HALF-PALINDROMIC WORDS

MARK SALTVEIT
San Francisco, California

I have never understood all of the interest in finding palindromic words. It requires no imagination; they just sit there in front of the reader, like a large gold nugget on the sidewalk. And, like gold nuggets, all but the most hidden and obscure ones have long since been grabbed.

Furthermore, the sentence palindrome is the gold standard of this strange obsession, and palindromic words inevitably fail.

But half-palindromic words (words that contain the other half of a sentence palindrome, in reverse, and nothing more), now there's an interesting topic. They are just as naturally occurring as palindromic words. They form meaningful palindromes. And, best of all, no one has even tried looking for them.

Three half-palindromic words have been seen, unrecognized, in well-known palindromes: honeydew ("we dye no honeydew"), prison ("no, sir: prison") and Maharajah ("Maharajah, a jar! A ham!"). A near-miss: religion ("No, I – Gil – err: religion"), but an R mist be added to form the palindrome. We will ignore such near-misses, since so many exist that require nothing to be added or subtracted.

Dentist: "Sit, Ned"
Matinees? Seen it (A.M.)
So many dynamos!
Derail liar Ed
Despot tops Ed
Rot a noted detonator

Dermatology? Go lot, am red
Depilatory? Rot a lip, Ed
Donuts stun – O.D.!
Tell if fillet
Ebullient Neil, lube!

The following half-palindromic words seem to encourage questions, but somehow the answer is always "no".

Tradition? No, I dart
Navigation? No, I tag Ivan
Narration? No, I tar, ran
Denotation? No, it atoned
Detraction? No, it carted
No, I sired derision
No, I tax if fixation
No, I tail if filiation

No, I tan; I cull a hallucination
No, it – a nation
No, it – age negation
No, it – a noted detonation
No, it, Al – legal flagellation!
Substitution? "No," I tut, "its bus!"
Subrogation? No, I tag orb, us
Denomination? No, I tan (I'm on Ed)