

COLLOQUY

Anil writes “Thanks to Rex Gooch for adding some more considerations and information to my keyboard revision musings in May. I would like to know more about the AZERTY keyboard, which I had never heard of until it was mentioned in the February 2005 Kickshaws—especially how old it is and how widespread its use. I was addressing the letters on the standard and what I thought was the only English pre-computer typewriter keyboard, the QWERTY, which I’ll bet is the one all Word Ways readers use, including Rex. Nor did I advocate ‘losing’ the semicolon, merely moving it to a less-central position, e.g., swapping it with the comma or dot (period, full stop). As to abolishing ^ and {}, of course they have uses, but are they more used than other extra-keyboard symbols such as $\frac{1}{2}$, £, π , é, ÷, ±, § and the like? Besides, rearranging the non-letter keys was merely touched on and thrown open as an additional issue in need of statistics I don’t have (the keys I didn’t mention were considered useful enough to retain).

“As to the metric system, England isn’t as advanced in metric conversion as I thought. But it *is* officially metric. Australia usually follows behind England and the US in most advances but has been fully metric in all regards, even everyday commerce, since 1966. Awkward metric equivalents of old units are still used in some engineering-type contexts to postpone retooling, but that’s intended to be a transitional step. And old fogeys like me still mentally convert back to English units in many cases, and we miss the old four-minute mile, the ten-gallon hat and the ounce of lollies. But neither mensural nor keyboard conversions can be painless. English (or American) has become *the* international language; we shouldn’t be greedy or stubborn and resist the evolution of an international system of mensural standards as well. And why not decimal? We have ten digits, both manual and numeral.”

Rex Gooch writes “You pre-empted my attack on double 4-squares. It might be helpful to add an editorial note about heterogrammatic squares, as I have been using this term for regular squares that have the maximum number of different letters [even though some are repeated], but the last two Word Ways have used it to describe double 4-squares where every letter is different [‘Heterogrammic Word Squares’ in the August issue].”

“Regarding Sir Jeremy Morse’s comments in Colloquy, I hope that my articles on squares in the same issue make my current policy very clear: use the most popular words that will do the job. There will always be arguments about various issues of quality. For example, I disagree totally with Richard Lederer’s views on palindromes: those with a credible and important real scenario (Napoleon, Eve, Panama) are infinitely preferable to those which are only credible if you are saturated in LSD. Transadditions merely seem to be failed anagrams.”

Susan Thorpe writes “In my opinion the resulting word(s) in ‘Anacrograms: Prolegomenon to Acrostic Anagrams’ should be the initial letters in order or reverse order, as in A DAD ‘another day, another dollar’ or BACK ‘keeps creditors at bay’. Other good anacrograms include IS ‘I’m sure’, WIT ‘what it takes’, CAT ‘catch a thief’, and the antonymic WOOS ‘walk out on someone’. (An unusual antonymic example: OD ‘off duty’ where OD is US slang for Officer of the Day.) Anil admits ‘The few longer ones (in Section I) are rather forced’ so why include them? Rearranging letters (Sections II and III) is a way of using longer sayings, but to what end? Most of these are also forced; Anil comments ‘I found surprisingly few good ones’. It is important that

contributors to Word Ways adhere to a certain standard and do not produce lists of forced examples.”

Anil’s August favorites: James Mayfields’s Narrative Alphametics (clever concatenations); Susan Thorpe’s ‘Life’s Secret Files’ (her most fun opus in some time); Jim Siergey’s cartoons; David Silverman’s posthumous Kickshaws (a highlight of early Word Ways and now as delightful as ever); the Shakespearean Sonnets (nice to see a differently-based frequency result for the alphabet; ‘Anil’ scored so low (2½) that I might have written *all* the sonnets). Steven Kahan’s Palindromic Triads were much too hard as a quiz unless I had felt like devoting hours to them, but I enjoyed the answers.

Anil asked for answers to two Silverman Kickshaws: the only three crash words to satisfy the scores already recorded are BLACK WHITE GREEN; the Stinky Pinkies in question are fervent servant, prosaic mosaic, truculent succulent, granite planet, raucous caucus, dire choir, puerile mural, saline praline, helot zealot and fecund second.

Errata: Sir Jeremy Morse asks “What loyal printer’s devil altered RICKSHAW on p 158 to the non-heterogram KICKSHAW?”. In “Answers to Bellamy’s 500 Charades” in the February issue, “More Charades” should read 67 missive 77 fraudulent 78 manteau 79 unit 88 yearly.

Tony Augarde writes “What a pity you didn’t consult me before you printed Rex Gooch’s scurrilous article “The Great Times Ten-Square Hoax” in Word Ways Aug 2006 with its malicious and libelous references to me and my work. Besides some sneering insults at my knowledge and abilities, Gooch’s main attack is directed at things I supposedly said to the Times reporter about word squares. Yet Gooch admits that I told him I was misquoted, and he points out that the writers of the newspaper articles about the ten-square got most of the facts wrong. In his article, Gooch says ‘The standard of journalism shown by The Times is execrable’ and he told me in a email that he ‘suspected that the reportage was not reliable generally.’ Nevertheless, he quotes the words they ‘reported’ as if that were what I actually said. The papers never offered me a chance to refute their lies and I knew it would be pointless to ask for a correction to so many misstatements.

“The quarrel between Ted Clarke and Rex Gooch exposed me to some extremely unpleasant emails from both men, who seem unhealthily obsessive about something that should be a good-natured quest rather than a cause for such vitriol. As I said in my last email to Gooch, ‘Any aspect of wordplay loses its palatability when it turns from a genial pursuit into a pitched battle.’

“I deserve an apology from you, and I hope you will publish this letter in the next issue of Word Ways to try to correct at least some of Gooch’s misrepresentations—even if you cannot undo the unwarranted damage the article has done to my reputation.”