

A CHALLENGE

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It is with a profound sense not only of humility but also of awe that I digested Professor Houdini's mind-expanding logological analysis in the November 1973 issue of *Word Ways*. It may, perhaps, be deemed not wholly inappropriate if I attempt a reply of sorts, feeble as it must inevitably seem by comparison with Houdini's brilliant, unparalleled display.

For complex, virtually esoteric reasons that need not be explored here, and which it might even be prudent not to bring into public view in times as uncertain as ours, but which must surely be well-known to the good professor, it is little more than child's play to find much of intense logological interest surrounding the names of American cities. It follows that a careful examination of Houdini's discoveries detracts measurably from their superficial splendor. Viewed in a proper perspective, they are little more than should be expected of any qualified logologist concerning himself with city names.

Since I do not wish to belittle my critic's obvious talents, I am proposing a substitute problem to which he may wish to turn his attention, and which is so much more difficult that it becomes a test of bona fide logological genius. This alternate problem is that of finding comparable logological interest investing the names of the twelve months of the year and the seven days of the week. What can you show us about these 19 names, Professor Houdini?

Lest I be accused of propounding a problem to which no solution exists, I hasten to point out that I have already considered it from one specific logological standpoint, that of the transdeletion, and have found a complete solution even on this mercilessly limited basis. That is more than the professor can claim to have done with the names of the 16 largest cities in the United States. My solution:

JANUARY	ARJUNA (in Hinduism, a prince who receives a divine revelation from Krishna)
FEBRUARY	FUR-BEAR (a back-formation from the adjective <u>fur-bearing</u> , defined "to bear fur")
MARCH	HARM
APRIL	LAIR
MAY	AM
JUNE	JEU (game, play, amusement)
JULY	YUL (the first name of Yul Brynner)

AUGUST	TAGUS (a river in Spain and Portugal)
SEPTEMBER	BETEMPER (a derivative of the verb <u>temper</u> , in which the prefix "be-" functions as an intensive)
OCTOBER	BOOTER (a soccer player)
NOVEMBER	OVERMEN (supermen)
DECEMBER	EMBERED (strewn with embers)
SUNDAY	UNSAID
MONDAY	NOMAD
TUESDAY	SAUTED (fried in very little fat)
WEDNESDAY	SANDWEED (the sandwort, a plant growing in dry, sandy soil)
THURSDAY	ST. AUDRY (also known as St. Etheldreda, of Ely, a saint whose feast-day is observed on June 23)
FRIDAY	DIARY
SATURDAY	DATURAS (ill-smelling herbs of the potato family)

Since there are many dozens of logological standpoints from which to consider words and names, my list constitutes the merest trace of a beginning, in a systematic study of these 19 names. I hereby challenge Houdini to perform his magic and to develop a dazzling constellation of curiosities around these names, similar in variety to the overpowering spectacle he has presented in connection with city names. How he responds to my challenge -- if he responds at all -- may well determine the ranking ultimately accorded him in the annals of logology!