

# 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).

## THE MOONNOOKKEEPER AND THE TOOLLOOTER

In *Language on Vacation*, Dmitri Borgmann discussed the Moonnookkeeper, a character created by Howard Bergerson. The Moonnookkeeper, an individual who keeps house on the moon, is the star of this story:

One sunny day, the Moonnookkeeper took a walk down by the Loop-pool. The Poollooppeeler was scraping eelleeks from the side of a boat. He looked up at his friend.

"Hey, Moonnookkeeper. Did you hear the latest news?"

"No, Poollooppeeler. What happened?"

"Last night a toollooter broke the reeddoor to my beerroom and stole my irreplaceable toolloom!"

"Gooddoom! What is this moon coming to? Did the police catch the thief?"

"Not yet. They couldn't find any clues. After they left, I found this old shoehorn, but I don't think it's worth mentioning." Sighing, he tossed it to the Moonnookkeeper.

"This isn't a shoehorn," the Moonnookkeeper said, "it's a boottooter! A very expensive one at that. Without it the thief's boots won't squeak in harmony. I'll bet he'll return to the scene of the crime to look for it, probably tonight. If so, we'll surprise him with my flash camera."

After dark, the two friends hid behind a barrel of spoonnoodles at the back of the beerroom. To pass the time, the Moonnookkeeper munched on some dried beeffeed while the Poollooppeeler crunched loudly on pickled steerrootteeth. About midnight they heard a noise outside. Suddenly the reeddoor creaked open. It was the toollooter, waving a flashlight back and forth.

"Where'd I drop that mooddooming boottooter?" he whispered to himself. With each step, his boots squeaked off-key.

Suddenly the Moonnookkeeper popped up from his hiding place and snapped the camera. The flash blinded the thief for a moment.

"What the--?! Who's that soottootheed snooppeeper?" he roared, dropping his flashlight in the confusion.

"Me, you gloommeeting gooffool!" said the Moonnookkeeper. "My camera got a peek at you, and I'm going to keep the picture."

"Give it to me, or I'll tattoo a balloonoose around your neck. you--you peekkeeper!"

Lurching toward them, the toollooter tripped on the slippery steer-rootteeth that the Poollooppeeler had dropped, tumbled over the spoon-noodle barrel, and landed with a whoop on a stack of slimy reeffeelers.

"Call me a peekkeeper, will you?" the Moonnookkeeper guffawed.

"Get these things off me, you crazy repeekkookkeeper!" he shouted. "Get 'em off, and I'll give the toolloom back!"

"You sure will! This photograph proves you're the thief."

"One picture doesn't prove anything," he replied, reeffeelers oozing all over his face.

So the Moonnookkeeper took a dozen more shots as the toollooter flopped around in the dark. The Poollooppeeler called the police, and a squad car arrived shortly. The police arrested the toollooter and locked him in the slammer until his trial.

A few weeks later the case went to court. The jury, on seeing the disgusting photos of the reeffeelers on the toollooter's face, instantly gave their decision, and the judge closed the trial with a short statement: "The case against the toollooter is so air-tight that it makes his innocence a vacuummoot point. He's as guilty as a reeffeeler and twice as slimy!"

On hearing that, the toollooter yelled at the Moonnookkeeper "I'll get even with you, you baddeeddoommooddeppoollooppeelloottoolloommoon-nookkeeper!" He was sentenced to several years in a prison crater where he made portable moonnooks.

As for the Moonnookkeeper, he took the toollooter's curse as his new title, painted it on a white wooden sign, and hung it above his door. With 26 double letters in a row, the title appeared in the Guinness Book of Lunar Records and brought him moon-wide fame. Soon tourists throughout the galaxy flocked to the moon in droves just to marvel at the immense length of the sign above the tiny moonnook.

And as for the poollooppeeler, he had a secret that he never revealed to anyone. He'd heard the toollooter speak a palindromic word containing five double letters in a row, but he didn't want the thief to get the fame that such a word would inevitably bring. Can you find it?

## U R WELCOME

Tom Hanks, who's won two Oscars and may win a third, has the reputation for being the nicest guy in Hollywood. He must be very grateful for his success. Perhaps that's why his name is T. HANKS.

## UCALEGONS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

The editor has cited UCALEGON as the word that has the most unusual definition. It actually has two definitions in Webster's Second. The first is "a next-door neighbor" and the second is "a next-door neighbor whose house is on fire." If someone knocks at my door and says "It's me, your ucalegon," should I bring out a Welcome Wagon or a fire extinguisher?

## TOLL-FREE WORDPLAY

Toll-free telephone numbers begin 1-800 (or 1-8xx) and continue with the customary seven digits. Many toll-free numbers use words instead of numbers. For example, Hooked On Phonics, which promises to teach you to read or your money back, has as its number 1-800-ABCDEFGH. Of course, if you can't read, then how can you dial the number? Mike Keith dialed a new type of telephonic wordplay that uses toll-free numbers to transmit messages via homophones, rebuses, etc. In most cases, the 1-800 paves the way to the wordplay. Consider 1-800-222-2222: decipher it, figure out its real meaning. The 2-pad on the phone has the letters ABC, and the 800 number has 2 repeated seven times; the number must belong to a cruise line who offers rides on the seven C's. Can you interpret the following numbers or come up with new ones? Mike devised the first four, and I added three more. The first number has two answers; the last includes all eleven digits in its answer.

1. 1-800-444-4444 (NASA's number)
2. 1-800-222-2666 (restaurant or hotel named after summer, fall, winter and spring)
3. 1-800-888-8888 (vintage clothing company specializing in disco wear)
4. 1-800-999-9999 (college of philosophy)
5. 1-800-444-4447 (Christian church)
6. 1-800-444-4112 (optometrist)
7. 1-888-999-8888 (Monica Lewinsky's hot line to Clinton)

## TELEPHONE STATE ABBREVIATIONS

The fifty statename abbreviations are formed with 24 letters (BQ are missing). Coincidentally, the telephone alphabet uses 24 letters, too (QZ are missing). Combining telephone and state letters, there are eight states that require one telephone key (CA DE HI MN MO NM UT WY) and eight that require two consecutive-digit keys (IL MS OR TX increase in value, WV OK NJ ID decrease). What is the best arrangement of letters on the seven keys of the dial to produce the most single-key abbreviations? double-key abbreviations? What is the best arrangement in both cases if letters can be repeated as often as desired?

## SLIDING WORD LADDERS

Take a four-letter word, clip off the outer letters, slide the middle letters apart, and insert two other letters between them to form a new four-letter word: TONE, O--N, OPEN. Repeat this process to form a sliding word ladder. Building one involves a very different kind of challenge. Take for instance these timely examples:

HerE, EveR, VaseE, AgeS, GonE

DayS, ArtY, RenT, EveN, VaseE, ApeS, PyrE, Year

## MICROSOFT'S SECRET MESSAGE

Here's a little trick you can try on Microsoft 6.01. A thesaurus, whether in book or electronic form, usually provides synonyms for a specific word. However, go to the Microsoft Thesaurus and type the line "I want to kill Bill Gates." The Thesaurus responds "I'll drink to that."

## SELF-MULTIPLYING NUMBER NAMES

In English, no number name is spelled with letters whose alphabetic values (A=1, B=2, ...) add up to itself. However, as previous Word Ways articles have shown, the letters can be assigned different numerical values so that names are self-adding (if S=1, I=2, X=3, then SIX=6). If the alphabetic values of the letters in a number name are multiplied instead of added, one can renumber letter values so that the number name equals its own product. There are at least two ways to do this:

1. Assign a unique value to each letter, as in the self-adding problem. If A=25, B=100000, D=1000, I=2, L=10, M=100, N=5, O=20, Q=200, R=500, S=1, T=20000, U=4 and X=3, then SIX, SIX MILLION, SIX BILLION, SIX TRILLION and SIX QUADRILLION are self-multiplying names
2. Assign values, but allow different letters to have the same value. If E=1, F=1, H=3, I=1, N=1, O=1, U=4, V=5, R=1, S=1, T=1, W=2, X=6 and Y=10, then ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, FIVE, SIX, TWENTY and THIRTY are self-multiplying. This set can be extended by setting L=1000, M=1000, B=1000000, etc.

What assignments maximize the number of self-multiplying names?

## E-MAIL NONSENSE: PURPLEPOLKA.BIKINI.COM

Mary Christie Craig has come up with some interesting names for web pages on the Internet, and invites Word Ways readers to add to her list:

tvpundits/woodendummies@talkingheads.com  
 peepingtoms@oicu/teehee.com  
 escapedmentalpatients@grabthebutterfly.net  
 dinersclubmembers@smorgasb.org  
 republicanpoliticians@weallwantbigger.gov  
 democraticpoliticians@weallREALLYwantmoretaxesandreallybigger.gov  
 anorexics@eattolive.barf  
 bratwurstmakersoftheworld@hot.link  
 murderforhire@bash'emdash'emand/////em.kill  
 chiropractors@snapcrackle.pop  
 dumbblondes@dumbblondes.duh  
 medicalFAQs@what'sup.doc?  
 suicideprone@followthelemmings.jump  
 mastercarpenters@sorethumb.damn!  
 occultistsandsatanists@hot.damn

darwinians@pleasehelpusfindthemissing.links  
 parentsofcollegestudents@youactuallythoughtyourkidwasgettingacollege.  
 edu.kashun

## LEAPFROG WORDS

A leapfrog word is a special kind of anagram that results from dividing a word into its even- and odd-numbered letters and placing them in unbroken sets next to each other, for example FEAST to FATES. There are three kinds--odd-letters first, even-letters first, and either first. In the final example, the letters leap twice, leading to a reversal.

Odd first: gun-gnu, blot-bolt, pearl-paler, hearts-haters

Even first: rat-art, pass-asps, freer-refer, steals-tassel

Either first: lies-leis or lies-isle

Chain: seel-else-lees

## ACCIDENTAL LETTERPLAY

Rich Lederer encountered an accidental anagram in the Olympic Spa and Resort in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin during a speaking engagement: BROADMOOR BOARDROOM. In fact, the two words separate into two parts that work in different ways--the first parts are anagrams of each other and the last are reversals.

## X-ANIMALS

While working on Medline, a bibliographic database of hundreds of thousands of science papers, I encountered a XANTUSIID LIZARD, the first X-animal I've ever encountered. Are there any others?

## HIGH-CONTRAST SPELLING

Howard Bergerson discovered an intriguing relationship between sound and spelling in the words THY and THIGH. Each begins with a different consonant sound spelled in the same way, and ends with the same vowel sound spelled in a different way. I noticed that THAI could be added to make a three-word set. I didn't think it would be possible to find any other words with high contrast spelling, but there are others. In the following set, two different pronunciations of SURE are paired off with two different words spelled SEWER:

SURE (shoor)

SURE (shoh-er)

SEWER (soor = "drain")

SEWER (sho-er = "one who sews")

## IN WITH INWORDS

A word whose letters appear alphabetically between the corresponding pairs of adjacent letters in another word is an inword. NO is an inword of YES, because N comes between Y and E, and O comes between E and S. (When the letter-pair is in reverse order, as YE, consider the range to be from E to Y.) Inwords are always one letter shorter than the words whose letters they fit between. Some others: GLORY to IMPS, AVARICE to CHIMED, BLUES to IRON.

It's even possible to construct sequences of inwords: AWASH-BERM-DIN-EL-G. How long a sequence can you find?

## THANKSGIVING DAY, 1998

A few years ago, I wrote about 40 Word Ways writers and asked them to send a wordplay statement for *Alphabet Avenue*. Since then, other people have written articles for the magazine. Bill Webster, a recent author, sent a statement that tells of his introduction to wordplay. He writes: "Thanks to Walter Henryson and the *Portland Oregonian*, I was introduced to Word Ways in 1997. One of my pastimes had been playing Scrabble, since receiving the game as a gift in 1960. In March 1980 I learned of the Scrabble clubs formed by the game's manufacturer and of the tournaments. I went on a Saturday to my first, and it was the only time I lost four consecutive games. I then learned about the dictionary and got right into it. I contacted Walt, and he sent me a column called "The Edge" which listed Word Ways as a source for words used. When I got the address, I wrote Ross, and he sent me a flyer about the magazine. I subscribed, finding it a fascinating 80-page quarterly...Anagramming has been my life-long hobby, beginning at age 7 with six-letter words. Mr. Eckler started using some of the anagram puzzles and other items I submitted...Through reading Ross's book *Making the Alphabet Dance* I learned of *The Enigma*, the monthly publication of the National Puzzlers' League. Now I am corresponding with a number of interesting people. All of this has encouraged me to create puzzles, which I find a fascinating hobby."

## SHAPELY ANAGRAMS

Bill found a number of words related to shapes that appear in various dictionaries. Here is a selection with definitions, but there's more. Bill anagrammed them into fairly common words. Can you do the same? Do yours match his?

- |                           |                       |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. CORDATE (heart)        | 6. ACEROUS (needle)   |
| 2. RENIFORM (kidney)      | 7. LIGULES (strap)    |
| 3. LYRATE (lyre)          | 8. CORNUTED (horn)    |
| 4. PELTATE (shield)       | 9. PINEAL (pine cone) |
| 5. LINEAR (straight line) | 10. SPHENIC (wedge)   |

## ODDITIES IN THE NAME GAME

Jay Ames sent in the following names, as real as they are unusual (onomastics is a field that knows know boundaries): Victoria Iphegenia Warshawski, Vienicius D'Olivier, Sepporah Ungalaq, Monger Zimmo.

And here are a few more, with commentaries from Jay. Are they real? You be the judge.

Ursula Undress (exotic dancer/stripper)

Bull Durham (the smoker's friend)

Shirlee Dimple (movie moppet)

Carmen Miranda (fern cop: reads you your rights before bustin' your chops)

Carmen Gettit (logging camp cook)

Carmen Trudi Rye (Scots lassie)

Carmen Monoxide (deadly on a date--first and last)

## PROPER NAMES--VERY PROPER

The next group Jay sent include their real meanings, which have to do with parts of the body: Azzopardi (drag foot, cripple), Gorbachev (hunchback), Gerstbein (barleyleg, drunkard), Pintzel (big dick), Cortigamvi (short leg), Krivonogy (bent leg), Cruikshanks (bent leg), Cameron (hook nose, wrynose), Campbell (crooked mouth, wrymouth), Ochsfuss (cow footed), Calvin (bald).

## JUST ASKIN'

Jay has some questions about well-known people: is Stallone sly? is Quaid randy? how evil is Knievel? was Hollywood cowboy Gibson a real hoot? how curt was Jurgens? was Pussy Galore also known as Lotta Twot? (The movie "Austin Powers" has a character named Alotta Fagina.)

## LUCK OF THE DRAW

As others have noticed, there are 52 letters in the names of the 52 cards in a standard poker deck. (While illustrating *The Word Circus* I counted the names of the letters in the four suits and the result was 25, a numerical reversal.) Using the 52 letters I wrote a poem about the 53rd card and his 52 relatives. It's about the Joker being a wild card, a rebel who doesn't fit in with the others:

FATE           The Joker's cue:  
                  "In quest I grew."  
                  Can he give in  
                  Even next of kin?

## SOD MURPHY

"Is it Sod's Law or Murphy's Law?" Peter Newby asks. "Algernon Prodnosa of the BBC decided to determine the truth of its origin, and included among his studio guests young Waldo Murphy of New Bybwen to oppose the opinion of the celebrated silly old sod Ben Pewtery that the sod was overturned by the original planter of the Irish potato, the Murphy. Waldo advanced the ingenious argument that "no matter what the question posed in the presence of a resident of New Bybwen, the answer was always palindromic," which Pewtery disputed with such compelling oratory that Prodnosa was moved to declare of the younger man "No! Sod law, Waldo, son!"

## DO YOU NEED AN OTTERBIL?

Unlike his famous OED-besotted brother Ben Pewtery, Nebuchadnezzar (Neb) Pewtery specializes in nonce and cheater's words, quoting the classical Arepo as his historical precedent. "Arepine words," he says, "are a vital adjunct to both palindromes and palindromic squares." He illustrates this with a word square based on the ancient STEP ON NO PETS palindrome. "This statement can be read in a variety of directions in this palindromic square. Whilst none can dispute STEP, TONE and PETS, there remains the problematic ENOT. Like AREPO, it requires an acceptable definition." AREPO and ENOT are both musical terms for differing reversal sounds. This refugee from the UK National Scrabble Championship would be grateful for any support from musical Kickshavians. "I will happily write an otterbil for any budding composer in return for this vital support," he told our correspondent. Pewtery will be pleased to know that several otters in Iowa City have offered their support for this bil.

S	T	E	P
T	O	N	E
E	N	O	T
P	E	T	S

## TWO QUESTIONS

Anagrams sometimes raise questions, as Peter has shown before. Here are two more that are worth pondering. If you WANDER aimlessly, are you WARNED? If FIANCES lose FACE, do they SIN?

## A PEWTERY TRIPLET SURFACES

Peter sent the following triplet authored by his New Bybwen compatriot, explaining it as follows: "BLOO, a variant spelling of the obsolete modern English word BLO (blackish-blue), assists in this triplet which Ben Pewtery created in order to get BLOOD from a STONE. 'Being blood-blooded myself,' he said, 'I appreciate the avarice of the proletarian tax farmer.'" Mad Eric Ovid, a former taxed proletarian, turned bloo when he red it: STONE-tone-ton-on-0-bo-boo-bloo-BLOOD.



## MUSICAL WORDS

Are there any words for notes of the octave? Webster's Third lists DO,RE,MI, etc., as nouns in their own entries but as syllables under Solmization and Sol-Fa Syllables. Guido d'Arezzo invented the first system of solmization in the eleventh century, assigning a syllable (not a word) to each note. So are they syllables, words, or simply bigrams (trigrams if SOL is SO to you, and SO is just so-so)?

Anyway, Guido's syllables were later modified to signify the one-letter natural notes: DO as C, RE as D, and so on, to TI as B. In the realm of logology, Musical Words are words that have musical letters, syllables, or both, that can be substituted for their opposites (e.g., DO changes to C, or vice versa). The process is similar to Elemental Words, in which FEY becomes IRONY. There are three kinds of Musical Words:

1. In a Letter-to-Syllable Word, each musical letter is replaced with its syllable, and all substitutions are reversible: Cry-DOry, Elk-MILk, Got-SOot, hiD-hiRE, spAt-spLAt, ED-MIRE, DoloREs-CloDs
2. In a Syllable-to-Letter Word, each syllable is replaced with its letter: fLAvor-fAvor, graTIs-graBs, maRE-maD, DOMIcile-CEcile, SOLAr-Gar, SOLAR-GAR. Some words of this type are irreversible since single musical letters may remain in the new word. For instance, cLAMP-cAMP, but CAMP would become DOLAMP.
3. In a Doubly-Musical Word, both approaches are used in making the change: MIId-Ere (MI,d = E,re)

## LATVIAN LOVER: A RIDDLE

You'd fill me with ardor,  
Em, if--as, O Lat, I'd order  
A dinner--you'll dine  
And drink some fine wine.  
But did you take note  
Of the music I wrote?

## GEOMETRIC LETTERS

The alphabet can be divided into letters based on whether they are made of lines, curves, or both. The line letters are AEFHIKLMNTVWXYZ, the curve letters are CJOSU, and the line-curve letters are BDGPQR. Geometric words are those with letters displaying a special relationship between these three types of letters. Can you find other examples or other forms of geometric words?

IMITATE line letters only  
CUSS curve letters only  
NOISE alternating line and curve letters  
TRUMPS alternating line, line-curve, and curve letters  
SOURCES six lines and six curves in six letters  
JUJU four curves in four letters

"VERBOSITY LEADS TO UNCLEAR, INARTICULATE THINGS"

Like Malapropisms and Spoonergrams, the following examples of inarticulate verbosity deserve to be labeled with the name of their creator (a national political figure). However, Word Ways has no political axe to grind, and is mindful that true believers (in politics or religion) can get quite huffy when their heroes are mocked or otherwise cast in an unflattering light.

[Members of his political party] understand the importance of bondage between a mother and child.

I love California. I practically grew up in Phoenix.

A low voter turnout is an indication of fewer people going to the polls.

We are ready for any unforeseen event that may or may not occur. We're all capable of mistakes, but I do not care to enlighten you on the mistakes we may or may not have made.

It isn't pollution that's harming the environment. It's the impurities in the air and water that are doing it.

It's time for the human race to enter the solar system.

The future will be better tomorrow.

If we don't succeed, we run the risk of failure.

What a waste it is to lose one's mind. Or not to have a mind is being very wasteful. How true that is.

I was recently on a tour of Latin America, and the only regret I have was that I didn't study Latin harder in school so I could converse with those people.

The Holocaust was an obscene period in our nation's history--I mean this century's history. But we all lived in this century. I didn't live in this century.

We don't want to go back to tomorrow. We want to go forward.

I have made good judgments in the past. I have made good judgments in the future.

I believe we are on an irreversible trend toward more freedom and democracy but that could change.

Quite frankly, teachers are the only profession that teach our children.

I stand by all the misstatements that I've made.

THIS IS JUST DUCKY

The Iowa City Press-Citizen carried a feature story titled "Chefs Help Out Annual Table to Table Benefit." Why I read it, I don't know, but I did discover one of the funniest typos to ever grace the pages of this particular newspaper. The article concluded with a description of the three courses of the benefit dinner. It sounded delicious except for the second course, which began with Wood Grilled Dick Breast. I wonder if it was baked or freud.