

KICKSHAWS

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Readers are encouraged to send their own favorite linguistic kickshaws to the Kickshaws Editor, 618 8th Avenue, Coralville IA 52241. All answers appear in the Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue. Guest editors will appear occasionally.

Triennium of the Palindrome

The Year of the Palindrome is over. Weary celebrants who'd fallen into the PARTY TRAP all year long are resting. The parades across the nation with people marching in both directions have ceased. The bumper stickers saying BACK TO BASICS TO BACK and the car window signs proclaiming PALINDROME ON BOARD ON PALINDROME have been cast into the trash or sold at garage sales. No more reversible press conferences by the President. No more foreign despots who fit perfectly into top-level palindromes like DRAT SADDAM, A MAD DASTARD! It was a great year, but greater years are yet to come.

In fact, the Roman Palindromic Triennium will be here soon. Now is the time to plan a three-year orgy. The years 1998, 1999, and 2000 in Roman numeral form are M11M, M1M, and MM. They mark the last time that palindromic years, Arabic or Roman, occur consecutively. They also marked the first -- 2000, 1999, and 1998 BC. This brings up a couple of questions. What was the longest string of palindromic years? What was the craziest year in history? Which two were father and son years?

Anagram Crackers

With the irreversible conclusion of 365 days of reversibility, we can all breathe anagrams again. Here is a dialog between Samson and Medusa, whose speech is anagrammatically correct. Most of the anagrams were mined from Pears Advanced Word-Puzzlers Dictionary (Pelham Books, 1987) by Peter Newby.

"Erasmus was a masseur for the Masons," says Samson. "Melissa was aimless, too."

"But they were equals," squeals Medusa. "He amused her. They ate and had tea with the esprit of a priest."

"You sprite! Even the ripest tripes make a morsel of morels to pleat a plate. Let the butlers bluster! Let the unrobed boulder rebound!"

"Don't be so solemn. Alister retails petals on plates. The dictionary is indicative of that!"

"Alister is a realist. He'd trapse to a repast where models seldom are cleaned and enlaced, where melons and lemons form stains on the

saints' satins."

"But in a tub Isabella says they're sailable."

"Like peanuts! She untapes halters and lathers for thalers. Even the grayest stagery gyrates at the Gallery of Allergy, so largely and regally robed. I'm bored."

"Theresa reheats the heaters."

"With aethers! She'd spear pears, too. Spare me Mesolithic homiletics."

"Carmel was calmer than Marcel."

"Who? How? Let's recall the caller in the cellar. His sanity was satiny in spite of the trails of trials to the errant ranter. Let's rewarn Warren."

"You mean Warner. He smiled."

"Smiled? he misled like a spider."

"He prides himself on framing, not on farming."

"And when the gander ranged in the Garden of Danger, who dawdled? Who waddled?"

"Slow owls."

"Well, I wagered on ragweed, and I was pleased with the elapsed time they emit. I felt elations in my toenails."

"Carrie is racier."

"Miles of slime! She can't untime a minuet in a minute. She opts to stop pots at a top's spot."

"A top's spot at a--?"

"Stop pots for Alister!"

"That realist? He saw the gander in the Garden of Danger."

"Did the gander need Eden?"

"No trucks struck him down, dented him, and tended to mangle that gamely, gleamy legman like sporadic picadors."

"Gerald glared at the sack in the cask."

"He was-beamy, maybe. The hikers shriek at the throanes of hornets and shorten chaste cheats who scathe wherever a sexist exists. Indiscrete, iridescent airbeds braised the seabirds by the canoe in the ocean."

"Ingrid was riding a horse on the shore."

"A ruse, I'm sure. Did Don nod? He singed the signed design, and now he deigns to stagger the gagster with strange garnets. And Dan? At the dune, nude, he was undressing the undersigns of the thingy on her nighty."

"The maiden met Demian."

"Oh, ho! Ribald bridal tales slate the Mimosa of Maoism for silvan anvils. She'd derange a grenade if angered or enraged, yet in the driest of strides, she'd foster a softer forest as it undraws sunward."

"Dare we read about it with Nan?"

"Ann Landers snarled in slander when a dearer reader reared a deer with a reed. Ann, not Nan, was a star in "The Arts of Rats" at the American Cinerama. I broused at the Rosebud to see the player replay the pearly parley. So now I won."

"And the adorer roared?"

"Natch! A chant, like a dynamo on Monday, to the hero's horse that bleats in the stable."

"You bleat at the table, dear."

"I read at the table. Bleat, hah!"

"You act euphoric, yet you're pouchier than Irving the Virgin."

"Ogre gore! Irving the Virgin travels with vestal varlets through the thickest, thickset thickets to the heart of the earth. His tablets

of battles are from an era of pinkish kinship with the rinsed diners of direct credit. In one eon, the throes of others made Dame Marsha at the ashram retune a tureen."

"She'd untree the tenure of a neuter dog, too."

"God, what a mean amen!"

The Anagram Method

When I first moved to Coralville, I didn't know any of my neighbors. But Peter Newby has provided a very simple way to know them and their lifestyles - by anagramming the letters in the town's name. Without even being here, Peter identified several Coralvillians: CLIVE L ORAL, the orator; OLIVER C ALL, the local busybody; COL VERA ILL, the diseased military matriarch; AVRIL O'CELL, the imprisoned IRA supporter; and ELI L R VOCAL, the choir soloist. I've since met each one - a tribute to the validity of the Anagram Method. How about your town? Or any city on earth?

Viewer Review

Mike Reiss suggests reviewing movies by anagramming their titles. "There was a movie some years ago called ICEMAN, for which a very apt review would be ANEMIC CINEMA, a double anagram. A volleyball movie called SIDEOUT was released last year; TEDIOUS is another fair, anagrammatic review. I invite your readers to come up with other pithy reviews for real movies, plays (CATS - SCAT!)."

Now that's a fair, impartial approach. Using phrases, TAXI could be panned in two ways - I TAX or AX IT. And HOME ALONE would be ONE LAME "OH!" The new HOOK is OH, OK or HO, KO! depending on your point of view. For classics, FRANKENSTEIN was INTENSE! FRANK! Siskel and Ebert, take note.

Blazing Yellow Journalism

In the Iowa City Press-Citizen, a recent headline (Sep 28 1991) about the President's planned decrease in missiles cleverly uses a double-meaning word to shock the daylights out of people: BUSH DROPS TACTICAL NUCLEAR ARMS. A couple of weeks later, it achieved perhaps one of the most accurate journalistic puns of the last twenty years when it came up with this headline on the Clarence Thomas hearings: SENATE DOUBTING THOMAS.

For the Love of Of

An article in the numismatic newspaper Coin World (Nov 27 1991) discussed Dennis Charles With, a man of prepositional qualities. Such a name invites unusual sentences, such as this quote: "[he] compared the coins he received from With with a list." What would happen if more people were named after the smaller figures of speech, such as prepositions and conjunctions, as in this poem:

Both To and Of were deep in love;
Not so with And and Or.

And Through was through with In and Out,
But But still fell for For.

Then In went out with Up last night,
And Out went in with Down,
And Up went down with In, and And
Went up to see the town.

Now Near was near the restaurant,
While At was at the bar,
Yet Yet met By, and by and by,
Between caught up with For.

Across was just about to ask
About to dance, but Of
Was just about to ask Across
If If were his true love.

From From to To, the party went,
And And and Or or Nor
Just danced beside Beside before
Before could dance with For.

For For was out with Out, without
Without, though Though saw Near,
Who looked within Within, with In
Within the inn, near here.

S & L Logology

The savings and loan scandal reached logological proportions in 1988 with the sale of 15 S&L's to a man named James M. Fail. An AP story (Oct 1 1990) quotes a Dallas bank president punning in court: "While I certainly had misgivings about Mr. Fail's background, he did not, to my knowledge at the time, fail to qualify."

Friendly, Friendlier and Friendliest Words

In a friendly word, each letter can be replaced by a different letter to make a new word. FAIL is friendly: mAll, Foll, FALL, FAIr. But some words are friendlier than others: the replacement letters spell out a word that is valid in its own right. FAIL is friendlier with JOLT: jAll, Foll, FALL, FAIt. The friendliest words of all can exchange every combination of corresponding letters to form new words. BANE and MITT are friendliest (using Webster's Second Unabridged). They can be arranged in a perfect word net-

BANE	BINE	MINE	MANE
BANT	BINT	MINT	MANT
BATT	BITT	MITT	MATT
BATE	BITE	MITE	MATE

work. Each word changes one letter from the words immediately above, below, right, and left of it. Each word in the top row changes one letter with the corresponding word in the bottom row, and each word in the leftmost column does the same with the rightmost column. Can you find 5-letter or greater examples of friendlier or friendliest words?

Twig?

Doug Hoylman writes that TWIG on the wooden postcard quoted in the November 1991 Kickshaws means "understand" according to definition 5 in Webster's Third. Leonard Ashley writes "Yew would be board knot at all with a dictionary of slang. Even today TWIG in UK slang means "catch on". The UK expression TWIGGY-VOUS is equivalent to (US) 'do you get it!.' Jeff Grant adds that it's a common expression in New Zealand. Is TWIG an early form of the beat expression D1G, which also means "understand"?

Longest OED Citation in a Palindrome

In the last Kickshaws, Peter Newby used the 20-letter word MICROMINIATURISATION to achieve the longest word in a palindrome. Jeff Grant notes that the 24-letter TRANSUBSTANTIATIONALISTS appeared in a palindrome in the August 1978 Kickshaws, but it was spelled wrong. Jeff created a 'drome with a 25-letter giant. While Newby's uses purely dictionary words, Grant's requires initials and funny surnames. This was necessary for him to reach a second goal: the last sentence actually appears in an OED citation with only one small variation. As Jeff describes it:

Overheard in a lecture-theater where Prof. Thomas Sayll, eminent scientist and numismatist, is to speak on the subject of immunoelectrophoresis. The students are having a discussion on the stability of various obscure foreign currencies. The professor enters and notices a bottle of port. His conscience tells him alcohol is like an all-consuming tumour, but he ignores it and takes several quick sips. His sixth sip brings a whispered comment from one of the students. Professor Sayll then begins the lecture. Here we go!

No! I, Ge, rate bani, sen.

O Zow!

T. Sayll (a citer): "Oh, port..."

--Cele, O Nummist! (Six 'e nims, Al!)

"Plasmin exists immunoelectrophoretically as two zones in a beta region."

GE is a person named after the Greek earth goddess, BANI are Romanian coins, SEN are Japanese coins, a CELE is a tumour, NUMMIST is an old synonym for numismatist, and to NIM is to take or steal.

Junior Cities

If you were a pioneer naming a city in your state, wouldn't you try to think up some exotic name? In Iowa WHAT CHEER has the most colorful onomastic origin. A century ago, the town fathers had just convened a meeting at the local saloon, and the big question on their agenda was "What do we call this place?". Since they didn't have a copy of What to Name the Town (Punch Press, 1812), they had to be creative, and the firewater helped. "I got an idea," one of them is reputed to have said. "Let's name it after the first thing that the next person who comes in this place says." Enough drinks had been drunk, so there was little need

for debate. A few minutes later, a British gentleman traveling across the United States walked through the swinging doors and greeted the men at the bar by saying "What cheer!" And the name stuck. Think of the alternatives. If the words had been somewhat grittier, they town might've been called Sonofabitch, or Where the Hell am I?, or @\$%# You.

I live next door to Iowa City, but I doubt that someone staggered into a bar there and said "Iowa City?" with the town council responding "Wow! Great name!". So what possesses people to christen their city after their state? It's like naming it Iowa, Junior. How many cities have done this? Kansas City, Missouri City, New York City, Oklahoma City, Kuwait City. Any other juniors?

Reverse English, Letter-by-Letter

In "Rorrim's Mirror" in the August issue, a man was caught in a looking-glass world. He had to learn to read Reverse English, in which the letters were rotated 180 degrees and the lines went from right to left. Lee Sallows has found himself in an even more convoluted situation. He writes of his plight:

read read,

I have just read your RORRIM'S MIRROR piece in the August number of Word Ways. Yours is a terrific story - but as far as my situation. I mean, it is just you can use RORRIM for reading text. Read a paragraph by rotating the letters of every word 180 degrees and I can read you!

The Possessive Byway

Faith Eckler searched for the pangrammatic highway and found a stretch less than a mile long with signs containing all letters of the alphabet. While driving home the other day, I noticed another phenomenon a few blocks from my house - the possessive byway. On one side of one city block, five Coralville businesses possess possessives in their names: Charlie's, Dan's, DJ's, Hardee's, and JC's. Can you find a more businesslike possessive byway?

Old Saws in New Clothes

Each of these paragraphs embellishes a familiar cliché, such as "The early bird catches the worm". The verbs and nouns of the original sayings have been replaced with words from A Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms (Popular Library, 1961), by Joseph Devlin. In the first two examples, synonyms are used, in the third, antonyms. With this proliferation of information, how quickly can you buzz through these old saws and identify the originals?

Duration, age, period, season, era, eon, epoch, term, sequence, while, course, succession, date, span, spell, stage, interim, cycle, present, past, and future soars, hovers, wings, floats, rises, ascends, glides, and skims

See, view, gaze, glance, scan, stare, behold, contemplate, descry,

watch, survey, regard, inspect, discern, perceive, spy, glimpse, speculate, recognize, distinguish, or observe before you spring, caper, jump, skip, gambol, romp, bound, frisk, frolic, and vault

Ignorance, darkness, blindness, stupidity, shallowness, nescience, incapacity, incomprehension, inexperience, illiteracy, unenlightenment, benightedness, obscurity, unconsciousness, misconception, mystery, incomprehensibility, mysteriousness, misunderstanding, misapprehension, and unfamiliarity is weakness, decrepitude, disability, impotence, debility, infirmity, atomy, langour, lassitude, faintness, disablement, ennui, weariness, tiredness, ineptitude, inability, collapse, helplessness, powerlessness, incapacity, inefficiency, unfitness, effeminacy, asthenia, cachexia, impairment, fatigue, exhaustion, deterioration, degeneration, timidity, cowardliness, fear, trepidation, tremor, fright, nervousness, cravenness, abjectness, faintheartedness, cowardice, yellowness and funk

The End Doesn't Justify the Means

Adding, subtracting, or changing a letter in a word can polish up the old saws and sharpen their teeth. Here are some examples with only one letter affected:

Put your money where your moth is
 The early bird catches the worm
 Curiosity killed the cat
 Time deals all wounds
 Night makes right
 Today is the first day of the rest of your life
 Man does not live by bread alone
 Every cloud has a silver lining
 It's always darkest before the dawn
 Never look a gift horse in the mouth
 Beware of stranglers
 Four walls do not a prison make
 Gold is the roof of all evil
 Crime does not pay
 Music hath charms to soothe the savage beast
 Good things come in small packages
 An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure
 Remember: only you can prevent forest fires
 A barking dog never bites
 Birds of a feather flock together
 Cats have nine lives
 No use crying over spilled milk
 There's more than one way to skin a cat
 It's bad luck to walk under a ladder
 Water seeks its own level

Dictionary Paths Revisited

To trace a dictionary path (see August 1991 Kickshaws), you look up a word, then look up the first word in the definition of that word, then look up the first word in the new definition, and so on, till looping back to an earlier word or reaching a

grammar definition. The object is to find the longest such path. My best example was PUN with 24 words. Tom Pulliam has located a path of 31 words: abutment structure manner kind essential contain enclose shut close bar long extend spread scatter distribute divide separate set cause something some one being existence continuance continuing remain be equal same being. He suggests changing the rules to allow for choosing any entry in a multiply-defined word: "For example, if my chain led me to FOUL, I see four FOUL entries from which I might choose the friendliest." Perhaps this could be expanded to allow for looking up any word (and not just the first word) in each definition.

Romancing the Numbers

Behold the numbers fIve, sIX, and seVen. $5 + 6 + 7 = 18$, and $IV + IX + V = 18$ as well. No other consecutive numbers have the same sum as the Roman numerals embedded within their names. They are Romantic numbers - numbers whose names contain a Roman numeral reading from left to right. The Roman number must be well-formed. For instance, flfty-seVen with IV is valid; flfty-sIX with lIX is not. At least one non-consecutive trio of Romatic numbers has the five-six-seven property: eLeVen + seVenteen + thlrty-three = 61 (both ways). Can you find any other sets of two or more?

Are there any other formulas (using subtraction, multiplication, etc.) that produce similar results? How many Romantic numbers are there? What is the largest Romantic number? What is the largest Roman numeral found in a Romantic number? Are there any self-referential Romantic numbers in English? Spanish has Clento uno (101), and German eln (1). Contrariwise, Spanish has a number name that is itself a Roman numeral, but not the correct one: MiL (thousand) = 1049. What about other languages?

Romanomagic Square

Lee Sallows has found that the Welsh alphamagic square in the May 1991 *Word Ways* translates into English as a Romanomagic square. The sums of the numbers are equal to each other for rows, columns, and diagonals; the sums of the number of letters are likewise equal; and so are the sums of the Roman numerals.

sIXty-two	elghty	seVenty-four
elghty-four	seVenty-two	sIXty
seVenty	sIXty-four	elghty-two

Tragic Square

Lee has also composed a tragic square. Can you determine how it works? What is the magic constant?

Discontent	Woe	Hardship
Gloom	Sadness	Suffering
Misery	Tribulation	Pain

French and German Squares

Latin squares have been discussed before in *Word Ways*, but the French developed their own word squares long ago. The concept was passed down to me by my ancestors from Alsace-Lorraine, who spent many sober hours crushing grapes for the wineries and devising squares whose letters (A=1, B=2, etc.) have equal totals for first row and first column, second row and second column, etc. Unlike the regular word square, the French square forms words horizontally but not vertically, as shown in the first example below. Of course, being on the German border, the French square was soon refined to greater complexity, and the German square was born. In it, the sums of all the rows and columns are the same, and words are formed in four directions - up, down, right, and left. The second example shows this variety, rare even for 3-letter words and possibly impossible for 4-letter words. All words are in Webster's Second Unabridged. Can you construct examples of higher-order squares of either type? Bon chance, mon ami! Achtung! Respondez si'l vous play.

B I L E	2	9	12	5	28	E A R	5	1	18	24
S C A N	10	3	1	14	28	E R A	5	18	1	24
M O L D	13	15	12	4	44	N E E	14	5	5	24
C A S T	3	1	19	20	43					
							24	24	24	
	28	28	44	43						

Off With Their Heads!

Spoonerisms switch the first letters of words to get new words. Applying this mathematically, here are ten pairs of number names and one trio with their new sums (based on Webster's Second). The first six swap one initial letter; the next three trade unevenly; and the last three move the first letter(s) of one word only. Any others?

FOUR + SIX = SOUR + FIX	ONE + SIX = SINE + OX
FOUR + TEN = TOUR + FEN	TWO + NINE = NO + TWINE
SIX + NINE = NIX + SINE	THREE + FIVE = FEE + THRIVE
SIX + FORTY = FIX + SORTY	ONE + THREE = THRONE + EE
EIGHT + TEN = TIGHT + EEN	ONE + TEN = TONE + EN
NINE + FIFTY = FINE + NIFTY	SEVEN + TEN = EVEN + STEN

Shakespeare's Word Search

Shakespeare was a high-rolling wordplayer. Like a card shark, he hid words in the sleeves of his sonnets. Some are embedded within larger words, and some overlap two or more smaller words. "When in eternal" has several embedded words, including HE, HEN, and TERN. It also has two overlapping words, N|1N|E and N|ET. (Vertical lines indicate spaces between the original words.)

Shakespeare's Word Search has three variations: (1) Highest Word Count for hidden words, (2) Longest Word, including overlaps if necessary, (3) Most Overlapping Word, which crosses over the greatest number of words. All words must be regular dictionary

entries of two or more letters. The same word may occur more than once in a line, and a single letter may take part in making more than one word. Line 12 from Sonnet 30, along with its hidden words (from Webster's Second Unabridged), provides a start. It's your turn to come up with better solutions out of the 2,154 lines appearing in the Sonnets.

Line 12: When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st

HE HEN EN N|1|NE N|ET ET TERN TERNA TERNAL AL|L LIN
 LINE IN NES|T ES EST S|TO|T TO|T TI ME ME|T E|T ETH
 THO US GROW RO ROW OW (29 words)

Dollar Signs

At a quaint little antique shop in Washington, Iowa, the shelves are piled high with the memorabilia of yesterday, from an ancient pig-nodder to last year's baseball cards. The pig-nodder is priced at \$35. But the box of Topps cards has a strange sign: "Baseball Cards: one for a dollar, two for a dollar, 3 / \$1." I asked the owner about it, and she said, "That way, no one ever buys less than three." I picked up one at random and gave her a dollar. "Now you're stuck with the other two," I said.

Pandora's Box

"Just a second," Becky beckoned.
 "Just a minute, what is in it?"
 Just an hour's worth of flowers,
 Just a day's worth of praise,
 Just a week's worth of peaks,
 Just a month's worth of wants,
 Just a season's worth of reasons,
 Just a year's worth of tears,
 "Just a second," Becky beckoned.
 "Leave the locks on that old box."

Substitute Lettershift Networks

Lettershift networks have never been constructed, partly because of the relatively small pool of lettershift words. With substitute lettershift words, the capacity for generating networks is dramatically improved. Even five-letter word networks can be fairly complex. Starting from STEEL, here is the beginning of a large network of words from Webster's Seventh Collegiate. The lowercase strings show the shifts before letter substitution; commas indicate alternative substitution routes.

STEEL-tuffm-TUFFS

-zalls-BALLS,CALLS,FALLS,GALLS,HALLS,MALLS,PALLS,WALLS

-fgrry-FURRY

BALLS-hgrry-HARRY,HURRY

CALLS-kitta-KITTY

FALLS-lgrry-LORRY

-nitta-NITTY

GALLS-mgrry-MARRY,MERRY

HALLS-buffm-BUFFS

MALLS-sgrry-SORRY

-guffm-GUFFS

WALLS-cgrry-CARRY,CURRY

Freudian Pronouns

A Freudian psychoanalyst walks into a department store. Unlike most people, she thinks of herself in three ways - as an ego, a superego, and an id. In this story, first person Freudian pronouns are necessary. Those referring to her superego are preceded by a plus sign, and those referring to her id by a minus sign. Her ego follows the usual format. She gazes at an expensive ring that is sitting on the glass counter. An internal moral battle ensues.

Hmmm, I like that ring, but it's much too expensive for my budget. It looks so gorgeous in its blue velvet box. Maybe -I should stick it in my pocket. Nobody would see -me. If +I did, though, +I'd be doing a terrible injustice to the poor clerk, who'd probably have to pay for it. +I'd feel so guilty. On second thought, -I don't know the idiot, and if -I did, -I'd probably hate his guts! -I ought to steal the ring. +I must be crazy. +I'll bet he's a generous, kind human being, but if he's so generous, why doesn't he just give -me the ring? -I'll have to take it. Oh, what's that? A jar of money marked "Contributions for Needy Children." +I'll give a dollar to help the little angels. Who am -I kidding? The little devils would steal this jar for themselves if they had the chance. -I'll steal it along with the ring. -I'd be a fool if -I didn't, but +I'd be a hideous wretch of a human being if +I did. +I'd never forgive +myself. +I'll put ten dollars into the jar instead. No, -I'll take the jar, the ring, and that diamond stickpin. +I'll donate fifty dollars to the kids. -I'll take those gold earrings, too. +I'll give a hundred dollars. -I'll grab that bracelet. +I'll give a thousand dollars and +my own ring. -I'll rob the place with an assault rifle. +I'll sign over the title to my car. -I'll blow up the building. +I'll throw in my house and--

Exe

One of the greatest challenges of the English language is to devise a third person singular neutral pronoun. Several suggestions have been made - E, EM, S|HE, HE|SHE, SHER - but none have caught on. I would like to add a logological example to the group. It's not intended to catch on, just to be given its day in the sun. The latest non-sexist pronoun: EXE (pronounced ecks-eh, accent on the first syllable). It's distinctive, and it has a nice ring to it: "When everyone leaves, will exe take exe's coat with exe?" Aside from obvious logological properties (it's a palindrome, it's an upside-down mirror reversal, it's a zigzag word, etc.), two puns make EXE fit in perfectly with YOU and I. What are they?

Wrods

A wrod is a word with the wrong definition. Everyone probably has a wrod or two in their mental dictionary. For me, COUPLE was a wrod until I turned 23. I thought it meant "a small amount greater than two and less than a few." The only exception was when COUPLE referred to "a man and a woman going together or

married."

Recently, I figured out why I mislearned COUPLE. When I was a kid, my father used to drive into the gas station and say to the attendant "A couple of dollars of regular." The attendant would say "Is that all?". And my father would pull out his wallet to check his cash, and then say "three" or "four" depending on how much money he had. Other usages reinforced this: "I'll be out of the bathroom in a couple of minutes." "Let's have a couple of beers."

I learned my mistake in 1967 while working as a dishwasher at the Mill Restaurant. The boss had told me it would take a couple of hours to do the dishes, so I assumed he meant 4 or 5 hours, and I paced myself accordingly. After a month he said "I don't think you have the aptitude to be a dishwasher." I asked why, and he said, "The dishes should take only a couple of hours." I said, "That's all I have been taking - 4 to 5 hours." He growled "I said a couple - two!" In my defense, I said, "But a couple is more than 2." He replied, "Your aptitude's worse than I thought," and he fired me a couple of times. Like magic, the word became a word. What words have ripped out the pages of your mind?

The Thirteenth Floor

Somewhere in this Kickshaws lurks a 13-word palindrome. Can you find it?

Paul Bunyan's Song: A Mini-Rhopalic Sonnet

A rhopalic sentence begins with a one-letter word and continues with each word increasing by one letter. The master rhopalist goes to great lengths to go to great lengths, achieving sentences ending in 24-letter words or longer. What about the lower end of the spectrum? Here is a sonnet about the time Paul Bunyan had Babe the Blue Ox for dinner. It's composed of 2-word (MWPD) rhopalic lines. Can you write a villanelle with the same limitation? O, do!

O, ax,	O, no,	O, ho!	I et.
I go.	X Ox!	O, be!	X it.
O, Ox,	O, so	O, go!	
I--so?	X ax.	O, me!	

Poem of the Year

While Januarying over the snows,
 I Februaried the tip of my nose.
 Then onward and upward and outward I Marched
 To Aprilic showers: my throat was so parched.
 What May I accomplish till summer returns,
 Junitiously watching for suntans and burns?
 Enjoying the beaches, Julyful to all,
 So Augustly tossing the world like a ball,
 I pause and Septemberize under the heat--
 Octoberous odors of cornfields and wheat.
 How soon I'll Novemberate, drenched in the glows
 Of mountains of moonlit Decemberish snows!