JANEISMS

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In the May 1980 Kickshaws, Charles Bostick introduced a variety of wordplay called Ravenisms in which one mixes cliches like

mad as a wet hatter (mad as a wet hen, mad as a hatter)
don't burn your bridges at both ends (don't burn your bridges behind you, don't burn the candle at both ends)
put one's oar in the ring (put in one's oar, throw one's hat in the ring)

Long-time radio listeners may remember the "Easy Aces" radio program of the 1930s, in which Goodman Ace's scatterbrained wife, Jane, uttered similar phrases. When the programs were rebroadcast after World War II, I listened with notebook in hand and copied down several pages of examples.

Here, for example, is a sampling of Janeisms that can be construed as cliche-scrambling:

no sooner said the better
I can't find hide nor seek of
begin at the beguine
he flew off the coop
making a mountain out of Mohammed
let me tell you, my tar-feathered friend
I gave him my peace of mind
don't take any wooden Indians
keep a stiff upper cut
come down off your high hat
I went on a wild goose egg
sitting on Pretty Street
it's high noon something is done

Often, Jane's malapropisms had a weird appropriateness:

he (Lincoln) was tall and emancipated
we were insufferable friends
in all my bored days
indiscreet lighting
words fool me
I'd give my right name to (marry him)
we'll just nosey around
no matter how you slice it, it's still blarney
a baffle of wits
to be contrary
too humorous to mention

Other malapropisms, though still amusing, have no obvious hidden message:

a woman's tuition
I got an interior complex
the fable of the dog and the manager
a fly in the oatmeal
speak with a southern drool
don't have that hangman look
keep your nose to the tombstone
burn a camel at both ends
stop batting around the bush
in a sort of roustabout way
I have them by the galore
you know the way gospel travels
to tidy him over until
I hate people who are impromptu
I await your answer with dated breath
I'm always in there punchy
can't they at least be Masonic friends?
you're becoming historical
that cock-and-wool story
he'll pay back every tin dime
bawling and cooing
taking little catnips
just wrecking my brain
I had him in the hollow of my head
a mediocre castle in Spain
running around like a chicken with its hat off
you could have knocked me over with a fender
make it short and sappy
shaking like a thief
it's in the bank

Finally, I list a few Janeisms which might be placed in the How's That Again? category:

what you don't know about women wouldn't take much
a person can stand so much and not a step further
if I'm wrong, I'm not far from it
I wasn't born yesterday for nothing
simple as the day you were born
I don't know if I'm going or on horseback
a girl is only young once in a while
don't cross bridges in midstream
there's a time to and a time not to, and this is it
as honest as the day is born