

# KICKSHAWS

DAVE MORICE  
Iowa City, Iowa

Readers are encouraged to send their favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws Editor (e-mail David-Morice@uiowa.edu).

## AN ANTHOLOGY OF ALPHAGRAMS

Mike Morton composed a fabulous collection of anagrams of the word ALPHABET and variations of it, noting that his favorite is "a battleship". Watch as the alphabet dances:

ALPHABET bathe lap...leapt? bah!...able path...ah, lab pet  
 ALPHABETARIAN planetaria? bah!...the Arabia Plan...ban aerial path...  
 eat alpha brain...I eat Alpha-Bran  
 ALPHABETIC abet caliph...bait chapel...the pi cabal...cheat a blip...  
 Bach? I leapt  
 ALPHABETICAL a pliable chat...ah, pliable cat!...I'll abate chap...  
 label CIA path  
 ALPHABETIFORM I form alphabet...the FBI, Palomar...Faith: a problem...  
 birth of Pamela...aplomb re: faith  
 ALPHABETISM heal baptism...sample habit...pat a blemish...  
 bash a limpet...he bit plasma  
 ALPHABETIST bite asphalt...bestial path...a battleship...a blithe past  
 ALPHABETIZATION zap toenail habit...a zap! the libation  
 ALPHABETIZER Bizet, Raphael...zap either lab

## ROMAN NUMEROLOGY

Many, if not most, English words have one or more Roman numeral letters (MDCLXVI) in them. In fact, eleven of the fourteen words in the previous sentence do. In MADAM, I'M ADAM, all consonants and the middle vowel are Roman numeral letters (RNLs). Some words go beyond the average and stand out for different reasons, including those below. A question: can you name a common 3-letter word that's a Roman numeral?

eXtraVehICuLar (14 letters) longest with 5 different RNLs used once  
 CLaIMeD-DeCIMaL-DeCLaIM-MaLICeD-MeDICaL (7) shortest with  
 5 different RNLs; largest transposal set with 5 different RNLs  
 heXaDeCIMaL (11) longest with 6 different RNLs  
 CLIMaXeD (8) shortest with 6 different RNLs  
 oVerCLIMaXeD (12) only number with all 7 different RNLs (coinage)  
 MILD (4) shortest with 4 different RNLs in a row (Ross Eckler)  
 IDI aMIn (7) first and last name with greatest ratio of RNLs

noVeMDeCILLIon (14) only number with 6 different RNLs  
 MoLeCuLe (8) longest with RNLs in odd positions only  
 Montana-Maine-Minnesota-Missouri-Mississippi-Massachusetts six-  
 state Romantic series (RNLs in correct order to form Roman  
 numerals) whose numeric values are within a span of 101 numbers  
 (M, MI, ... MIII, MC)  
 fLoCCInauCInIhILIpILIfICatIon (29) most RNLs (16) in a single word

### THE MINI-FIRMAMENT QUESTION AND THE STARS CHALLENGE

In the last Kickshaws the universe was packed into a small rectangle. Mike Keith found a smaller rectangle, below on the left. He describes his search: "I was intrigued by the mini-firmament question and set my computer about working on it. After many hours of thought, it discovered that  $12 \times 9 = 108$  is not the minimum-area rectangle into which the given words can be squeezed. Here is a solution in a  $13 \times 8 = 104$  rectangle." Mike took up the STARS challenge (in which STARS is added to the mini-firmament) and found the  $10 \times 12$  rectangle on the right.

N		U	N	I	V	E	R	S	E		M	O	O	N							
E	J								U		A				S	T	A	R	S		
P	L	U	T	O		M		V	E	N	U	S		R	J	U					
T	P				A		A				A			S	A	T	U	R	N	P	
U	I		M	E	R	C	U	R	Y		T				P		N		L		
N	T	O	S				T				U		M	I		V	E	N	U	S	
E	E	O					H				R		E	A	R	T	H		P	T	
	U	R	A	N	U	S					N		R	E		T	O				
													C	U	R	A	N	U	S		
													U						N		
													R	U	N	I	V	E	R	S	E
																				Y	

In an article called "The Big Crunch" in the January 1999 Wordsworth, Ted Clarke packed the firmament even more tightly. First he put everything (including STARS) into an  $8 \times 11$  crossword in which adjacent words are separated by lines instead of black squares, and next he stuffed everything into a  $9 \times 9$  Word Search grid.

M	A	R	S	M	J					H	N	E	P	T	U	N	E		
	V	N	A	O	U	R	A	N	U	S		T	Y			N	E		
	E	E	T	O	P	L	U	T	O		V	R	R	R	S	R	S	U	
	N	P	U	N	I	V	E	R	S	E	E	E	A	U	R		R		
	U	T	R	S	T	A	R	S			N	M	T	E	C	A			
	S	U	N		E	A	R	T	H		U	A	V	I	N	R	T		
		N	M	E	R	C	U	R	Y		S	S	I	R	U	P	O	E	S
	E											N	U	S	S	U	O	M	
											U	O	T	U	L	P	J	M	

## ZODIAC PACKING

I wrote to Mike suggesting that other word groups might be tried, especially those whose words had a greater variety of spelling. Mike took up the challenge and fired back the smallest rectangle for Zodiac words, measuring 9x14:

	C		S		
	A	Q	U	A	R I U S
	N		G		
	C		P	I S	C E S
L	E	O		T	A
	R			T	P
L			T	A	U R U S
I		G		R	I C
B		E		I	C O
R		M		U	O R
A	R	I	E	S	R P
		N			N I
	V	I	R	G O	O
					N

## WASHINGTON WORDPLAY

Mike Morton informs us that "Washington cognoscenti like to refer to Al Gore's 'reinventing government' as REGO. This is, of course, an anagram for GORE. Perhaps we should coin the term 'syllanym' for words made from leading syllables of words, like 'acronym' is made from leading letters." (Or perhaps we should just call them 'silly names'.)

## MONICA UNDER FIRE

Mike Morton sent three anagrams on the Monica-Clinton affair. The first two are by Mike, and the third is by Dave Polewka.

William Clinton = it'll win Monica L

William Jefferson Clinton = sniffle, or jilt new Monica L

Monica Samille Lewinsky = Slick Willie's my A-one man

## AUTOMONICAGRAM

Monica is an alphabetic soulmate of mine. If the third and sixth letters of her name are shifted four steps down the alphabet (N to R, A to E), MONICA changes to MORICE. As her soulmate, I feel I should write an alphabet sentence about the whole affair, the truth from A to Z.

As Bill Clinton defined every federal guideline, Hyde impeached. Jealously, Kenneth loved Monica. "Newt, our president's quietly roasting Starr," Tripp uttered, "Violate Willie's X-rays, you zero!"

## PENTECOSTAL ALPHABET

Nyr Indictor sent the following "alphabet of eloquence" in which each line includes the name of a person and of a language that begins with a different letter of the alphabet going from A to Z--quite an ABComplishment!

Abel was articulate in Afrikaans  
 Betty was bombastic in Bengali  
 Charles was chatty in Catalan  
 Dinah was demonstrative in Dogon  
 Edward was eloquent in Estonian  
 Flo was fluent in Flemish  
 George was garrulous in G=E3  
 Harry was high-sounding in Hawaiian  
 Inez was impeccable in Iroquois  
 Jack was jocular in Javanese  
 Kate was kibbitzy in Kikuyu  
 Lloyd was loquacious in Luxembourggeois  
 Millie was mellifluous in Mongolian  
 Nate was native in Nepali  
 Odette was outspoken in Occitan  
 Paul was periphrastic in Palauan  
 Queenie was quotable in Quechua  
 Rodney was responsive in Ryukyuan  
 Susan was shortspoken in Swahili  
 Thomas was talkative in Telugu  
 Usha was unintimidated in Ukrainian  
 Vernon was vocal in Vietnamese  
 Wilma was well-spoken in Welsh  
 Xavier was xpressive in Xhosa  
 Yetta was yackety-yak-yak in Yoruba  
 Zack was zestful in Zapotec

## MY! NO, CRASS ACRONYM!

Mike Morton writes "I just learned that NATO in French is OTAN. I wonder what other acronyms reverse when you translate to another language? What's the longest such acronym? Not quite so good: I've heard that the International Standards Organization has a standard called Open Systems Interconnect. It's called the ISO OSI, but of course computer geeks picked the OSI name specifically because it's the reverse of ISO." I wrote Mike back and told him that AIDS in Spanish is an anagram, SIDA. He replied that SIDA in Hawaii is the Semi-Independent Drivers Association, a taxi company.

## A PARADE OF CHARADES

A charade, or redivider, is a word that slices apart to form other words--for example, PUNGENT becomes PUN GENT. Some words are especially suitable for forming charades. The word 1-ADAMANTANAMINE, listed

in the 1997 ICN Pharmaceuticals catalog, may be the record-holder. It contains as unbroken letter strings the following 33 words found in Merriam-Webster's 2nd Unabridged: a, ad, Ada, Adam, adamant, am, ama, amant, ami, amin (variant spelling), amine, an, ant, anta, da, dam, dama, daman, I, in, ma, man, mant, manta, mi, min, mine, na, Nami, ne, ta, tan, tana. With such a large body of shorter words, adamantamine without the numeric prefix can be divided a record-breaking 155 different ways, from A DA MAN TA NA MI NE to ADAMANT ANA MINE!

## ELEMENTAL STATES

Do you get up in the americium or the promethium? Have you ever heard a song begin with rhenium, lanthanum, titanium? Do you use the fluorine-word much? Well, I'm from Molybdenum: show me! As you may have guessed, chemical element names replace their one- or two-letter symbols (Am, Pm, Re, La, Ti, F, Mo). To read the real meaning, replace the words with the symbols, which stand for something entirely different.

As logological geographers know, fourteen states produce elements of such high quality that their abbreviations have become identical:

AL Alabama aluminum	MD Maryland mendeleevium
AR Arkansas argon	MN Minnesota manganese
CA California calcium	MO Missouri molybdenum
CO Colorado cobalt	ND North Dakota neodymium
GA Georgia gallium	NE Nebraska neon
IN Indiana indium	PA Pennsylvania protactinium
LA Louisiana lanthanum	SC South Carolina scandium

## COMPANY MERGERS WE'D LIKE TO SEE

Susan Eckler picked up on the Internet a list of company mergers resulting in much more interesting names than the individual companies now have. Merge on! These are cataclysmically funny!

Fairchild Electronics, Honeywell Computers = Fairwell Honeychild  
 Polygraph Records, Warner Brothers, Keebler = Poly Warner Cracker  
 John Deere, Abiti-Price = Deere Abi  
 3M, Goodyear = mmmGood  
 Honeywell, Imasco, Home Oil = Honey, I'm Home  
 Denison Mines, Alliance, Metal Mining = Mine, All Mine  
 3M, J.C. Penney, Canadian Opera Company = 3 Penney Opera  
 Grey Poupon, Dockers Pants = Poupon Pants  
 Knott's Berry Farm, National Organization of Women = Knott NOW  
 Crabtree & Evelyn, Apple Computer  
 Swissair, Cheseborough-Ponds = Swiss Cheese  
 Zippo Manufacturing, Audi, Dofasco, Dakota Mining = Zip Audi Do Da  
 Yahoo, Netscape = Net'n'Yahoo (with headquarters in Tel Aviv?)  
 W.R. Grace, Fuller Brush, Mary Kay Cosmetics, Hale Business Systems =  
 Hail Mary Fuller Grace

## A NAME LIKE NO OTHER

I asked Ghil'ad Zuckermann if one could find seven names of well-known people that were also weekday names. These weekday people could be real or fictitious. Ideally, one would find all seven as first names (TUESDAY Weld, actress), last names (Sergeant Joe FRIDAY, character on "Dragnet"; Billy SUNDAY, turn-of-the-century preacher), and maybe a few as only names (FRIDAY in *Robinson Crusoe*). He responded with a name so amazing and unique that its owner understandably wants to protect her privacy. This fascinating name, far more intriguing than any in John Train's books, is FRIDAY FEBRUARY ELEVEN BIDDLE which shortens to Friday F.E. Biddle--a day, a person, to remember!

## PEACEFUL SUNDAY

Ghil'ad Zuckermann has found a delightful relationship of the meaning of two singers' names: "There is a famous Israeli singer called Shlomi Shabat. I have jocularly named him for years Placido Domingo since [Shlomi] means peaceful (from shalom, "peace") and [shabat] is Sabbath (the Jews' Sunday). Placido Domingo is Spanish for "peaceful Sunday".

## WHO HE? WHO SHE?

Jay Ames sent a bunch of names of people who may or may not have existed except in the realm of On(tario)omastics. Let's welcome

MANNY TOBA, MANNY SHEVITZ  
 MAY DAY, MAY FAIR, MAY POL, MAY QUEEN  
 MOLLY CODDLER, MOLLY B DENUM  
 MINNIE SOTA, MINNIE HAHA, MISS SIS SIPPY, MISSY SAUGA (a town)  
 MORT GAGE, MOSS TROOPER, MOSSIE BANKS

## HEADLINERS, MAYBE

Jay sent the following one-line stretches of imagination. However, considering some stories on the Weird News Website, it could happen:

The CRUDE CROWD CROWED when she played the CRWTH  
 This CRACKER CROAKED by the CRICK, a CRACKED CROCK at his side  
 Why 'VOILA VIOLA'? She was never lost  
 Is a MAD DAM an irate ewe or you?  
 Is ECRU a CURE for dyes that bleed?

## MORE HIC HAIKU HOC

Introduced in the August Kickshaws, Edmund Conti's *Hic Haiku Hoc* is one of the funniest books of short poems around. It combines the strategies of wordplay, concrete poetry, and light verse in fun and funny ways. And who is Edmund Conti? The author's note explains: "Edmund Conti is, essentially, Edmund Conti. That he is not quintessentially

Edmund Conti is neither relevant nor interesting." And here are some more of his essential poems:

FOUR OUT OF FIVE CAN'T READ ROMAN NUMERALS      fiVe  
 COMPUTER SOLUTION      datadatadatadatadatadada!  
 PALINDROME      designing is Ed  
 FLYING SAUCERS      Saw some. Awesome!

PENTAGRAPH      I think. I think. I think. I think. I think.  
 Therefore, iamb.

DOUBLE HELIX  
 dna  
 and dna  
     dna and  
     dna

ONE-SIDED STORY  
 One of my phobias  
 is taking a trip  
 forever on a Mobius  
 strip.

ANAGRAMS  
 Some of them  
 seem to have  
**continued**  
**unnoticed**

#### AL ASKS MANY QUESTIONS

Bill Webster's AL is a character who ALways gets answers that are quick, to the point, and meant for him alone. In the following dialog, Al speaks first...and his neighbor replies, but his wife has the last word:

Nice dog you have there...Watch out for his pausal.  
 What's his name?...Penial. [Cocking his ear] Is that your phonal?  
 No. What kind of tree is your dog sniffing?...Pineal.  
 How was your bowling last night?...I got a spare, all but one pinnal.  
 Does your wife Rose bowl?...No, she's not a plagal.  
 Who was the deliveryman at your door?...Parcel Postal.  
 You're still sending for those cheap books?...Yeah, pulpal.  
 What kind of stories are they?...Racial.  
 Look up there! What kind of engine does that biplane have?...Radial.  
 I bet you were a mischief--what did your mom call you?...Rascal.  
 What became of all those toys you had?...Rectal. [Rose calls] Uredial?

#### AT-TITUDE

According to Bill Webster, the use of the word "like" is like the use of "at"--popular but not necessary. Like, it's where it's at, as he tells in this story:

Do children outgrow the use of the word "like"? I met this twenty-something gal, Pat. One day she offered to come over and make dinner for me. "Where's the pansat?" she asked, as she set up shop in the kitchen. "Pansat?" I queried. "Y'know--the pan for--". "Oh," I replied, "the pan--that cupboard." Looking at the fridge, she uttered "Where's the butterat?" I was beginning to catch on, but it was "like" learning a new language. I suppose one could become accustomed. However, the relationship didn't last. Sometimes I wonder, "Where's Patat"?

## MARY HAD A GRUB MALADY

According to Peter Newby, "Sir Diggory Rogg-idris, the retired admiral and poet, has risen to New Bybwen's longest-standing challenge, the completion of a stanza of palindromic lines for the verse 'Mary Bred a Derby Ram.' Sir Diggory supplied a glossary to enable the general reader to appreciate his imagery: TUP (a ram), OT (an urchin), DA (to experience), and E (an exclamation of Yorkshiremen, but more significantly the name of a Scottish river that the ailing Derby ram created when it had to relieve itself). Admiral Rogg-idris dedicated his ovine masterpiece (titled "Dirge") to Iowa's Mad Eric Ovid who first posed the challenge:

Mary bred a Derby ram,  
Tup to ewe ot put.  
Mad Eros! Sore dam.  
Tug o'war--braw o' gut.  
E, grub malady: da lamb urge.

## CRYPTOGRAMS AND WORDSMITH'S RIDDLES

Nebuchadnezzar Pewtery, Ben's brother better known as Neb Pewtery, has devised a series of conundrums designed to test a wordsmith's power of reasoning. The first two are cryptograms based upon famous quotes by Americans; the third and last is closer akin to a riddle.

1. LLAHSI
2. HE MINTS COYOTE
3. Which fish is a vulgar fraction?

## BEN PEWTERY WONDERS

The eminent logician recently posed the question "Is a stag turned on by hindsight?" Since no answer was forthcoming, he posed another: "Would MOTHER APE be an example of a mixed METAPHORE?" He has also discovered that the OED gives one of the meanings of CALE as "foul worm," noting that this has topical relevance for moniCA LEwinsky. Finally, the verb to well (to boil) is the key to understanding Ben Pewtery's latest construction: We'll well well. Well, well!

## MAD ERIC, PRIZE-WINNING NUDIST

Mad Eric Ovid paid his annual visit to New Bybwen's nudist colony. Era Bare, and bought a ticket for a raffle for a goose of one's choice. As usual, he was baffled by the local dialect which retained such older English words as steg (a gander) and cire (choice). However, Ovid was delighted to read the result of the draw under the Semetimes headline ERIC GETS STEG CIRE.

## MAD ERIC, NUDE-WINNING PRIZIST

New Bybwen's greatest living female athlete, Sad Ida Adidas, acquired her sorrowful sobriquet by her habit of winning races then dashing



back to the start. Thus, to the horror of her sportswear sponsors, she never got to mount the victor's rostrum.

Mad Eric courted her but, as he wished to consummate their relationship in as static a mode as passion allows whereas Ida insisted on running round the bedroom, she spurned him. Thereafter Ida, an expert on Persian mythology, referred to him as Div Ovid.

Disappointed by Ida's cruel rejection, Mad Eric wandered into Ooze Zoo where, to his delight, he was greeted by the delightful Nefertiti Alexis Fretwell who had sold him the winning raffle ticket at Era Bare. Nef, a statuesque blonde, was in the antelope house, where Mad Eric noticed that SIX ELAND EYED N. ALEXIS.

## INSECT SIGN LANGUAGE

In Don Marquis's *Archyology: The Long Lost Tales of Archy and Mehitabel*, Archy the Cockroach invented a sign language in order to converse with Czar Nicholas of Russia. As Archy described it, each of his six legs represented four different letters. By pointing up, down, right or left with the appropriate leg, he could make 24 letters and "get along without sometimes W and Y." If you ever see a cockroach gesturing to you, it just might be using Archy's insect sign language. You'll need to know how to interpret the message, so here's a crash course. Each leg is listed with the four letters in pointing order (e.g., a=up, b=down, c=right, d=left):

left upper leg = a b c d  
left middle leg = e f g h  
left lower leg = i j k l

right upper leg = m n o p  
right middle leg = q r s t  
right lower leg = u v x z

## TELEPHONICS

Wordplay involving the telephone has been around ever since Borgmann introduced it in *Language on Vacation*. Most discussions of word-dialing have to do with finding words typed with the same digits. There are other wordplays involving the telephone alphabet, in which three letters are coded to a single digit. Let's dial (or punch in) a few words specific to the phone. Keypad refers to any number-plus-letters set, and two-pad, three-pad, etc., refers to the set with that specific number.

If no digits or letters are repeated, as POLICE 765423 or EARTHLY 3278459, the words are telephone isograms. A complete telephone isogram has all eight digits (2-9), as in SODALITY 76325489 or the pair MAPLE, IVY 67753,489. Some words have digits that increase in value without skipping a digit, like FILMS 34567, while others decrease in value, like SOLID 76543. (FILMS and SOLID are also telephone reversals.) Single-digit telephone words like DEEDED 333333 have appeared before, but double-digit words are almost as tricky to find. JACKAL 522525 and FACADE 322233 are six letters long, and DEIFIED 3343433 is seven. Some have their letters grouped by their digits: BABOON 222666, HIGH NOON

4444 6666. Some use all the letters on the keypads one time only, like HOMING 466464. Others do the same and group them by digit, like the first six letters in SPRIGHT 7774448. One devilish word combines Christ's age at death with the Number of the Beast: DEMON 33666.

Words like CAB and FEED use all three letters one or more times on a single keypad, but are there words that use all the letters on any two or more keypads? They're hard to find. Allowing extraneous letters makes it easier; two full keypads appear in SUPERLATIVE (PRS,TUV,elai), UNFORMED (DEF,MNO,ru), and FRIGHTENED (DEF,GHI,rtn). Three are in MORPHOGENESIS (GHI,MNO,PRS,ee). Some words have keypad letters in single strings, as in these two-pad examples: FEEDBACK (DEF,ABC,k), MOONDUST (MNO,d,STU), MOONLIGHT (MNO,l,GHI,t), and BACKGAYMON (ABC,kg,MNO). Others have the letters on keypads in alphabetical order scattered through the word: PARSIMONIOUS (PaRSiMoNiOus).

There is no number name whose letters have digits which add up to itself, but if repeated digits are dropped out, the situation changes. THIRTY-SEVEN is dialed as 844789-73836, which totals 67, but if each digit is used only once,  $8+4+7+9+3+6=37$  is a self-referential sum.

#### TOUCH-TONE WORDS

The grid on a touch-tone phone adds a geometric dimension to telephone words. A touch-tone word is spelled with one or more letters from every keypad in a single row or column. What is the longest word that can be typed for each of the six possibilities? Here are some examples, but longer ones are undoubtedly in the phone somewhere: top row (2,3) DEFACED; middle row (4,5,6) NONILLION, bottom row (7,8,9) SYRUPY; left column (4,7) GRIPS, middle column (2,5,8) ACTUAL, right column (3,6,9) MONEY.

#### ON ROMAN NUMERALS AND LAST THINGS

According to some biblical scholars, the Book of Revelation was written prior to A.D. 70, during the reign of the Emperor Nero. The total value of the consonants in his name (when spelled Neron Kesar) is equal to 666, the Number of the Beast in Revelation 13:18. Other scholars argue that this number cryptically alludes to a person known only to the cognoscenti. But could there be a non-gematric reason as well? Is it more than coincidence that the Roman numerals DCLXVI, in use at the time of Christ, denote 666 when written in descending order? How was this number expressed in the earliest manuscript versions of Revelation?