SOME OF MY FAVORITE SQUARES

JEFF GRANT
Hastings, New Zealand

Word squares have been around for centuries. I have constructed a few over the years, and admired the efforts of others too. Here are some of my all-time favorite squares, ranging from a joky little 1-by-1 up to a 12-by-12 attempt. Unattributed examples were devised manually by myself.

One-, Two-, Three-Squares

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
A & E & M \\
N & U & \\
Q & O & Z \\
A & J & I \\
T & O & X \\
\end{array}
\]

The first square appears as the ‘Mammoth Crossword’ (it takes up the whole page!) in a 1970 issue of the Victoria University (New Zealand) magazine *Cappicade*. The clues are:

Across 1. First letter of the alphabet.
Down 1. Indefinite article.

A similar square using the letter ‘I’ was published as an ‘Easy Crossword’ in the 1980 book based on the BBC cult comedy TV series *Not! The Nine O’Clock News*.

The two-square is one of several crosswords in the 2nd edition of *The Concise Dictionary of 2-Letter Words* published in 2006. All clues are ‘letter of alphabet’ (two English, two Greek).

The three-square contains the awkward letters J, Q, X and Z, with only uncапitalized words used:

- **QOZ** a sandy soil found in Sudan [Wikipedia (Net)]
- **AJI** a plant of the Capsicum genus [Web2]
- **TOX** to intoxicate [Web2]
- **QAT** an evergreen shrub [OED]
- **OJO** an oasis [Web2]
- **ZIX** old form of ‘six’ [OED]

Four-Squares

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
G & R & I & D \\
A & U & T & O \\
S & L & E & W \\
H & Y & M & N \\
A & B & L & E \\
I & R & E & N \\
D & E & M & E \\
S & E & S & S \\
L & O & V & E \\
O & V & E & R \\
V & E & T & O \\
E & R & O & S
\end{array}
\]

The first square contains sixteen different letters with all words listed in the OSPD. Seven of the words are very common, and the meaning of the other, RULY, is obvious. It’s a modern back-formation from ‘unruly’, and appears in the likes of the *American Heritage Dictionary* (2000) and *Collins English Dictionary* (2005) [WW, Nov 1980, p 212].
The middle example is a spiral square based on the word REMEDIABLENESSES [Web3], which can be spelt out by reading clockwise from the R. All eight 4-letter words are in the OED [WW, Feb 1983, p 26].

The third square is much easier to decipher: ‘Love Over? Veto Eros!’

**Five-Squares**

| S E E S T | S A R E S |
| T E S T E | E L E M I |
| E S S E E | E L E E R |
| T E E T S | L E S E O |
| E S S T E | S N E R P |

The left square uses only three different letters (E, S, T), and all words can be found in the OED [WW, Aug 1979, p 154].

The diagonal reversible square on the right contains twenty-four different 5-letter words – five vertically down, five vertically up, five left to right, five right to left, and four on the diagonals. They include capitalized and apostrophized terms drawn from several sources [“Diagonal Reversible Word Squares,” WW, Aug 1981].

**Six-Squares**

| O C C U R S | F J O R C K |
| C L O S E T | L U V I A N |
| C O M E D Y | A D E P T I |
| U S E F U L | G E R M A L |
| R E D U C E | H O B A L L |
| S T Y L E S | T W Y N E S |

The left square contains six everyday words and has a claim to the title of ‘commonest’ six-square [“The Commonest 6-Square,” M. Douglas McIlroy, WW, May 1996].

The other square has twelve much more unusual terms drawn from three large dictionaries (OED, EDD, Web 2). However, it does have the distinction of using 23 different letters (only Q, X, Z missing), more than any other word square [“Word Squares Using Many Letters,” WW, Feb 1980].

**Seven-Squares**

| N E S T L E S | S M A S H E S |
| E N T R A N T | P O N T I N E |
| S T R A N G E | I N G R A T E |
| T R A I T O R | R E L A T E R |
| L A N T E R N | A S I N I N E |
| E N G O R G E | L I N G O T S |
| S T E R N E R | S A G E N E S |
American puzzler Henry E. Everding (‘Simon Ease’ of the Eastern Puzzlers’ League, the predecessor of the National Puzzlers’ League) devised the first square using only common words. It appears in ‘Our Puzzle Column’ in the July 3 1884 issue of the Henry Republican.

The superb double seven-square on the right was discovered by Chris Long in 1992. It contains only uncapitalized, solid-form words listed in Web 2. In fact, all but MONESIA, a preparation extracted from the bark of a South American tree, and HIATION, a gaping, are well enough known to be allowed in international Scrabble competition [Never Odd or Even (1997), O.V. Michaelsen]. Strange that the word STRANGE appears in both squares!

**Eight-Squares**

| CRABWISE | TATTLED |
| RATLINES | HEMERINE |
| ATLANTES | APOTOMES |
| BLASTEMA | METAPORE |
| WINTERLY | NAILINGS |
| INTERTIE | ALOISIAS |
| SEEMLIER | TENTMATE |
| ESSAYERS | ASSESSED |

Every word in Richard Sabey’s square on the left is listed in the OSPD. They are all used in real life too, not just on a Scrabble board. The most unusual-looking ones are ATLANTES, male figures supporting columns, and BLASTEMA, a mass of embryonic cells [“Some More Quality 8-Squares,” Richard Sabey, WW, Aug 1995].

All words in the double eight-square can be found in dictionaries, with thirteen of them in the OED or Web 2 [“Double Word Squares,” WW, Feb 1972]. The other three terms are listed in more specialized references:

**TETALITE** a variety of calcite [Dictionary of the Names of Minerals (1896), A.H. Chester].

**LIMONIAS** an old name for the orchid Serapias longifolia [A Dictionary of the Flowering Plants and Ferns, 8th Edition (1973), J.C. Willis, revised by H.K. Airy Shaw].

**ALOISIAS** individuals named ‘Aloisia,’ a feminine form of Aloysius recorded in 16-17th century English parish registers [The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names, 3rd Edition (1977), E.G. Withycombe]. ‘Aloisia’ is also a modern female name of German origin meaning ‘famous warrior’ [35,000+ Baby Names (1995), B. Lansky]. There are many Aloisias mentioned on the Net, including Aloisia Wagner, a limbless sideshow singer born in 1906, Aloisia Schmid, Assistant Professor of Human Genetics at the University of Utah, and Aloisia Woergetter, of the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Vienna.

A variant square is possible using TRESTLED (OED), EMOTIONS (OED) and SETALITE, a nonce-word found on p 583 of Finnegans Wake (1939), by James Joyce (“O, O, her fairy setalite!”).
Nine-Squares

FRATRIES
REGIMENTAL
AGITATIVE
TITANITES
ERANIST
RETITRATE
INTEGRATOR
EAVESTONE
SELESTERED
NECCESSISM
EXISTENCE
CIRCUMFER
ESCAPING
STURNIDAE
SEMPITERN
INFIDELIC
SCENARIZE
MERGENCES

The left square, constructed by Wayne M. Goodwin (“Mentor” of the National Puzzlers’ League), can be found on p 195 of Dmitri Borgmann’s Language on Vacation (1965). It originally appeared in the July 1928 issue of The Enigma. Seven of the words are found in Web 2; RETITRATE, to titrate (a solution) again, is in the Century Dictionary Supplement (1909), and the village of EAVESTONE in Yorkshire, England, is listed in the Times Index-Gazetteer (1965). This excellent nine-square inspired my own early attempts at constructing large squares.

Eric Albert’s remarkable computer-generated example on the right contains all solid-form headwords from a single dictionary (Web2). The only minor flaw is the capitalized term STURNIDAE, the starling family. Found on June 27, 1989 (at 11:29 a.m.!), this square was first published in the October 1989 issue of The Enigma, and subsequently appeared in the Feb/Mar 1990 edition of Games magazine [“The Best 9x9 Square Yet,” Eric Albert, WW, Nov 1991].

Ten-Squares

DESCENDANT
ECHENEIDAE
SHORTCOATS
CERBERULUS
ENTROMERE
NECROLATER
DIOLUMABA
ADALETABBAT
NATURENAME
TESSERATED
FISCALISED
IMPOLARITY
SPALACINES
COLDNOSERS
ALANBROWNE
LACORALINA
IRISOLONES
SINEWINESS
ETERNNESS
DYSSEASSES

The DESCENDANT square, discovered by Rex Gooch in 2002, is arguably the finest 10-by10 yet. It contains seven dictionary words (one capitalized, one hyphenated), two place-names, and an insect species name [“Some Superior Ten-Squares,” Rex Gooch, WW, November 2002].

The square on the right is my best effort after nearly forty years using manual methods [“The Best Ten-Squares,” WW, May 2006].
Eleven-Squares

| MORRIS MOSES       | NORRIS MOSES       |
| ORIENTIRANI        | ORIENTIRANI       |
| RIMISURANTE        | RIMISURANTE       |
| REIDPAINTER        | REIDPAINTER       |
| INSPIRADORS        | INSPIRADORS       |
| STUART MASON       | STUART MAHON      |
| MIRIAM GRECO       | MIRIAM GRECO      |
| ORANDARILOR        | ORANDARILOR       |
| SANTOSELLER        | SANTOHELIER       |
| ENTEROCOOLE        | ENTEROCOOLE       |
| SIEERSNORREN       | SIEERSNORREN      |

To achieve success at this level, it is apparent that a wider range of terms has to be allowed. An eleven-square composed entirely of English words is an impossible task, but by using names and foreign words a multilingual solution has been found.

Rex Gooch is the only person to have exhibited reasonable eleven-squares. His best effort so far (shown on the left) is a mixture of people’s names and foreign terms, with one English dictionary word included for good measure [“The Eleven-Square – Take Two,” Rex Gooch, WW, May 2005]. Rex asked for confirmation of the foreign words, and their meaning. After much research on the Net, and emailing various overseas contacts, I have been able to track down all the terms in this square. The square on the right is a variation.

**MORRIS MOSES** the name of seven people in US telephone directories [WhitePages.com (Net)]. MORRIS MOSES was also a 19th century daguerreotype artist from Trenton, New Jersey [Net]. The gentleman Rex mentions is listed in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1906) as ‘Ximenes, Sir Morris (Moses)’. He was known as Morris Ximenes or Moses Ximenes, not Morris Moses.

**ORIENTIRANI** ‘oriented’ in Slovenian, for example ‘problemko orientirani’ (problem-oriented), ‘objektno orientirani’ (object-oriented), or ‘levo orientirani’ (left-oriented). There are thousands of hits for ORIENTIRANI on the Net.

**RIMISURANTE** ‘remeasuring’ in Italian, present participle of the verb ‘rimisurare’, to remeasure [www.logosconjugator (Net)]. There is just a single hit on the Net, but the word has been confirmed as legitimate by Angelo Giannini of the Koine Italian Language Center in Lucca, Italy.

**REID PAINTER** a pupil recorded on the fifth grade Elementary “A/B” Honor Rolls for October 2003 and January 2004 at North Chatham School, Chatham County, North Carolina [Net].

**INSPIRADORS** plural of ‘inspirador’, Catalan for ‘inspirator’, one who inspires, a motivator [Catalan-English Dictionary (Net)].

**STUART MASON** the name of more than 20 individuals listed in US telephone directories [WhitePages.com (Net)]. The most famous STUART MASON is probably the English endocrinologist (1919-2003) mentioned in Rex’s article.

**MIRIAM GRECO** the name of eight individuals listed in telephone directories in Argentina [www.telecom.com.ar (Net)], and three in Italy [www.paginebianche.it]. MIRIAM GRECO and
her husband David sold a property in Burlington County, Philadelphia around January 2004 [Philadelphiainquirer, 18 Jan 2004 (Net)].

ORANDARILOR despite there being no hits for ORANDARILOR on the Net, Romanian Scrabble champion Dan Laurentiu Sandu assures me that it is a legitimate word in his language. In Romanian, ORANDARILOR is a genitive form of ‘orandar’, an obsolete term for someone who owns an inn.

SANTOS ELLER in ‘dos SANTOS ELLER’, a Brazilian double surname. In Portuguese-speaking Brazil, people start life with two family names, one from the father and one from the mother. By tradition, the maternal surname precedes the paternal one. When a woman marries, she usually adopts her husband’s last name, retaining her paternal surname before it.

A Brazilian website devoted to the genealogy of the Eller family [www.familiaeller.com.br] records ‘Maria dos SANTOS ELLER’ (born 3 June 1932), wife of Milton Antonio Eller, and ‘Amalia dos SANTOS ELLER’ (born 5 Jun 1935), wife of Jose Jacob Eller. The latter couple married in Nova Venecia, Brazil, in 1955, and produced eight children, most of whom were also named ‘dos SANTOS ELLER’.

‘Katia Helena dos SANTOS ELLER’ is listed in the telephone directory for Belem, capital of Para State, north Brazil [www.teleslistas.net].

Brazilian footballer Fabiano Eller is recorded a few times on the Net as ‘Fabiano dos SANTOS ELLER’ (3 hits), but Alexandre Perin of the Internacion Football Club states that the correct form of this player’s full name is ‘Fabiano Eller dos Santos’ (1,260 hits).

ENTEROCOELE the body cavity formed from an outpocketing of the archenteron (a primitive digestive cavity), especially typical of echinoderms and chordates [RHD].

SIERSNORREN a contrived Dutch word meaning something like ‘ostentatiously-decorated moustaches,’ formed by combining ‘sier’ (decorative or ornamental) with ‘snorren’ (moustaches). It’s not in any dictionary, but the word is a plausible coinage [Hugo Brandt Corstius, Colloquy, WW, Aug 2005, p 184].

The variant square on the right contains three different terms:

NORRIS-MOSES surname of American representational artist Dorothy NORRIS-MOSES (often spelt as two separate words), born in 1931 [Art in America, Artists Index (findarticles.com, Net)]. There are individuals named NORRIS MOSES living in Casar, North Carolina and Richmond, Virginia [WhitePages.com (Net)].

STUART MAHON a resident of Dublin, Ireland [mmm.eircom.ie/phonebook (Net)].

SANTO HELIER a Spanish version of the name of a 6th century ascetic hermit (St. Helier), and the capital of Jersey in the Channel Islands, which is named after him [Wikipedia articles, www.yotor.net/wiki/es (Net)].
Twelve-Square

ENDING ENDING
NGONGONGONGO
DOOGOODOOGOO
INGENSINGENS
NGONGENGONGE
GOOSEYGOOSEY
ENDING ENDING
NGONGONGONGO
DOOGOODOOGOO
INGENSINGENS
NGONGENGONGE
GOOSEYGOOSEY

Finding a regular twelve-square seems unlikely. However, a solution of sorts is possible with six tautonyms (reduplicative terms), each used four times in the square.

ENDING-ENDING the conclusion of the last part of a movie, play, book, etc. ‘I say sub-ending because the ending-ending was even more disappointing’ [university.imdb.com (Net)].

NGONGO-NGONGO a stream in the Sangha region, northern Congo [Geonames].

DOOGOO-DOOGOO variant of ‘dugu-dugu,’ the sex act, or to have sex, modern Jamaican English slang. ‘Would yuh doogoo-doogoo pan a fuss date?’ (Would you have sex on a first date?) [www.everythingjamaican.com (Net)].

INGENS INGENS designating a subspecies of South American rufescent screech owl, Megascops ingens ingens [ITIS].

NGONGENGONGE a New Zealand Maori word meaning ‘crippled’ [Dictionary of the Maori Language (1992), H.W. Williams].

GOOSEY-GOOSEY variant of ‘goosey,’ a foolish person, a simpleton [OED].

References

EDD  English Dialect Dictionary (1905), edited by Joseph Wright
Geonames  Geographic Names Information System [geonames.usgs.gov (Net)]
ITIS  Integrated Taxonomic Information System [www.itis.usda.gov (Net)]
Net  Internet search program (Google)
Web2  Webster’s New International Dictionary, Second Edition (1934)
Web3  Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (1976)
WW  Word Ways