

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.

More on the 2004 Spineless Books Award for Constrained Literature

William Gillespie, editor and publisher of Spineless Books, corrects my analysis of the prize-winning book in the constrained writing contest reported in the August Kickshaws:

“About the winner of the Fitzpatrick-O’Dinn Award For Best Book Length Work Of Constrained English Literature (2003), judge Christian Bök writes:

Joshua Corey writes a poetic series based upon the psychosocial permutations imagined by the utopian thinker Charles Fourier. Corey arranges a resonant, emotional lexicon into a quadratic structure that emulates in language the kind of interpersonal relationships that, according to Fourier, might ideally define a social utopia of competitive cooperation. Just as Fourier imagines a set of artfully designed communes, in which members, chosen for their variegated talents, but compatible passions, might coexist in a state of harmonic integrity, so also has Corey selected diverse ensemble of elegant, sensual phrases and arranged them into an array that highlights the beautiful potential inherent within the force-field of language itself.

“Spineless Books’ anticipated publication date for *Fourier Series* is January 1, 2005. I hope to publish excerpts from the finalists and semi-finalists at <http://spinelesbooks.com/award>.

“At spineless books dot com check out the improved Table of Forms 2004. This densely interlinked collection of constrained poetry is becoming more extensive and yet more sharply focused. I’m revising it “live” and hope to provide improvements all summer long. Its intentions to provide inspiration and instruction for writes and writing teachers, as well as, I hope, readers, is being realized through links from poems to descriptions of the forms they employ, typically more than one form or constraint per poem.”

Mathematical Limericks

Ove Michaelsen sends a raft of math limericks with commentaries about the origins and authors. But the genre is far from closed. As Will Nediger commented in his article “Can Math Limericks Survive?” in the August issue, “It appears that there are many mathematical limericks yet to be discovered—with poetic license and a little bit of luck!”

The following limerick is found in *Ye Book of Sense: A Companion to the Book of Nonsense* (Torquay & London, 1863), which was followed by *The New Book of Sense* (Philadelphia, 1864). It was apparently the latter book which spawned a fad for this verse form in America.

There was an old man who said “Do
Tell me how I’m to add two and two!
I’m not very sure
That it does not make four,
But I fear that is almost too few.”

In recent decades, these anonymously-written verses appeared:

A mathematician confided
A Möbius strip is one-sided.
You'll get quite a laugh
If you cut one in half
For it stays in one piece when divided.

A mathematician named Ben
Could only count modulo ten.
He said, "When I go
Past my last little toe,
I have to start over again."

The limerick on the left, by Harvey L. Carter, appears in W. S. Baring-Gould's *The Lure of the Limerick* (1963); the one on the right, by J.A. Lindon, appears in Martin Gardner's Scientific American column on mathematical games in April 1963:

'Tis a favorite project of mine,
A new value for pi to assign.
I would fix it at 3,
For it's simpler, you see,
Than 3.14159.

One thousand two hundred and sixty-
Four million eight hundred and fifty-
Three thousand nine hun-
dred and seventy-one
Point two seven five eight four six three.

Poetic License and a Bit of Luck

Math limericks are tricky to write. The numbers have to fit within the rhyme and rhythm of the limerick and within the rules of mathematics, too. However, complexity can often be circumnavigated by simplicity. Here's one by Anil, followed by my simple contribution:

To live on for a full jubilee
Plus decades that run on for three,
Divided by eight,
Adding two to the date,
A dozen more years you must see.

A one and a one and a one
And a one and a one and a one
And a one and a one
And a one and a one
Equal ten. That's how adding is done.

Resident Bush

Ove Michaelsen says "I've been hearing reporters referring to and addressing G. DUBYA (which anagrams to BAD GUY) as "Mr. Bush" instead of President Bush or Mr. President. (I prefer to call him Resident Bush or Dear Occupant.). While e-mailing a friend a few minutes ago, an anagram came to me: MISTER BUSH = IT'S ME—SHRUB!"

The Language of Flowers

Lovers have always used flowers to communicate their feelings of passion. In Victorian England, this practice became quite sophisticated. Each flower had its own meaning. *Collier's Cyclopedia of Social and Commercial Information*, compiled by Nugent Robinson in 1904, lists hundreds of flowers and their wide-ranging meanings in a section titled "The Language of Flowers." The meanings aren't always pleasant (*Snakesfoot* means "horror," while *Gum Cistus* means "I shall die to-morrow"), but c'est l'amour. One hundred years after the book appeared, the Language of Flowers draws 40,000 hits in a Google search! To see how easy or difficult it is to use the language, I wrote the poem below in a special way. In the first two stanzas, the italicized words are names of flowers, and the unitalicized words represent their meanings. Each flower name appears in one stanza and its meaning appears in the corresponding position in the other stanza. For instance, *Pearl Blossom* in the first stanza is defined as "I am your captive" in the second

stanza. The same process works for the third and fourth stanzas and for the fifth and sixth stanzas. Note that the first, third, and fifth stanzas have an ABAB rhyme scheme to doll up the flowery language. By replacing the flower names with their meanings, a secret poem grows from the garden of language. Can you decipher it? In the title, *Cape Jasmine* means "I am too happy," which is what you will be when you learn how to speak in flowers.

CAPE JASMINE, I Am Too Happy

Peach Blossom, you are perfect *Peppermint*.
Throatwort, I live for thee.
Mercury, beware of excess *Lint*.
Purple Lilac, for once may pride befriend me.

I am your captive *Pine Apple*. Warmth of feeling,
 Neglected beauty, *Cedar Leaf*.
 Goodness! *Saffron*, I feel my obligations,
 First emotions of love, *Tiger Flower*.

I declare war against you, *Quamoclit*.
 You are cold, *Snowdrop*. Your looks freeze me.
Queen's Rocket? I will think of it.
Venus's Car? Hopeless, not heartless, *Pear Tree*.

Wild Tansy, busybody!
Hortensia, hope! *Ice Plant*,
 You are the queen of coquettes! *Wild Daisy*,
 Fly with me. *Love Lies Bleeding* comfort.

I love *White Dittany*—frivolity.
 Ambassador of love, *Heliotrope*.
Jacob's Ladder, win and wear me.
 Happy love, *Branch of Currants* hope.

Red Chrysanthemum passion, *London Pride*.
Cabbage Rose, faithfulness.
 Come down, *Lady's Slipper*.
Bridal Rose, you please all *Flowering Almonds*!

French and German Self-Taught Playlets

The 1904 *Collier's Cyclopaedia* also provides a do-it-yourself course in French and one in German. The courses include lists of phrases such as Expressions of Surprise, To Ask Questions, Evening, and Age. Some of the lists can be arranged to form tiny yet evocative Broadway playlets such as the two below. Each includes a description of the scene. Lines in italics are asides to the audience.

EVENING: A French Playlet

Midnight. Jake and Nell are sitting in the couch in her living room. They have been necking for quite awhile. Jake looks at his watch. He decides to make his big move. The lights are dim.

Jake: It is late.
 Nell: It is not late.
 J: What o'clock is it?
 N: It is still early.
 J: Are you tired?
 N: Not at all.
 J: *Not much.*
 N: It is only ten.
 J: It is time to go to bed.

N: Is my room ready?
 J: Go and see.
 N: Draw the curtain.
 J: *A blanket.*
 N: Good night.
 J: I wish you a good night.
 N: I am sleepy.
 J: Are you sleepy?

AGE: A German Playlet

Midnight (again). Luke and Sal are sitting on stools at a singles' bar. They have been drinking for quite awhile. Luke looks at his glass. He decides to make his big move. The lights are dim.

Luke: How old are you?
 Sal: I am twenty.
 L: I shall soon be thirty.
 S: *He looks older.*
 L: *She is younger.*
 She cannot be so young.
 S: *He must be older.*
 I did not think you were so old.
 He is at least sixty.
 L: *She must be forty.*

S: How old is your father?
 L: He is nearly eighty.
 S: Is he so old?
 L: How old is your sister?
 S: She is fifteen.
 L: Is she so young?
 S: How old is your aunt?
 L: She is nearly ninety.
 S: It is a great age.
 He begins to grow old.

Palindrome Transposal

Jeff Grant has discovered perhaps the first transposal of the word PALINDROME published without wordplay in mind. He says "If the word TRAMPOLINED is beheaded, the remaining letters transpose into PALINDROME. Is there a legitimate transposal of PALINDROME itself? I remember the coinage PRALINEDOM being suggested some time ago by Borgmann [the plural of this can be found on page 90 of *Language on Vacation*]. Presumably this would describe the realm of sugar-coated confections!

"Self-styled 'global poet laureate' Scotsman Edward Graham Macfarlane has posted an article on his website entitled 'A Proof of Political Turpitude' (30 April 2003). It contains the following: 'A New World was brought to the attention of mankind when Russians and Americans solved the space-travel problem of putting human beings on the moon. This Event actually made our world of many militarised nations Effete. It made the Anno Domini calendar a thing of the past and the world of squabbling nations a thing of pre-mondial thinking as well.' The word PRE-MONDIAL is a transposal of PALINDROME. It apparently refers to a time before the global village concept, when the world seemed a bigger place. If you Google 'premondial' or 'pre-mondial' there are other hits, mainly in French (referring to pre-world championship events), but I like the one above. It looks like the word 'premundial' is also used. In a context like Mr Macfarlane's there is probably no need for a hyphen in the word."

Unappetizers

Don Hauptman wonders if anyone has written about foods with unappetizing names. He cites the following as examples: Sloppy joe, bear claw, tire treads (a brand of licorice), and Italian dishes

with *puttanesca* in the name. Recently, candy companies have been pushing the inedibility envelope to an extreme. The Jelly Belly Company has produced several awful flavors of jelly beans, including dirt, booger and dungeon floor. Some recipe books give directions on how to make Kitty Litter, a chocolate-flavored crumbly treat for kids. My own personal all-time favorites are two names not chosen for their double meanings: Donutland's famous "chocolate-filled longjohns," and Hy-Vee's packets of frozen fish parts called "cod pieces." I bought a joke food that actually contained what it advertised and followed the rules for putting nutrition information on the label. The name of the food? Fish assholes. Are there any other bad goodies for sale? We're getting hungry.

Game of the Magic

In the August Kickshaws, "Magic of the Game" pointed out that GAME, FOAD and COCE have two special numeric relationships with the 26 letters of the alphabet: the alphabetic values of the letters add up to 26, and the absolute values of the differences between the alphabetic values also add up to 26. This rare relationship is shared by a few place names that Rex Gooch found:

ANJA a place name at 33°48N, 64°35E in Afghanistan (also a personal name in the US census)
 CIAM a place name at 7°32N, 37°57E in Ethiopia
 COGA a place name at 3°23S, 29°24E in Burundi
 ECOC a place name at 1°47N, 11°14E in Equatorial Africa
 Phum SAEA a place name at 12°55N, 105°08E in Cambodia.

Logological Shell Game

WHO, with its first letter moved to the end of the word, spells HOW. Using the alphabetic values of the letters, WHO and HOW both form arithmetic equations: $W - H = O$ ($23 - 8 = 15$), $H + O = W$ ($8 + 15 = 23$). Can anyone find another pair of three-letter words having this property?

The Power of the Slash

HE/SHE and its objective and possessive forms, HIM/HER and HIS/HER, are listed in Webster's 10th Collegiate. They are probably the first words in which the slash can be pronounced (but doesn't have to be). The entry for HE/SHE gives pronunciations he-she, he-or-she, and he-slash-she. The other two pronouns are pronounced in a similar fashion.

Scrabble Factoid

ARCS is the longest word that appears in SCRABBLE when its letters are placed in reverse order: ELBBARCS. ARCS contains the only two letters whose SCRABBLE values ($A=1$, $C=3$) are the same as their positions in the alphabet. They appear first and third in ARCS, too.

Consecutive Roman Numerals

Sir Jeremy Morse replies to the May Kickshaw item regarding consecutive Roman numerals in surnames: "I find no other names with 5 *different* Roman numerals, but there are 5 making a Roman number in the quartet McClinchy, McClinstock, McClintock, McClinton (MCCLI = 1251) and, if IC is allowed for 99, in McDicken (MCDIC = 1499). Turning to words, one needs a hyphen to show 5 different, as in MILD-CURED (in the OED), while 5 making a number occur in ACCLIVITY (CCLIV = 254). A jumble of 8 is found in BACILLICIDE and 10 in the rare

MILLIMILLINARY (in the OED). A search of Chambers yields the following list of 68 words containing different Roman numerals from 1 to 2051. Can you add to the list?

1 I	52 NAUPLII	204 BACCIVOROUS	1000 ME
2 SKIING	54 LIVE	250 ACCLAIM	1001 MINE
4 IVY	55 SOLVE	251 ACCLIMATISE	1002 GASTROCNEMII
5 VAN	56 PELVIC	254 ACCLIVITY	1004 SEMIVOWEL
6 VIE	57 SYLVIINE	500 DO	1005 DŪUMVIR
7 SILVIINE	59 HELIX	501 DIE	1006 TRIUMVIR
9 SIX	60 CALX	502 RADII	1009 MIX
10 OX	90 EXCEL	504 DIVE	1050 DIMLY
11 AXIS	91 EXCITE	505 ADVENT	1051 GREMLIN
12 TAXIING	100 CAB	506 ADVICE	1100 ARMCHAIR
14 REFLEXIVE	101 ACID	509 RADIX	1500 HUMDRUM
15 SEXVALENT	104 CIVET	550 IDLE	1501 HUMDINGER
19 MAXIXE	150 CLAN	551 IDLING	2000 DUMMY
40 AXLE	151 CLIP	600 MADCAP	2001 COMMIT
41 OXLIP	154 PROCLIVITY	650 HEADCLOTH	2009 COMMIXTURE
50 LA	200 OCCUR	900 ACME	2050 BUMMLE
51 LIE	201 ACCIDENT	901 ACMITE	2051 BUMMLING

Lip Service

BILABIAL is defined as “*of a consonant* : produced with both lips.” The word divides into four parts, each composed of a consonant and a vowel: BI LA BI AL. The first and third are spelled the same, and the second and fourth are spelled in reverse of each other. There is no other word in either Webster’s Second or Third having this pattern. The sum of the alphabetic values of B+I (2+9=11) equals the difference of the alphabetic values of L-A (12-1=11). The first five letters of BILABIAL anagram to I BLAB, an action produced with both lips.

Cubist Wordplay

CUBOIDAL is one of several adjectives listed in Webster’s 10th Collegiate that express different degrees of “cube-ness.” Here is a definition that combines them all by going from the general to the specific: CUBOIDAL means somewhat CUBOID, which means approximately CUBICAL, which means CUBIC, which means having the form of a CUBE.

Very Pistol

A VERY PISTOL, listed in Webster’s 10th Collegiate, is “a pistol for firing Very lights.” The Very light is “a pyrotechnic signal in a system of signaling that uses white or colored balls of fire shot from a Very pistol.” Edward W. Very invented them in World War I. It was a Very colorful addition to an otherwise dismal war. The dictionary doesn’t mention whether the Very pistol is also Very light. All the letters in VERY PISTOL and in VERY LIGHTS, except for V, appear in PYROTECHNIC SIGNAL. V stands alone for Victory.

Tales From New Bybwen

Says Peter Newby, “Nebo was the Babylonian god of writing of wisdom. He is still remembered in New Bybwen, a former home of the poet Ben Jonson (1573-1637). Johnson so admired this patron of his craft that a contemporary wrote ‘O, Ben deified Nebo.’”

“Constable Mel Batsnoc has single-handedly stamped out a graffiti plague in the town.” Peter reports. “He caught his latest job in the action of defacing a toilet wall. The miscreant had got as far as spraying LAV, LUV before the law prevented him from reflecting on his crime!”

WOE TRAIL is Peter’s attempt to mix OIL and WATER. He asks “Does a dictionary-sanctioned single word exist to disprove the old saying that ‘oil and water don’t mix’? No prizes—only the glory of making ironic history.

Apple-Saucy

Louis Phillips writes numerous miscellaneous quickies, little apples of wordplay, and gathers them together occasionally as a samizdat-style magazine titled “20,000 Leagues Under the Apple-Sauce.” Here is the core of his recent collection:

- What is the relationship of the camp follower to the soldier? Platoonic
- What is the difference between a white paste used in modeling statues and Helen’s abductor falling down drunk? One is Plaster of Paris, while the other is Paris Plastered
- Names in the news: a man named O.O. Dull was a production manager on D.W. Griffith’s *Abraham Lincoln* (1930). If O.O. Dull had married Becky Sharpe, headlines could have read SHARPE TO BECOME DULL
- HISP = ship wrecked
- Palindrome about comedienne Cass Daley: YE LADS SACK CASS DALEY
- When is four half of five? IV = half of FIVE
- What fruit grows bigger the more it lies around? PRUNEocchio
- Why would Tom Edison have been a good pickpocket? Because he was light-fingered
- LuncheON = a very long lunch
- The answer is OFF AND RUNNING. The question is: How would you describe the secretary’s nylon stockings after she undressed?
- The answer is again OFF AND RUNNING. The question is: Can you name an insect repellent and a track and field event?
- Palindrome for a tennis player: No, is net tension?
- The answer is CIGARETTE LIT. The question is: What do you call the literature dealing with smoking?
- conTRAST
- O = photo finish
- Should I buy unpaid bills from my friends? Certainly--they are collector’s items
- What did Hector use to clean the walls of Troy? Ajax
- I just spoke with Luciano Pavarotti! Yes? Then what was the tenor of the conversation?
- The answer is REMAINS TO BE SEEN. The question is: How do you advertise a walking tour of Forest Lawn Cemetery?
- What do you think of the Pied Piper of Hamelin? A tough act to follow
- Do you know Rapunzel? Yes, I had to upbraid her once
- What do you think of duck feathers used to make music? I think I’d downplay the idea
- What did the masked spoon say to the fork? Hi-Ho Silverware!
- The captain of the Bounty was changed into a crow, thus inspiring the song Bligh Bligh Blackbird
- PALINDRAMA—a play that can be acted backwards and forwards
- How can you tell the computer programmers at a Ku Klux Klan rally? They’re the ones wearing the spread sheets

- Did Sonny Liston subscribe to Punch?
- Curt Gowdy / Said Howdy / Doody never had sex at all / Not even with a doll
- THE BIG MACabre—strangest fast food in town
- PALINDROME: No? O trace cartoon
- Two sheep were named Love and Peace. Actor John Hurt came to the farm and asked if he could take one home. The farmer didn't want to part with either, but he was a great fan of the actor, so he gave him one, saying "For you only, Hurt—the one ewe Love."

Longest Genealogical Term

Darryl Francis found *great-great-great-great-great-great-grandniece-in-law*, a word that has more occurrences of the same word than any other in the dictionary (Feb 1998 Word Ways, p 44). This appears as a citation under the main entry for GREAT in the OED. Although it has probably never been used in a normal conversation, it is a great word. But is it the greatest? In the movie *Dogma*, comedian Chris Rock uses an even greater word, *great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandniece*, which is five greats longer than the dictionary one.

Ain't vs. Aren't

According to Webster's 10th Collegiate, AIN'T is "widely disapproved as nonstandard and more common in the habitual speech of the less educated." Described as a contraction of ARE NOT, it has eight meanings: am not, are not, is not, have not, has not, do not, does not, did not. The word AREN'T, on the other hand, has only two: are not, am not. AREN'T ain't as popular as AIN'T.

A One-in-a-Million Name

MIMI, a female given name well known from Puccini's *La Bohème*, is just four letters long, but those letters do much more than spell the name. MIMI is made of two overlapping palindromes, MIM and IMI. MIMI divides into two equal parts, MI and MI. MI sounds like "me" and it contains I, which is me in the first person. In reverse, MI becomes I'M. As a state postal abbreviation, MI is Michigan. As a musical syllable, MI means E. In Spanish, MI means *my*. In the world of felines, MIMI means *cat*. Subtracting the alphabetic value of I (9) from M (13) results in 4, the number of letters in the name. MIMI is a one-in-a-million name: each letter is a Roman numeral (M=1000, I=1), and if the four values of the Roman numeral letters are multiplied together the product is one million. If they are added together the sum is 2002, the first palindromic year of the new millennium. In short, MIMI = Million + Millennium.

Beheadment Homophones

Removing the first letter from KNIGHT results in NIGHT. Each is pronounced the same as the other: KNIGHT and NIGHT are beheadment homophones. Another pair for the KN bigram is KNAVE-NAVE. How many *different* bigrams begin the larger words in beheadment homophone pairs? Here are a few: AA aah-ah, EE eerie-Erie, GN gnu-nu, KN knot-not, LL llama-lama, PS pshaw-Shaw, SC scent-cent, WH whole-hole, WR wring-ring.

Curtilment Homophones

Just as beheadment sometimes results in a homophone of the starting word, curtilment can do the same: for example, THEE curtails to THE. For starters: CE rock-roc, DD add-ad, EE wee-we,

IE hie-hi, LE sole-sol, LL cell-cel, NE Maine-main, NN inn-in, OO too-to, OW sow-so, RR curr-cur, TT butt-but.

And Special Cases of Both

- KNIGHT-NIGHT, KNAVE-NAVE beheadment homophones; two longer words have contrasting meanings
- WRITE-RITE, WRIGHT-RIGHT beheadment homophones; all four words pronounced the same
- WRITE-RITE, WROTE-ROTE beheadment homophones; the two longer words are the present and past tense of the same verb, and the two shorter words have meanings related to repetition of words or actions
- BEE-BE-B curtailment homophone trio
- QUEUE-Q multiple curtailment homophone
- KNOW-NO, WHOA-HO beheadment-curtailment homophones
- KNAPSACK-NAP,SAC beheadment of first half, curtailment of last half
- KNICKKNACK-NICNAC beheadment and curtailment of both halves

Pleasant View Farm Squared

The editor describes a surprising bit of wordplay that he found in his own backyard: “Here’s a little something that intrigued me while at our summer place. My grandfather named it Pleasant View Farm, and a sign on the barn advertises this fact. With 16 letters, I wondered if the letters could be reassembled into a 4x4 word square. To conserve vowels, I decided on the pattern ccvc/cvcv/vcvc/cvcc. At first, I was discouraged by the rare letters w, f and v which require special treatment, but eventually I found a solution in Webster’s Second (and seven of the eight words are even more common). The square is given on the left, followed by several variants:

F L A W	F L A W	F L E W	F L A W	F L A W
R I V E	R I V A	R I V A	R A V I	R A V E
A M E N	A M E N	A M E N	A M E N	A M I N
P A S T	P E S T	P A S T	P E S T	P E S T

Diot Coke

Ove Michaelsen writes “You won’t believe this girl’s real name—Diot Coke. No, her parents are not trying to cash in an odd 21st-century fad in which children are named after commercial products. Diot was born in the year 1379 in West Riding in Yorkshire, England. That’s the word from researchers at Britain’s National Archives, who think the name Diot is a corruption of the then-common Dionisia, which later became Denise, reports the Associated Press. Her surname, Coke, is thought to be a variant of Cook.

”The unusual 14th-century name was discovered by archivist George Redmonds, who wrote about it in the National Archives’ magazine, *Ancestors*. When he was reviewing the ancient birth records, Redmonds made an even odder discovery than the name Diot Coke. He learned that names we now consider to be masculine, such as Philip and Thomas, were used as girls’ names in the 1300s, and names that were once typically masculine, such as Jocelyn and Vivian, are now used by women.

“What was an unusual name for the 14th century? Mary. The most popular names of girls during this time were Godelena, Helwise, Idony, Avice, and Dionisia.”

If You See Kay

Maury Tamarkin recently pointed out that in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, some 42 per cent of the way through the nighttown chapter, the Artane orphans join hands and caper around Bloom while he is seated in a pillory. They recite the following ribald verse: If you see kay / Tell him he may / See you in tea / Tell him from me. He asked the editor “Is there a word that describes using words to spell out a different word?” Indeed there is; in *The Dictionary of Wordplay* (2001), I define an *antirebus* as a syllabic rebus that goes in the other direction—words form letters (for example, “Oh, any” spells out ONE).

No Sesquipedalian Words!

Anil points out an interesting truth that shows the exaggerative qualities of people specializing in the field of logology: “I doubt that we will ever find any truly sesquipedalian words unless we count the poly-hyphenated amino acid sequences of proteins or the acronymic DNA base sequences of genes. That’s because a sesquipedalian word, by etymology, is a foot and a half long. In standard Word Ways 11-point Times New Roman font this would amount to three lines or about 250 letters!”

Sixteen More Millennium Names

In response to my request for new names meaning “millennium” (or “chiliad”), Anil has created a whopping sixteen, as follows:

Millimega, Microgiga-, Nanotera-, etc.

Polyanna (anna is the Latin feminine plural of annum)

Score-of-Jubilees

Antilog 3

Square root of Million, Cube root of Billion, Fourth root of Trillion, etc.

Three Orders of Magnitude

Inverse Thousandth

Decemcentury, Centidecade

Ten-cubed

One-Comma-Interval

Handouts Anniversary [note anagram]

Letter Names

Regarding the question of single-letter names in the last issue, Anil asks “Why didn’t you use ‘Dubya’ for the missing letter W?”

Erratum

Anil found this dictionary error: “Webster’s Third (1986 printing) on page 1165 gives ‘inner voice’ as the top right-hand guide word, but gives no such entry below. Are the Merriam-Webster clan in denial of their own inner voice?”

Pattern Recognition Quiz

Here is a clever quiz from Anil: “Without glancing ahead, how far into this list do you have to go before recognizing the pattern? (The answer becomes obvious farther down the list, so don’t peek.) The list is incomplete. What is the next item? What is the last item?”

H, W,
 DH, HW, MN, TH,
 GRG, LBM, LSK, LSN, NDN, NVD, RGN, RZN, TXS,
 CLRD, DLWR, FLRD, KLHM, KNSS, LLNS, MNTN, MSSDR, VRGN, WMNG...

Honest-to-God Time Travel, As Heard on TV

Anil heard this odd bit of news on the telly: The tuatara (*Sphenodon*) has been around some 250 million years, but “twenty million years ago scientists realized it was in serious trouble.”

Light and ‘Reft

“‘Right and left’ is a common idiom meaning anywhere and everywhere, often abbreviated R/L,” writes Anil. “But why not L/R? Why is the R on the left side and the L on the right? Could it be because that’s the way it is on the typewriter keyboard?” (On the other hand, R is in the right half of the alphabet, and L is in the left half.)

More Untruths

Anil notes that DEXTER means on the right side (Webster’s Third), and yet all its letters are on the left side of the keyboard.

Ambiguous Consonant

Anil raises this intriguing question: “The fact that the Hebrew language has no vowels set me to wondering what consonant or group of consonants in English is the most ambiguous in terms of the number of words that can be formed by adding vowels. L forms 61 Web 3 words, excluding abbreviations, prefixes, suffixes and capitalized words, but including parts of two-word phrases (*eola, laue*). If Y is regarded as a vowel in *yale, yole* and *yule*, then the total is 64.

aalii, ail, ailao, aile, al, ala, alae, ale, alee, alii, aloe, eel, eely, el, eola, ila, ilia, iliau, L, la, lai, lao, laue, lauia, lay, lea, lee, lei, leo, leu, ley, li, lie, lieu, lo, loa, loe, lolo, looey, looie, louey, louie, loy, lu, luau, luo, lye, oil, oily, ola, olé, olea, oleo,olio, oul, ula, ulae, ule, ulo, ulu, ulua

Happy Belated Halloween!

MIDNIGHT used to be called “noon of the night.” It is still referred to as the witching hour, suggestive of black magic and bad luck. However, the alphabetic values of the letters in MIDNIGHT and NOON show just the opposite. The sum of MIDNIGHT’s alphabetic values is 84. Adding the two digits gives 12, the time that the hour begins, and dividing 84 by 12 conjures up the lucky number 7. NOON, on the other hand, is unlucky. The sum of its alphabetic values is 58, which isn’t evenly divisible by 12. Adding the two digits in 58 curses the midday with the unlucky number 13!