KICKSHAWS

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Kickshaws is currently being assembled by a series of guest editors; all contributions should be sent to the editor in Morristown, New Jersey.

Major Minor

John Train’s Remarkable Names of Real People (Clarkson Potter, 1977) lists Major Minor, of the U.S. Army. The name is odd enough, but is it particularly rare? I think not; the surname Minor appears a little more often than once in every 10,000 names in Social Security files, and surely there are (or have been in the past 200 years) considerably more than 10,000 majors in the U.S. Army. In fact, restricting attention to West Point graduates before 1959, Minors were in the classes of 1937, 1945 and 1946.

A stranger story surfaced in the New York Times of September 18, 1972 -- it reported a man named Minor W. Major among the guests at a conference of Empire State Presidents. How did he get his name? "Before the Civil War, a young woman named Minor married a young man named Major and became Mrs. Major. He was a Confederate agent and he sank Union shipments on the Mississippi. He had a Yankee uniform for use at certain times, and in those circumstances Major Minor, the Confederate agent, became Major Minor, a Union officer. I’m a great-grandson of the Major who married Miss Minor," Minor W. Major said.

P.G. Wodehouse created a delightful bit of nonsense using these words in Uncle Dynamite (Dodd, New York, 1948). In order to gain entrance to a country estate, Lord Ickenham passed himself off as Major Brabazon-Plank, an old school chum. When challenged by Constable Potter, who knew the real Brabazon-Plank quite well, Ickenham quickly shifted ground and claimed to be an elder brother instead:

Potter: He (Bill Oakshott) give me your suitcase to take to the house, and he said 'This here belongs to Major Brabazon-Plank'. Ickenham: Just a slip of the tongue, such as so often occurs. He meant Brabazon-Plank, major. As opposed to my brother, who, being younger than me, is, of course, Brabazon-Plank, minor. I can understand you being confused, and what renders it all the more complex is that as I myself am a mining engineer by profession, anyone who wants to get straight on the Brabazon-Plank situation has got to keep steadily before him the fact that the major
is a miner and the minor a major. I have known strong men to break down on realizing this. So you know my minor, the major, do you? Most interesting. It's a small world, I often say ...

Why are you looking like a stuck pig, Bill Oakshott?

Bill came with a start out of what appeared to be a sort of trance. Pongo, who had had so many opportunities of observing (Lord Ickenham) in action, could have told him that a trancelike condition was almost always the result of being associated with this good old man when he was going nicely ...

Quickie Puzzles

The following ten students enrolled for a class in number theory. To aid in remembering their names, the professor seated them in a certain order in the classroom. Can you determine the order he used?

Don Edwards  Edith Reed
Jeff Ives   Leigh Thompson
Toni Nesbit  Rose Ventnor
Pete Norris  Robert Worden
Rolf Oursler  Jessi Xander

In his little book, Puzzling Posers (London, 1952), J. Travers gives the five-by-five letter square reproduced at the right. The puzzle is to imagine a chess king placed on any letter and moved (by king moves) to spell out a familiar motto. Starting at the center T, the solution is TO MANY COOKS SPOIL THE BROTH. Note that there are just sixteen different letters in this sentence. Is it possible to construct a four-by-four letter square that will do the same job? We assume that S and O may be counted twice in a row to produce the doublings in the motto.

Alphabetical Pie

Several years ago, James Davis of Auburn, Washington sent me the following logological curiosity. Write the letters of the alphabet in a circle, with Z followed by A, and cross out all letters which possess left-right symmetry. The remaining letters, starting with J and moving clockwise, fall into five distinct groups of sizes 3, 1, 4, 1 and 6 -- the first five digits in the representation of π!

Anagrams

John Donne's poem, "The Anagram", contains the following couplet:

Though all her parts be not in th' usual place,
She hath yet an anagram of a good face.

Norman Mailer, in his 1973 book about Marilyn Monroe, went out of his way to point out that if the A in Marilyn is used twice, the O in Monroe used just once, and the Y omitted, the remaining letters can be ar-
ranged to spell Norman Mailer. No one can deny that Norman and Marilyn were very close.

Two political anagrams that recently appeared in the Enigma, the official publication of the National Puzzlers' League:

**BILLY GATE = LIBYA GELT** (by Henry Hook)
**RONALD REAGAN = OLD AGE RAN, RAN ...** (Harry Hazard)

Andre Breton, the French poet and founder of surrealism, once pointed out that Salvador Dali anagrams to avida dollars (greedy for dollars, in Spanish).

The Wall Street Journal reported on September 6, 1978 that a Florida-based company called Xonex which makes motor oil was being sued by Exxon for using the letters of its name in anagram form. Patrick J. McNary, president of Xonex, said it never occurred to him that the two names were anagrams until he received a letter from an Exxon attorney; in fact, he thought the letter was a hoax.

**Economical Signs**

Peer Clahsen, a Swiss artist and toy designer, has a business card reproduced at the right. Words such as THINK are rich enough in shorter words spelled out in the same order to make sensible messages possible. What, in fact, is the most fecund word of this type? Obviously, it depends upon the length of the word and the dictionaries allowed. In the April 22, 1979 Philadelphia Inquirer, Theodore Bernstein quoted Leo G. Staley of Columbus, Ohio as finding ten common words in SCAPEGOAT: scape, cap, cape, ape, peg, go, goat, oat, at. Ralph Beaman added five more: ca't, pe and goa from Webster's Third, and scap and eg from Webster's Second; subsequently, he discovered that FIRESTONE was an even better nine-letter choice. In similar vein, Boris Randolph of Los Angeles discovered twenty-two words in MISINFORMATION: Mi, mis, misinform, sin, is, in, inform, information, for, form, forma, format, formation, ma, mat, a, at, ati, ti, I, ion, on. Puckishly, he noted "The letter M IS IN FORMATION!"

I have been in tall buildings in which each men's room was indicated by a large brass M on the door, and each ladies' room by the same fixture installed upside down. Has anyone ever used a similar inversion device next to the buttons of an elevator: up and dn?

**Carrollian Wordplay**

Most readers of Word Ways are at least moderately familiar with Lewis Carroll's wordplay -- his word-games (Doublets, Mischmasch and Syzygies, all explained in detail in John Fisher's *The Magic of Lewis Carroll* (Simon and Schuster, 1973)), his anagramming (William Ewart Gladstone = Wilt tear down all images?), and his acrostic poems.
Here are a couple of less well-known examples. In a letter that Lewis Carroll wrote about 1862 to a little girl named Annie Rogers, he said he was enclosing

A picture, which I hope will
Be one that you will like to
See. If your Mamma should
Desire one like it, I could
Easily get her one.

What is unusual about the above construction?

The following poem by Lewis Carroll turned up in an obscure publication called The Lewis Carroll Circular, Number 2, November 1974:

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 ...

Why is this poem so remarkable?

Lewis Carroll's real name was Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. He was fond of using pseudonyms on letters and poems that he sent to various periodicals. Once he used the initials R. W. G. Can you see why? Answers to all three problems can be found at the end of this issue.

I think Lewis Carroll would have been intrigued by the following colloquy generated by Roberto J. Pick of Manhattan:

Where are you going?
To the movies.
What are you going to see?
Ouo Vadis.
What does that mean?
Where are you going?
To the movies.
What are you going to see? ...
and so on ad infinitum, with questioner and answerer alternating roles.

And Other Authors ...

It is widely assumed that Rex Stout based his character of Nero Wolfe on Sherlock Holmes's stout brother, Mycroft, and there has even been speculation by Baker Street Irregulars that Nero was Mycroft's illegitimate son. The critic Leon Edel has noted that Rex means 'king' in Latin, and Nero is the name of a Roman emperor. Both Nero and Wolfe, said Edel, "throw off ripples of evil" and is it a coincidence that Wolfe's assistant is named Goodwin? Did Stout, as his New York Times obituary suggested, derive the name Nero Wolfe from Sherlock Holmes
Someone should pull together all the wordplay in the writings of Poe. In the story "King Pest", a man with the initials H.T. (Hugh Tarpulin) gets the best of T.H. (Tim Hurlygurly). In "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains", a man named Bedlo dreams of the death of a man named Oldeh. Poe was fond of such letter reversals, and there are other instances in both his fiction and his poe-etry.

In Finnegans Wake there are ten great thunderclap words, each 100 letters long except for the last one which has 101 letters. There are ten letters in the name James Joyce, and I suppose the 1001 letters of the thunderclaps may have something to do with the Thousand and One Tales of the Arabian Nights. Is it possible that Joyce's thunderclaps conceal a coded message of some sort? Probably not, but Joyce had an interest in ciphers; J. F. Byrne, an intimate of Joyce's who devised the still-unsolved Chaosipher, was a model for Cranly in Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, and his Dublin address, 7 Eccles Street, was the home of Leopold and Mollie Bloom in Ulysses. It might be worthwhile for logophiles to investigate the thunderclaps in depth.

In one of Fitzgerald's novels, for no apparent reason, we read about a man named Biloxi. He blocks' Biloxi, and he made boxes -- that's a fact -- and he was from Biloxi, Mississippi. The wordplay is rather feeble compared, say, to that in Nabokov, but can you guess the novel in which Mr. Biloxi from Biloxi appears?

The Oz books by L. Frank Baum are a happy hunting ground for wordplay enthusiasts because of their many invented names for persons and places and things. For instance, in The Magic of Oz, the all-consonant word PYRZOXGL, if pronounced correctly, enables one to change oneself into any animal desired. I once tried to guess how Baum arrived at this word. Note that the consecutive-letter sequence PQR occupies the first, fifth and third positions of the word, and the consecutive-letter sequence XYZ the sixth, second and fourth positions -- a mirror image. The last two letters do not partake of this symmetry, but GL might stand for GLinda, one of the good witches of Oz. In Ozma of Oz, Princess Langwidere had a "languid air". The protagonist of The Tin Woodman of Oz is a boy named Woot; did Baum take the initials Tin Woodman Of Oz and move the T from the beginning to the end? It would be easy to write an entire book about Baum's wordplay, not to mention the later Oz books written by Ruth Plumly Thompson.

**Acronymania**

P. Howard, the editor of the Association of Acronyms, has written a book about the organization. The members of the Association, like the alert Evers, are usually quick on the draw with acronyms. The title for it, Acronymania, is an example of an office single word trick action for "Acronymia".

*Floridians*
written by Ruth Plumly Thompson and others.

Puns, Charades, Riddles

John Allen Paulos, in his book Mathematics and Humor (University of Chicago Press, 1960), says he has a friend who collects answers to the old riddle What's black and white and red all over? Word Ways readers might like to add to his collection:

A wounded nun
An embarrassed zebra
Santa Claus after coming down the chimney
A right-winter's view of an integration march
A skunk with diaper rash

Hundreds of East Indians were meditating on a hillside just at sunrise. Led by their guru, they sat in the lotus position and continually chanted "Morning ... morning ... morning ..." while the sun slowly rose. Some wag in the back broke the rhythm by calling out "Evening". Surprised, the guru looked up and murmured "Someone chanted 'evening'!"

Have you heard about the two Italian brothers, Physio the rapist and Psycho the rapist?

Someone once told me, though I don't believe it, that he saw the door of an office shared by three proctologists: McCann, Hurtz and Howe.

Frank Harary, a well-known mathematician at the University of Michigan, is co-author of a book titled Graphical Enumeration. In the book, he discusses some results by mathematicians Ronald Read and E. M. Wright. A footnote states, however, that Read and Wright are both wrong.

There is a Tinker Street in Woodstock, N. Y. Steve Barr, the author of the three-word poem Womb/Bomb/Tomb, once claimed that a Mr. Evers bought a house on Tinker Street so that he could say he moved there by chance.

Acronymania

P. Howard Lyons of Toronto tells me he is the manager and treasurer of the Association of Creators of Really Original Names Yielding Meaning. The members, he says, are trying to devise an appropriate acronym for their organization, but haven't yet found one. This reminds me of Ruth Eisendrath's remark to me years ago that she was writing a satire on James Stephen's novel The Crock of Gold but couldn't think of a good title for it. And that in turn reminds me of Tom Wicker's May 14, 1978 newspaper column, where, in reply to various feminist proposals for single words that combine he and she, he suggested a one-word contraction for "he or she (or it)".

Floridians tell me that CALIF stands for Come And Live In Florida.
I don't know what Californians think FLA means, but perhaps some Word Ways reader can enlighten me.

Russell Baker, in his newspaper column of April 23, 1977, pointed out that the acronym of Moral Equivalent Of War is MEOW.

**Solitary and Social Word Games**

P. Howard Lyons has devised a form of wordplay that he calls Thing-Things. Can Word Ways readers add to his collection?

- **drill drill** - a tool for drilling holes in drills
- **doctor doctor** - a doctor who specializes in treating doctors
- **light light** - a light bulb that doesn't weigh much
- **head head** - leader of a junkie ring, or the main washroom on a naval vessel
- **pot pot** - place to hide marijuana
- **file file** - a tool for filing files, or a place to keep files
- **heavy heavy** - a fat villain in a movie

Along similar lines, I'd like to revive the old pastime of thinking of suitable first names for the wives of men in certain professions:

- **Grace** (dancer)  **Sophie** (upholsterer)
- **Bridget** (engineer)  **Carlotta** (used car salesman)
- **Rose** (florist)  **Dolly** (toy manufacturer)
- **Hattie** (milliner)  **Ginny** (bartender)
- **Carrie** (waiter)  **Robin** (thief)
- **Ethel** (chemist)  **Faith** (preacher)
- **Patience** (doctor)  **Fanny** (chair manufacturer)
- **Wanda** (magician)  **Iris** (ophthalmologist)
- **Ophelia** (chiropractor)  **Ruby** (jeweler)

Of course, this can be played the other way around, with sexes reversed (which leads to the same thing).

John Conway, a famous Cambridge University mathematician, invented the following three word games a few years ago:

1) **Monosyllabic talk:** All players must speak only in one-syllable words. If anyone uses a word of two or more syllables, other players shout "Bang!". Three bangs and you are out of the game.

2) **Polysyllabic talk:** This is played the same way as the first game, except that every spoken word must be at least two syllables long.

3) **Alternating talk:** Players must alternate one-syllable words and words of more than one syllable. Curiously, alternate English sounds much more natural than either monosyllabic or polysyllabic English.

John Conway

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**A CASE**

DOUGLAS J. CLINTON, New

ROGER J. S. TRENTON, New

Antonyms have active meaning.

Aristotle, the New Dictionaries. Since the term felt quite capable little thought has are clearly not appear to be antonym are not. For example they are opposed to 'unpopular' to be opposed to the property of 'unpopular' they readily identify as not 'famous' as not 'shy', people gain attention and occasion.

To illustrate pairs as antonyms in the list below contain random order. Then antonyms. You longer than antonym a pseudoantonym lead you to agree.

- absent/present
- clear/logic
- loud/noisy
- hot/cold
- foolish/skilled
- slim/trim
- absolute/relative
- believe/deny

Answers can be