

# NEW WORD PALINDROMES

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Michael Donner's fine recent book on palindromes, *I Love Me, Vol. I*, got me thinking about word palindromes and the paucity of examples cited in the standard collections. Besides the classic "All for one and one for all," the cry of the Three Musketeers, the following specimens are among the few that are generally cited in illustrating the genre:

- King, are you glad you are king?
- So patient a doctor to doctor a patient so.
- Girl, bathing on Bikini, eyeing boy, finds boy eyeing bikini on bathing-girl.
- You can cage a swallow, can't you, but you can't swallow a cage, can you?

To reverse this sad situation, I recently ran a creative competition for word palindromes in my weekly puzzle segment on NPR's Weekend Edition Sunday. Several thousand creative entries were received. These were judged on originality, cleverness, and naturalness of syntax. I looked particularly for examples that used the repeated words in different ways in the first and second halves. The quality of the results greatly exceeded my expectations. In fact, some of the submissions might well become new classics. First the runners-up, and their composers:

- Fall leaves after leaves fall (Betsy Mirarchi)
- Will my love love my will? (John Hesemann)
- Herb the sage eats sage the herb (The Miller Family)
- Please me by standing by me, please! (Peter L. Stein)
- "Rock of Ages" preceded ages of "rock." (Richard G. Jones)
- Escher, drawing hands, drew hands drawing Escher (John Meade)
- In order to stop hunger, stop to order in (Nicole Jacoby)
- Blessed are they that believe that they are blessed (Hugh Hazelrigg)
- Parents love to have children; children have to love parents  
(Peter L. Stein)
- Says Mom, "What do you do?" You do what Mom says (Natalie Heiman)
- Family first sees Holy Father secretly father holy see's first family  
(Elizabeth Scott Andrews and colleagues)
- You know, I did little for you, for little did I know you (Patrick Robbins)
- Did I say you never say "Never say never"? You say I did (Bill O'Malley)
- Good little student does plan future, but future plan does student



little good (Roxanne Abrams)

- Better doctors like people treated well because well-treated people like doctors better (Una Creditor)
- Celebrate! Why not? If happy birthday's your hope, I hope your birthday's happy! If not, why celebrate? (David C. Palmer)

My favorite long entry was this:

- Pain increase to aching back strikes, and sufferer finds no doctor. Doctor No finds sufferer and strikes back, aching to increase pain (Marjorie Risman)

Finally--ta-dah!--the grand prize winner, from Peter L. Stein of San Francisco, who also submitted two of the runners-up above. He titled this "Future headline out of Washington, D.C.":

- First Ladies rule the state, and state the rule--"Ladies first!"

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Edited by Frederic Cassidy and Joan Houston Hall and published by Belknap Press/Harvard for \$75, this volume, like its predecessors, sets a standard for thoroughness and scholarship that is essentially impossible to beat: the ne plus ultra of lexicography. It focuses on words and phrases whose forms or meanings are not in general use in the United States, or are peculiar to a certain social group (blacks, women, senior citizens, etc.). Historical regionalisms have been gleaned from a wide range of printed works; current regionalisms were identified by sampling speakers in a thousand US communities. The results of the latter are presented in the form of US maps with clusters of dots enabling one to quickly grasp the geographic range. Armed with DARE, a reader could, perhaps, emulate Henry Higgins (Shaw's imaginary English linguist who could locate a speaker's origin within a few miles). Americans, inveterate movers, ought to diffuse regionalisms, but this is not the case, at least for unusual or specialized terms:

money cat (having fur of three colors) ME  
 mall (median of divided highway) upstate NY  
 mischief night (night before Hallowe'en) eastern PA, NJ  
 monkey (delirium tremens) NC, GA, FL  
 motte (grove of trees) TX  
 lawyer (kind of fish) MN WI MI  
 Kasier blade (billhook) MS