

KICKSHAWS

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Readers are encouraged to send their favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws editor at drABC26@aol.com. Answers can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

Real Signs for the Real World

Humorous business signs have appeared very rarely in Kickshaws, and usually only two or three examples at a time. There haven't been any lists available until recently. Last week I received a list of signs that appeared in my email sandwiched between a promo for a Nigerian investment company and an ad for hot chicks with farm animals. The signs are all supposed to be real, and what else could they be? I know for sure that the first one is real, because I've seen it on a truck in Iowa City. From the Virtual World of cyberspace to the Real World of logology, here are signs ranging from simply funny to dangerously hilarious, and they all mean business!

- On a Septic Tank Truck sign: We're #1 in the #2 business
- Over a Gynecologist's Office: Dr. Jones, at your cervix
- On a Plumber's Truck: We repair what your husband fixed
- On a Plumber's Truck: Don't sleep with a drip. Call your plumber
- Pizza Shop slogan: 7 days without pizza makes one weak
- At a Tire Shop in Milwaukee: Invite us to your next blowout
- On a Plastic Surgeon Office door: Hello. Can we pick your nose?
- At a Towing company: We don't charge an arm and a leg. We want tows
- On an Electrician's truck: Let us remove your shorts
- In a Nonsmoking area: If we see smoke, we will assume you are on fire and take appropriate action
- On a Maternity room door: Push. Push. Push
- At an Optometrist's office: If you don't see what you're looking for, you've come to the right place
- On a Taxidermist's window: We really know our stuff
- In a Podiatrist's office: Time wounds all heels
- On a Fence: Salesmen welcome! Dog food is expensive
- At a Car Dealership: The best way to get back on your feet—miss a car payment
- Outside a Muffler Shop: No appointment necessary. We hear you coming
- In a Veterinarian's waiting room: Be back in 5 minutes. Sit! Stay!
- At the Electric Company: We will be delighted if you send in your payment. If you don't, you will be
- In a Restaurant window: Don't stand there and be hungry. Come on in and get fed up
- In the front yard of a Funeral Home: Drive carefully. We'll wait
- At a Propane Filling Station: Tank heaven for little grills
- At a Chicago Radiator Shop: Best place in town to take a leak

Letter Days

Two days listed in the Collegiate dictionary are named by connecting a letter of the alphabet to the word DAY. **D-day** (1918) is "a day set for launching an operation" but it specifically refers to June 6 1944 when the Allies invaded France in World War 2. The D is an abbreviation of "day." **V-day** (1941) is a "day of victory." The V is an abbreviation of "victory." Both days evolved out of war. In the current Gulf War, two more letter days have received government approval.

According to a US military spokesperson, there is now an **A-day** and a **G-day**. Can you figure out what the two letters stand for and the order in which they occurred in Iraq?

Father-Son Presidents

Monte Zerger has compiled a list of facts that relate the two father-son presidential pairs in a variety of unusual ways.

- The only two father-son presidents in our nation's history have been John Adams/John Quincy Adams and George Bush/George W. Bush
- Both were minority presidents who did not win a majority of the popular vote, and so were not directly selected by the people. They took office only after the intervention of government agencies. In a four-way contest, John Quincy Adams lost the popular vote to Andrew Jackson. Since no candidate received a majority of the electoral vote, the election was decided in the House of Representatives. George W. Bush also lost the popular vote, and may have been elected only because of the Supreme Court ruling.
- Both fathers ascended to the presidency after service as vice-presidents.
- Both fathers were one-term presidents. John Adams lost his reelection bid to Thomas **Jefferson** and George Bush lost his to William **Jefferson** Clinton.
- Both mothers, Abigail Adams and Barbara Bush, were strong personalities who significantly influenced their husbands and sons.
- The middle name of Adams (Quincy) and the middle initial of Bush (W) are commonly used, possibly to distinguish them from their fathers.
- Shortly before being sworn in, Bush revealed that he'd begun reading a biography of John Quincy Adams, a book his father suggested he read.
- In 2001, the year Bush took office, the biography *John Adams* by David McCullough was published. It became a #1 bestseller and earned McCullough a Pulitzer Prize.
- The letters in ADAMS (use the D twice) can be used to spell SADDAM, the Iraqi leader that both Bush Sr. and Bush Jr. are so closely linked with.

Monte writes "The most curious twist to all this is that I teach at Adams State College. My boss is Ed Adams, who is in no way related to the founder of the college. The office across the hall from mine is occupied by a George whose middle initial is W. His office and Ed Adams' offices adjoin (common wall)."

9-11 in Lettershifts

On September 11 2001 the World Trade Center towers in New York City were destroyed. The number 11 and the alphabet can be combined to obtain NYC: begin with C and count forward 11 letters to N, then another 11 letters to Y. Monte also found that shifting the letters of NY two steps gives PA, and shifting PA eight steps gives XI, the day of the attack. He shifted the letters of President Bush's initials 12 steps with religious results: GWB to SIN. The most surprising shift involved the initials of the World Trade Center. When I shifted WTC by 24 steps, it resulted in SPY. After the WTC attack, critics said that the US needed a better SPY system to gather information on terrorists.

9-11 in Roman Numerals

The terrorist attacks on September 11 2001 are referred to as 9-11. In Roman numerals, 9-11 forms the palindrome IX-XI. The two I's suggest solid buildings, and the two X's suggest that the buildings were targeted (X marks the spot). If you take the alphabetic values of IX you get 924.

The first digit gives the month of the attacks, the first two digits added together gives the day, the second digit signifies the Twin Towers, and the third digit counts the hijacked airplanes.

Mr. Deeds

In the recent Adam Sandler movie *Mr. Deeds*, a switch of letters results in a kind of subliminal spoonerism—subliminal because everything sounds ok until your logological guardian angel kicks you in the ear to call your attention to it—spoonerism because the first letter in one word switches with the first letter in another. Early in the movie, Longfellow Deeds (Sandler) and two businessmen are discussing the completion of a business deal. One of the men says to Deeds "We just need a little time to dot the t's and cross the i's."

Winchestertonfieldville, Iowa

The main female character in *Mr. Deeds* is Pam Dawson, a newswoman (played by Winona Ryder). Posing as a school nurse in order to get a story about Deeds, the recent heir of a \$40 billion fortune, she improvises a homey story of her life. She tells Deeds that she grew up in a small town with a big name, Winchestertonfieldville, Iowa, where as a child she fell out of Boo Radley's apple tree, broke her arm, and had to go see Dr. Pepper. A little later, Deeds takes Pam on a trip to her home town. Fearing that he will discover there really is no place like home, she is surprised when they enter a small town identified on a sign as Winchestertonfieldville Iowa. As far as I know, this is the longest name, real or imaginary, of an Iowa town, but Iowans have been alphabetically frugal in town naming. It's easy to find longer real town names elsewhere in the world, especially in New Zealand, but are there any longer imaginary town names?

Letteral Language

Stuart Kidd writes "I've finally got my back issues of WW (though Janet got to them before I did and hid them to put under the Christmas tree). Boy, have I been having a feast since then! I've just been devouring the August 2002 issue, including Anil's "Letteral Words" (cute appellation). I've enjoyed mucking around with these over the years, too. Richard Lederer calls them Grammagrams, and the rec.puzzles newsgroup, Gramograms. They always seem to sound best when spoken with a German accent." Stuart includes some longer examples, some amazingly so:

ABCDRE abecedary	MEDAC immediacy	RRR aurora
ABTULSM habitualism	MN8RE emanatory	SNCLET essentiality
CNMNE sea anemone	MRLET immorality	SOCACN association
CTUACNLSM situationalism	NDVDULET individuality	SOCATVT associativity
FECLET officiality	NFEKCS inefficacious	SSNACN assassination
FEKCT efficacy	NILACN annihilation	XEBCNSM exhibitionism
FXULET effectuality	NSNCLET inessentiality	XSRE accessory
IDLSM idealism	NTAVACN antiaviation	3O9 threonine
LENACN alienation	NTXPRENCLSM antiexperientalism	4NR foreigner
LOQCNRE elocutionary	OBDNC obediency	6SM sexism
LUCNSM illusionism	RKDN Arcadian	8NUACN attenuation

Letteral Limerick

Stuart has written the world's first Letteral Limerick, which has a Star Wars theme (the letter Z is pronounced "zed"):

Z OBI K 2 N LEN:
 'B4 UR XMNACN
 I 2 F 2 C
 S XLNC
 N QR S LENACN.'

Lucky & Unlucky Pi

The so-called lucky and unlucky numbers, 7 and 13, have an unusual relationship with the transcendental number pi. Multiplying the two numbers together gives 91, whose digits can represent three square integers: 9, 1 and 16 (91 upside down). Their respective square roots are 3, 1 and 4, the digits of the approximate value 3.14. Now, here is the special part. Multiply any two of these digits and add the third digit to the product—the result is always 7 or 13!

Nexus Words

Next and **nexus** are similar in spelling. The different letters occupy the same position in the word and are alphabetic neighbors--STU. In Webster's Tenth Collegiate, **nexus** means "a connected group or series" whose members are next to each other in some way. Nexus words involve changes of letters next to each other in the alphabet. Single-step letter substitution pairs such as **is-it** aren't considered nexus words. To qualify, every substitution should involve at least three different adjacent letters, none repeated, with two in one word and one in the other, and can involve as many more different letters as possible. The substitution set is the set of letters involved in a single substitution, and its size is the number of letters in the set. In **next-nexus**, the substitution set is STU and the size is 3. The letter changes must appear in the same relative position in each word, but they don't have to be in alphabetic order (**rain-stain**, **nose-moose**). Three or more words can form nexus word groups that work the same as pairs (**larch-monarch-parch**). On the other hand, a single pair of words can have two or more substitution sets (**about-decors** has two sets, ABCDE and RSTU). All the letters may change from word to word (**cab-fed** has one substitution set, ABCDEF, and **cars-debt** has two substitution sets, ABCDE and RST). Nexus word ladders can be formed in different ways. In one, every word shares two substitutions with its neighbor that result in all letters changing: **debt-cars-but-cads-brut-decafs**. What are the longest nexus words for each substitution size? What are the most substitutions that can be made from one word to the next? What is the greatest change in word length? What other kinds of nexus ladders can be made?

Beheadment Pair Antonyms

THIN and **STOUT** have opposite meanings. Dropping the first two letters from each results in **IN** and **OUT**, also opposites. The two pairs of opposites are parallel in their meanings. When a person breathes **IN**, the chest becomes **STOUT**, and when a person breathes **OUT**, the chest becomes **THIN**. Two other opposites, mentioned in an earlier **Kickshaws**, that remain opposite after beheadment are **DOFF** and **DON**. To **DOFF** your hat, you take it **OFF**, and to **DON** your hat, you put it **ON**. In this case, the same letter of the alphabet is beheaded from both words.

Oddball Call

SMALL and **TALL** are opposites that rhyme. Moving the first letter of **SMALL** to the beginning of **TALL** gives **STALL** and **MALL**. The two new words are also rhyming opposites when viewed in a particular way: **STALL** is a small place for selling things, and **MALL** is a large place for selling things.

Snowplow Words

During a big snowfall today, I watched the snowplow chuffing and chugging up the street, pushing the flakes out of the way like cold confetti. As I watched, I realized that SNOWPLOW is a compound word made of two shorter words that are sight rhymes. What other words (call them snowplow words in honor of snowplow drivers everywhere) work like this? They don't have to be compound words, but most of them probably are. One snowplow word rhymes with SNOWPLOW. What is it?

Roman Window

The pangrammatic window is a section of published text that accidentally contains all the letters of the alphabet at least once apiece. A variation on the theme is the Roman window, a text that happens to contain all 7 of the Roman numeral letters, MDCLXVI, none of which are meant to signify Roman numerals. In general, the Roman window contains each Roman numeral letter (RNL) at least once in any order. There are special kinds of windows. The **ideal** window has only one of each RNL. A **numerically-ordered** window has the RNLs occurring in least to greatest numeric value, with duplicates allowed; a **reverse numerically-ordered** window has the RNLs going from greatest to least. A **perfect** window combines the ideal window with either of the numerically-ordered windows, but it is extremely rare. Six Roman windows appear below. The first previously appeared in the Feb 2000 Kickshaws. The first three are followed by the type of text, the number of RNLs within the window (including duplicates), and the length of the span. The last three are number names that illustrate the special windows described above. Even with repeated RNLs, the last window is probably the shortest Roman window of any kind from any source. How many words in normal English text have one or more Roman numeral letters?

GM CADILLAC DEVILLE LUXURY (automobile model; 14 RNLs in a 19-letter window)

VICE PRESIDENT RICHARD MILHOUS NIXON (vice president; 13 RNLs in a 30-letter window)

ADVANTAGE MICRO TEXTURED BRISTLES (Oral-B toothbrush; 8 RNLs in a 26-letter window)

FIVE SEXDECILLION ONE OCTILLION ONE HUNDRED MILLION (numerically ordered)

ONE NOVEMDECILLION SIXTY FIVE MILLION (reverse numerically ordered)

SIX NOVEMDECILLION (ideal Roman window; 7 RNLs in an 11-letter window)

Presidential Roman Numerals

George Washington has a Roman numeral in his name, "I", which is appropriate for the first president. No other president's full name has Roman numeral letters (RNLs) that make a correctly-formed Roman numeral equal to the president's position in the list. In fact, no presidential name's RNLs even add up to the correct position. All 43 presidents' full names have at least one RNL in them, but no two consecutive presidents have the same RNLs. The names of 17 presidents have their RNLs in the right order to form a Roman numeral. James Madison has the Roman numeral MMDI, which has the highest numerical value (2501) and the largest number of letters (4). However, if the numerical values of the RNLs are added up, then Millard Fillmore has the highest sum of all (2502). Fillmore is tied with William McKinley for the highest percentage of RNLs—60 per cent, with 9 RNLs out of 15 letters. While several presidents are tied for most RNLs in their first or middle names, Stephen Grover Cleveland has the last name with the most RNLs (5). George Walker Bush (Sr or Jr) is tied with George Washington for having the lowest percentage of RNLs—6.25 per cent. Richard Milhous Nixon has the greatest number of different RNLs (MDCLXI). (However, RNLs are conspicuously absent from Watergate.) Last, but perhaps most, and certainly not least, Franklin Delano Roosevelt gets the Congressional Medal of Wordplay. He is the only president having two RNLs in each of his three names—a

unique but not award-winning accomplishment. The reason for the award is that those letters form a syllabic rebus that contradicts the famous political slogan "A chicken in every pot" and gives a meaty new meaning to The New Deal: LI DL VL is "Hell! I deal veal."

Name Changeling

My son Danny says he would like to change his name to Maurice Morice (since both names are pronounced alike). That way, if someone asks him his last name, he can say "Morice," and if they ask him his first name, he can say "Maurice." Then if they say, "Is your first name the same as your last name?" he could say "No, why do you ask?"

Tom Wilson's Secret of Linguistic Betterness

Here's a true story (and I swear it's true) about name changes: a friend of mine, Bob Jones, had moved out of town in the 1970s. When he came back for a visit a few years later, I ran into him and said, "Hi, Bob! Long time no see." He said, "My name isn't Bob Jones anymore. I had it legally changed." I said, "Wow!" What's your new name?" I figured it would be something exotic, colorful, and memorable. He said, "Tom Wilson." I asked him why he changed Bob Jones to Tom Wilson, and he replied, "I like it better." After all these years, I'm still not sure where "better" comes in. Is the new name better because it has one more letter? One more syllable? An I instead of an E? Two state postal abbreviations (WI, IL) instead of one (NE)? Logologists are used to finding the unusual within the unusual, but this is a case of trying to squeeze the unusual out of the usual. Can anyone help decipher Tom Wilson's secret of linguistic betterness?

Wordplay in Evansville

On a recent trip to Evansville, Indiana, I noticed two pieces of public wordplay. First, I was going down a long street with a name that was abbreviated at times to a palindrome beginning and ending with V: Vann Av. On some signs it was Vann Ave; curiously, Evansville begins with EVAN, the letters in Vann Ave. Second, while riding down Vann Av, I saw a huge sign above a long white building advertising a weekly oxymoronic event: GIANT FLEA MARKET.

Oxymoron for the Rich

Even fish eggs can be oxymoronic. One type of Romanoff caviar, according to its box, is made of BLACK WHITEFISH, which is prized by bluebloods.

Mnemonically Speaking

In the Nov 2002 Kickshaws, I asked if there were two kinds of mnemonics, one based on spelling and the other on pronunciation. Max Maven replied, "There are, in fact, more than that, but regarding those two kinds I can provide some information. Probably the most generally known type of alphabet-based mnemonics is the type using spelling. Well-known examples would include the word HOMES used to remember the five Great Lakes, the phrase "Every Good Boy Deserves Favor" to remember the lines on a standard treble staff (E,G,B,D,F), the word "face" to remember the notes represented by the positions between the lines, and so on.

"Pronunciation systems have been around since 1634 when Pierre Hérigone published what has become known as 'Number Alphabet.' This type of system takes advantage of the fact that there are approximately ten distinct hard consonant sounds. (Details and divisions will, obviously, differ from one language to another.) By linking each sound to a digit, lengthy numbers can be

converted into words and phrases that are relatively easy to memorize. Generally, vowels and soft consonants are irrelevant, and spelling is not a consideration; the conversion is based entirely on pronunciation.

“If you want more information about this sort of thing, I can suggest *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Improving Your Memory* by Michael Kurland and Richard Lupoff, published in 1999. Despite its grotesque title, I would recommend the book even if I weren't the technical advisor and hadn't written the introduction.” A variant system, using both hard and soft consonants, was presented in the Feb 1994 Word Ways by Anthony Sebastian, entitled “On Converting Numbers Into Words”.

Musically Speaking

Also in the Nov 2002 Kickshaws, I discussed the word HEMIDEMISEMIQUAVER and commented that “What Borgmann didn't notice [about the word] is that the shared letters EMI have a musical significance in themselves: E is the musical note, and MI is the musical syllable for E.” To this, Max writes, “True enough, but what you didn't notice is that EMI is the largest music publishing company in the world, with rights to over a million songs and ownership of hundreds of record labels. (The name is an acronym for Electric & Musical Industries, which was the name the company, started in 1889, took on as the result of a 1931 merger.)”

Palindrome-Charade Hybrids

Anil writes, “Is there a name for palindrome-charade hybrids where one ‘half’ is reversed, the other unchanged, so that the word folds into itself or turns its back on itself--preferably with an affinity to the original word or phrase? For example, **chancellor** chance roll! Latitude to swap halves and use phrases allows these affinitives: **backward** drawback, **drowsiest**, a siesta word. Similarly, internal leaping genes may reverse: deny it's **destiny**?”

“Has anyone extensively explored this form? If these palindrome-charade hybrids don't already have a shorter name, I suggest ‘drawbacks,’ ‘introspections’ or ‘nilapdromes.’ The first example above, the self-folder, belongs to a sub-category I call ‘cephalopods’ after the foot-in-mouth (‘head in foot’) squids and octopi.”

Sentence Squares

Sentence squares have been occasionally exhibited in Word Ways. The Nov 1968 issue cites one from *Language on Vacation* consisting of five five-word sentences, which can be read off either horizontally or vertically. Lewis Carroll constructed a coherent discourse of 36 words, readable either row-by-row or column-by-column. This was reproduced in the Feb 1981 Word Ways:

I often wondered when I cursed,
Often feared where I would be—
Wondered where she'd yield her love,
When I yield, so will she.
I would her will be pitied!
Cursed be love! She pitied me...

In the Aug 1985 Word Ways Howard Bergerson constructed similar 5x5 and 7x7 word squares. However, Anil is the first to ask whether or not a double word square can be so constructed, leading to two different sets of sentences. His initial try: Be Here Now / Means Become Ends / Flow Full Time, which transforms to Be Means Flow / Here Become Full / Now Ends Time.

Future Titles in Preparation

Anil has produced titles for several more books. All that is left now is the writing of each of the books' contents. Until that's done, imagine the possibilities for...

Neurology, a Nerve Ending Story
Peg Leg Pete, Rum Runner
Magical Venerable Animals

Billy the Kid Wasn't WANTED as a Kid
Higher Learning in Giraffes
Every Mirror Has a Silver Lining

Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Applesauce

Louis Phillips issues his own wordplay in samizdat format under the above title. It consists of short snappy sections in many different forms about many different topics. Here is a selection:

- Why did the coffee bean quit its job? It couldn't stand the daily grind
- Bring me a carpet and beat it
- Subscribe—poet of underwater boats
- Problems in Punctuation: Lose ten pounds fast. Lose ten pounds. Fast.
- New Geography: El Salvador Dali—the country of the burning giraffes
- If a booklet is a little book, and if a coverlet is a little cover, is a toilet a little toi?
- Crus-ade, the new summer drink where you quench your thirst by faith alone
- If they cloned Cher, you would have Cher & Cher Alike
- Answer: Catskill Question: What do you call a feline's ability to always land on its feet?
- Mar GIN—typist's drink
- SE GM EN TA TI ON
- The travel agent's dossier: Vocation—vacation
- Another upside duo: dins snip
- In what religion do you always have a friend? EpiscoPAL
- What kind of stories do palindromists prefer? SAGAS
- The bird-watcher was so cantankerous, we referred to him as the Ornerythologist
- About the Reformation, I warned Martin not to be a sore Luther
- Slow poke—punch from a snail

Income Tax Hall of Fame

Louis Phillips informs us that a week after Tax Day the IRS inducts taxed people into its Hall of Fame. Here are three of the winners:

AUDIT MURPHY the most decorated tax accountant of World War II
 DEE DUNCTION well-known stripper, takes it off at any opportunity
 I.R.A. GERSHWIN noted lyricist for retirement benefits

The Start of Something

Louis suggests a game involving successive curtailments: "Take a word, and step by step drop one letter from it and define each step." He gives "The Start of Something":

SKIRT – full length skirt
 SKIR – miniskirt
 SKI – a sport that keeps participants poles apart

SK - the end of my task
S – the start of something

French Fly Follow-Up

Rex Gooch adds to the February Kickshaws comments on the movie usage of French pronunciations to give a pedigree to non-French words: “Sousè [a character in *The Bank Dick*] would be pronounced “Soo-zay” in French, but perhaps W. C. Fields was deliberately making this pretentious person make errors. I don’t know why he calls it a ‘grahve’ accent, when ‘grave’ is correct. And certainly, if you want –ay pronounced, you need an acute accent (and indeed, I cannot recall a French word ending in a grave accent, it is such a weak sound). Actually, the -ay sound is not correct; nearer is the start of English ‘ay’, before the mouth starts to close (i.e., the first of the two vowel sounds that make up –ay or A). Joe Dirt in French is ‘deer’: for ‘deertay’ he needs to add an e acute [1727 Boyer Dict. Fr.-Eng. s.v. Grave, Accent grave+]. Pissant is more like ‘pee-ss-aun’, where ‘aun’ is as in ‘aunt’: but it should be nasal. Of course, in English we have Slidebothams who prefer ‘sliddy’ rather than ‘slide’, and a well-known TV character here is Mrs Bucket, pronounced ‘bouquet’.”

Half-Alphabet World Records

In response to Susan Thorpe’s half-alphabet words in the February Kickshaws, Rex Gooch has mined the pages of NIMA for two extraordinary examples: the 23-letter Cheikh Aabdallah el Aajami in Syria (35°00’N 36°15E), and the 16-letter Ostrov Povorotnyy in Russia (51°48’N 120°22’E).

Odd-Lettered Terms

In the February Kickshaws, Darryl Francis suggested QUASI-SAGACIOUS as the longest word spelled with odd-numbered letters (ACE...). Rex writes “Here are the best I found in various categories—solid, hyphenated, phrases, places, etc.”

14 kicksie-wicksie [OED]

14 Qawiqsaqqesque [coinage by Palmer Peterson in May 1978 Word Ways, “in the style of Qawiqsaqq, an Alaskan bluff”]

14 squamosissimum [Plagioscion squamosissimum nilotica, ITIS animal]

14 ukuwuku-ukuwuku [Palindromicon II, “to hang” in Ekagi language]

14 comme ci comme ca [The Electronic Alveary]

14 easy come easy go [Bloomsbury Thesaurus]

15 Gokceagacoymagi [NIMA, in Turkey]

15 Maksimokumskoye [NIMA, in Russia]

15 smick-smick-smack [Chambers Scots Dictionary]

16 Makoekoe-makoekoe-val [NIMA, in Surinam]

16 Kamoiwakka-misaki [NIMA, in Russia]

Susan Thorpe writes “Looking for the longest such single word, rather than the longest term, I found the remarkable 18-letter KOUAKOUIKOUESIOUEK, an Algonquin tribe in Hodge’s *Handbook of American Indians*.”

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs in an Alphanumeric Mood

By assigning A=1 to Z=26, Susan has found some relationships that link the names of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs to words descriptive of them:

SNOW WHITE the princess (136)
 PRINCE CHARMING her handsome chap (138)
 BASHFUL shy lad (69)
 GRUMPY apoplectic (100)
 DOC has to deal (22) with those who ail (22)
 DOPEY beloved (65)
 HAPPY nice rake (66)
 SLEEPY och, tired (82)
 SNEEZY bad atishoo (94)

Shrinking Word Sentence

Dan Tilque writes, "One of Susan Thorpe's Shrinking Word sentences in the February Kickshaws was PATCH PATH, PAT. This can be extended to PATCH PATH, PAT, AT T, where T means a T-intersection."

Gly (5)

Dan also says "Susan reported a 13-letter internal palindrome, what Borgmann called an anchored palindrome. A couple years ago, I discovered a longer one which was reported in the November 2000 Colloquy. One of the amino acids that make up protein is GLYCINE. When glycine is combined with another amino acid, the combining form is GLYCYL-, so when two glycines are combined, the result is called GLYCYLGLYCINE. This word has two 7-letter internal palindromes, one starting at the first G and the other at the first C. Well, 7 is not a long one, but what if another glycine is added? Then we get GLYCYLGLYCYLGLYCINE which has two 13-letter palindromes, matching Susan's in length. But chemistry is not done. More glycines can be added. Four of them produce the 19-letter anchored palindromes in GLYCYLGLYCYLGLYCYLGLYCINE. Conceivably, an indefinitely large number of glycines can be added, making indefinitely large internal palindromes. However, it turns out that in practice, chemists don't usually write such long words in their papers. They usually find shorter ways of referring to their chemicals. For strings of glycine, the breaking point seems to be about 5. The last time I checked, I found a single Internet reference to GLYCYLGLYCYLGLYCYLGLYCYLGLYCINE, but usually this is abbreviated gly(5) and longer glycine strings seem to be always abbreviated."

Reversed Spelling, Reversed Meaning

Dan asks, "Do you know of any word where reversing its spelling also reverses the meaning? Other than a few deliberately-coined examples such as MHO (the inverse of OHM), I don't think any have been reported in Word Ways. Some time ago, I noticed that Webster's Third has REUS defined as 'defendant' in Roman, civil, and canon law. Reversing it gives you SUER, someone who sues. So it seems to me that in civil law, at any rate, REUS and SUER would be opposites. Unfortunately, Webster's seems to ruin this by appending 'opposed to actor' to the definition." My first and only suggestion is TIP-PIT, considering TIP as the peak of a mountain and PIT a deep hole. Any others?

The Loop in the Reversed Number Convergence Series

Mike Keith provides information about the reversed number convergence series in the February Kickshaws. This is formed by taking any number name, converting its letters to alphabetic values (A=1 to Z=26), adding those values, reversing the sum, converting it to its number name, and

repeating the process till reaching a sum that has already appeared in the series. The question is whether all numbers converge to a single number or loop of numbers. Mike writes: "The answer...is that all positive numbers converge to the eight-number loop (482,662,182,42,241,52,421,572). The simple inductive proof begins by showing that any number larger than a certain (fairly small) limit produces a number smaller than itself after one application of the sum-values-then-reverse rule. Then one finds (by computer, in my case) that all numbers smaller than that limit enter the eight-number cycle, thus completing the proof."

Truth in Logology

Sometimes the truth can be expressed logologically, as Rich Lederer has demonstrated many times. Rich writes about another instance of wordplay wisdom: "Realizing that you are party of humanity is a healthful attitude because it's the difference between I/llness and WE/llness."

Vowel Names

A recent puzzle by Will Shortz was "Name a famous person, four letters in the first name, six letters in the last, in which each of the vowels AEIOU appears once each. Who is this person?" The answer was Bela Lugosi. Using this puzzle as a springboard, Mike Keith dropped the 4-and-6 letter requirement in order to find a bunch of names with the five major vowels and two with all six. This is similar to Susan Thorpe's "Vowel Mates" in the Aug 1996 Word Ways. Here are the results Mike got from a list of names taken from various websites. He asks if anyone knows of a single website devoted to the names of famous people.

Arlo Guthrie	Chuck Mangione	Count Basie	Douglas Leigh
Greg Louganis	Ja'net DuBois	Junior Samples	Louis Malle
Mike Douglas	Phil Donahue	Robert Pilatus	Rosalind Russell
Susan Oliver	Screaming Lord Sutch	Victor Mature	Brian Mulroney
Emmylou Harris			

Two Senators From Hawaii

Hawaii has two senators whose names are well-grounded in wordplay, Daniel Inouye and Daniel Akaka. Both first names end in IEL, which reverses to LEI, the traditional flower necklace of Hawaii. Daniel Inouye has all six vowels in alphabetic order, and his last name has the greatest percentage of vowels (83%) in Congress. However, Daniel Akaka's last name is overstuffed with wordplay:

- It is univocalic (A only) and also monoconsonantal (K only)
- It alternates vowels and consonants
- Its letters come from the first half of the alphabet
- It is typed on the middle alphabetic row of a typewriter
- It is typed alternating left and right hands
- Removing its end letters leaves KAK, a bird; removing KAK leaves A'A, Hawaiian word for lava
- A's alphabetic value is 1, and K's is 11, so that Akaka is a unidigital word (1,11,1,11,1)
- The sum of its values is 25, which equals the square of its number of letters
- In uppercase, each letter uses 3 straight lines only
- In lowercase, the vowels use 2 curves only, and the consonants use 3 straight lines only

ZYZYGY, the Evil Twin of SYZYGY

Mike Keith found a twist in the spelling of a well-known wordplay word: “In a discussion a few days ago on the Internet, someone said something about the properties of the word ‘zyzygy,’ which I replied to right away with the question ‘didn’t you mean “syzygy”?’ to which they replied ‘oops, you’re right.’ However, this made me curious so I did a Google search on ‘zyzygy’. The two most prominent hits are for a currently-active publicly-traded company on the London Stock Exchange called Zyzygy PLC (who changed their name from Channel Health PLC in early 2002, and whose ticker symbol is ZYZ), and an apparently-defunct band called Zyzygy whose home page no longer exists. One wonders if these usages are also a result of someone misremembering how the word is spelled. At any rate, a ‘word’ (even if it is just a proper noun) that starts zyzy- is somewhat interesting.”

Murder at Leeds (Do Read Millie’s Fate—Solo Last Time)

Faith Eckler wrote the following story using a specific strategy for composing it. Exactly what is going on, word-wise, from start to finish? Your first answer may not be correct; mine wasn’t. Watch out for red herrings!

A drear fall at our estate. Outside, it sleeted as usual. I told Sam to start a fire. It made me feel tired. I realised I must rest. I drifted off, dreamt of murder. Startled, I arose stiff, sore. I dressed for tea. Millie made salad, dates for dessert. Sam seemed flustered. I said “Do sit, I’m full.”

Murder—a solid idea, a fatal result. I smiled. Little red-suited Mira, a maid, or Sam, a deaf old soldier? I mused. I said aloud, “Does it matter a lot after all?” Earlier, a letter told me Sam misled me; Millie told a flood of false tales. Sam or Millie to die? A real dilemma. Frustrated, I set it aside for a time.

From our radio a lute emitted a melodious trill, a familiar air. It filled our room, made a dream seem true. (Millie uttered a solo—drat!)

I issued a formal ultimatum: “Do more for me, or die!” Sam tried to do more; Millie did still less. Later, I made a list of Millie’s faults. I realised Millie must die.

At last, I arose from our sofa. I lifted a firearm. I aimed. I fired. I missed. Rats! After all I did, Mira still stood at our door. A total lifetime of desire foiled? I reloaded, fired four times. Millie died. Sam stared at me. I tried to smile. “It’s fate, after all” I said.

From Synonyms to Antonyms

Dan Tilque found a puzzle posted on the website rec.puzzles. He writes: “The puzzle was to find two nouns which were synonyms, add the same suffix to each and get antonyms. Their answer was JAIL/PRISON to JAILER/PRISONER. I didn’t care much for their answer as it seemed to me that jailer and prisoner are complements rather than true antonyms.” Dan came up with a better answer: AWE/WONDER to AWFUL/WONDERFUL. What can you find?

Synonym Synchronicity

Stuart Kidd found an unusual pairing of words. Dropping a vowel from one word and adding a consonant to the other results in a unique convergence of spellings, sounds, and meanings: “A synonym of ORDINANCE is CANON, and of ORDNANCE is CANNON.”