" which has wider application, and "Excursions on foot will be approximately 58 percent uphill in both directions--and this percentage will increase as the temperature rises"). I hope, however, that the Dicksonism relating to editing does not apply to **Word Ways**:

The less the readers know about how a publication is put together by the editors, the happier they are (Garreau)

Does the Law of Diminishing Enthusiasm apply to Dickson's book? With a vengeance--there are 142 pages devoted to entries A through M, but only 74 to entries N through Z!