

# THE STUTTER GAME

OREN N. DALTON  
El Paso, Texas

Ross Eckler's article "Wright, Write 'Rite' Right" in the February 1997 Word Ways reminded me of a game I and a friend, Scott Hancock, invented over rum and cokes about ten years ago. Inspiration was provided by a very pretty young woman, Helen Solis, a musician in the El Paso Symphony Orchestra along with Scott. During a break she asked if anyone had heard about the zookeeper Neumann who had nursed a pregnant wildebeest through birth: as a consequence, the NEW GNU KNEW NEUmann.

We could hardly let this idea lie fallow, so developed various rules of play. A phrase of two or more words, called the core, consists of components having the same sound but different spellings (thus, TUTU is not allowed). Obsolete and foreign words should be avoided, although common ones like OUI are allowed. The core must make good grammatical sense, generally by incorporating it into an explanatory paragraph. The constructor is free to create proper names that follow reasonable spelling rules (no GHOTI pronounced "fish"). Some four-component stutters:

Freddy, the baker's son, delivered a pair of croissants to each man in the encampment. Although James Tew was on guard-duty a mile away, Freddy faithfully delivered TWO TO TEW, TOO.

John Knott always wanted to be a sailor, but his attempts at knot-tying weren't really Navy. His instructor moaned "Why canNOT KNOTT KNOT NAUTically?"

Wealand is a tiny lost place in northern Ireland whose inhabitants, the Weauns ("Wee-uns"), are a very small people. The mayor once exclaimed "OUI, WE WEE WEauns have often been considered the French equivalent of leprechauns."

The inhabitants of Bhee in Northern England always pronounce I as "ee". They brag "A BHEE BEE BE Bigger and harder-working than any other bee alive!"

Five-component stutters are possible as well:

Alaric Freaze, a hero of Friesland, is honored by a band of paintings around the walls of a room in the city museum. In the depiction on the FRIEZE, FRAZE FREES FRIESE FREEZing during the 1482 siege.



Millicent acquired two marsupial-type skunks belonging to the genus Sehnt from the Australian outback. Sehnts have outstanding olfactory apparatuses: they can out-truffle-hunt pigs and leave bloodhounds in their dust. There is no doubt that MilliCENT'S SEHNTS SENSE SCENTS SENSationally.

Do Stutters have practical use? At Scott Hancock's church a question arose about the proper protocol for a ritual. Scott pinned a note to the bulletin board with the words "The RIGHT, RITE, WRIGHT WRITEs, is in Appendix A." There was, in fact, a parishioner named Wright, who denied all knowledge of the note's source or solution. The note remained posted for a couple of weeks for the bemusement of the congregation. Scott claimed the mood surrounding the controversy was lightened.

## ALPHABET AVENUE

Fans of Kickshaws editor Dave Morice will rejoice that he has collected his "baubles, gewgaws" or "fancy dishes, delicacies" into a 334-page book published by Chicago Review Press (ISBN 1-55652-304-1) in paperback for \$17.95. Alphabet Avenue uses the metaphor of a busy, cosmopolitan city to showcase three facets of words: groups of letters, combinations of sounds, bearers of meaning. Instead of Little Italy, Chinatown or Skid Row, we tour exotic places like the Pangrammatic Highway, the Rebus Station or the Word Square. Each neighborhood is full of linguistic clowns, jugglers, and magicians to beguile the ear and the eye. (A map of the city can be found in the November 1995 Kickshaws.) As the subtitle suggests, this is wordplay in the fast lane, with a dazzling variety of language oddities: not only old friends like anagrams, palindromes and word squares, but also lettershifts, rebuses, onomastics, jargon, puns, parodies, logic, letter geometry and poetry. (Remember the haiku maze? the poem consisting entirely of Beatles song titles? Shakespeare's backwards sonnet? They're all here.) One of the most charming features of this book is a chapter describing how various Word Ways authors view logology, or got into this game. Another is the typewriter art of Joyce Holland, who shows how far emoticons (those sideways faces that punctuate computer text) can be generalized. And pay close attention to the formation of the letters labeling the 26 chapters: G, for example, is built out of giraffes, a ghost, gun, gears and grapes.