

EDITORIAL

As it completes its thirtieth year of publication--longer than most cottage-industry magazines--Word Ways faces a crisis. Post office regulations require at least 200 paid subscriptions in order to qualify for a second-class mailing permit. Without such a permit, Word Ways must be sent out third class (currently as costly as first class), adding \$6 per year per subscriber to expenses. The subscription list, a paltry 235, has been declining for the past decade or more. It's time for Word Ways readers and subscribers to make gift subscriptions to friends or libraries, or persuade others by word-of-mouth to subscribe. Potential subscribers must be out there somewhere--Verbatim had a subscription list of 3100, and Maledicta 12 was mailed to 1800. Any good ideas for cost-effective advertising would also be welcome. (Reinhold Aman reports only 18 subscriptions to Maledicta from his Web page, set up some time ago.) I had hoped that the 1996 publication of Making the Alphabet Dance would result in a flow of new subscribers, but this has not proved to be the case.

If Word Ways were able to find only 75 new subscribers while holding onto its old ones, it would also erase an operating deficit currently being covered by drawing down a bank account from more profitable times (the early 1980s). In a couple of years, however, this will be gone. The Internal Revenue Service shares the burden of occasional losses, but not those of businesses that are chronically in the red.

A longer-term obstacle to Word Ways' continuance is the mortality of its editor. Although in good health, I have now passed the Biblical three-score-and-ten milestone. Any suggestions for a successor? Or should the mag expire with me? I welcome your input.

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