FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING

"I don't know if this subject has been dealt with in Word Ways, but I find it so interesting," Ray Love writes. "It's another confounding and confusing aspect of that cornucopia called the English language. If I am going out and it looks like rain I usually take an umbrella, and I may even take a jacket. Or if I'm going sight-seeing I'll take a camera. All three are tangible objects I am taking. I have them in my possession. However, there are other things we can take but don't actually 'take'. They are figures of speech, icing on the English language cake. Here are 20 things we can take but don't literally 'take'. Are there others?"

We can take a nap or take a snooze.
We can take walk or take a hike or stroll.
We can take a shower or take a bath.
We can take a dive or take a fall.
We can take a piss or take a leak.
We can take a shit or take a crap.
We can take a break or take a rest.
We can take a fancy to or take a shine to.
We can take a back seat to.
We can take a picture or take a selfie.
We can take a test.
We can take a ride.
We can take a bow.
We can take a dip (in the pool).
We can take a cab, a bus, a train, a boat or a plane.
We can take a powder.
We can take a risk or take a plunge.
We can take a charge.
We can take a part or take a role (in a movie).
We can take a count.
We can take a vacation or take a trip.
We can take a rain check or take a pass.
We can take a minute or take an hour (for lunch).
We can take a flying leap or take a flying fuck at a rolling donut.
We can take a pitch or take a base (baseball terms).

Note that some of Ray's examples can have multiple meanings. "We take a count" usually means we numerically count something," but it could also mean that we are kidnapping Dracula. In the latter case, the meaning involves a tangible object, the count himself, involved literally in getting snatched. "We take a bow" involves an unusual twist. By pronouncing "bow" like the vowel sound in "bow-wow" we get the figurative meaning, and by pronouncing "bow" like the long O vowel sound in "bow and arrow" we get a literal meaning; that is, "We take a BOE" can mean "We bring a thing that shoots arrows" or "We steal a thing that shoots arrows."
POETIC LICENSE PLATE

"As I was coming home one evening I was stopped at a stop light," Ray recalls. "I noticed the car ahead of me in the right lane had letters on its license plate that spelled out what looked like a word. It read MRALARM. Then I glanced at the side of the van and saw the name of a home security company. Clever, I thought. But as the light changed and he drove away, I realized something even more remarkable: The letters on his license plate were palindromic! I wondered if he knew that."

JAMSESSION

Ray reports: "A major accident on a busy freeway always causes the traffic to backup for miles like this."

MODERN ECONOMIC TIMES

And Ray points out that there are three basic necessities: Food, clothing, and a tax shelter.

BOOK REVIEW

Ray has a ready-made book review for the overworked critic: "It's incorrect to say a book was writ or a book was wrote, but it might be perfectly all right to say a book was written!"

BOOK REVIEW 2

Ray's Book Review inspired me to take action. I wrote a book review for the book The End of the Alphabet. It's a romance novel, a love fable that will put you to sleep. My review: Zzz.

AND THEN

Bill Brandt introduces a new wordplay category name: "There are a number of named categories for word play phrases or sentences, such as Tom Swifties, Show Me, and Spoonerisms. If there isn't already, I think there should be a category name for word play sentences that use 'and then.' Although they show up on numerous sites on the internet, I have not been able to identify the authors of the first five examples shown below. The rest are some that I have come up with. I have not seen these examples anywhere so I think it is safe to claim them as my own. If this group does not have a name yet, and until someone comes up with a better name, I propose to call them simply 'And Then.'"

I stayed up all night to see where the sun went, and then it dawned on me.
I didn’t like my beard at first, and then it grew on me.
I wondered why the baseball was getting bigger, and then it hit me.
I used to be a banker, and then I lost interest.
During the race he was ahead by a nose, and then he blew it.
I was keeping an eye on a pregnant cow, and then it became apparent.
I wondered where by boomerang went, and then it came to me.
I started riding a bucking bronco, and then it threw me.
I spilled coffee on my shirt, and then people started to view me with distain.
I was a doctor that developed a temper, and then I lost my patients.
I spoke to the minister in the elevator, and then I felt uplifted.
I stole a scale in the department store, and then I got weigh with it.
At first I lost money making chocolate candy, and then I made a mint.
I asked for a job at the pin factory, and then I got stuck with all the work.
I got a new job as an archeologist, and then my career was in ruins.
I got a job at the bicycle shop, and then I had to pedal the merchandise.
I wanted to install auto mufflers, and then I found the work was exhausting.

~ REPORT FROM DOGDOM

Bill Brandt notes that “In Richard Lederer’s book The Play of Words there is a chapter entitled ‘Dog my Cats’ in which he introduces the reader to the origin of some of the dog-word meanings, such as ‘dog days’, and invites the reader to guess the meaning of some other dog-words. The following is an expansion of what he presented by using dog-words to tell a story.

Dogmatic Dilemma

Doggone it! I am dog tired of you calling me a dirty dog and dogging me about my dog and pony show saying it is nothing more than a dog’s breakfast or a shaggy dog story. It is not just dogma, it is about how to go from being an
underdog to becoming the top dog. If you want to play with the big dogs it takes more than just putting on the dog. The world is going to the dogs. It is a dog eat dog world. You cannot just dog it or let sleeping dogs lie. You need dogged determination if you want to win the dogfight and not end up in the doghouse. During the dog days of summer, unless it is raining cats and dogs, you can go down the road past the dogleg where next to the dogwood tree you will find a dog eared hot dog vendor who was a dogface during the war and has the dog tags to prove it. He can tell you that my method is not just doggerel. If you believe him, all I can say is 'Hot Dog!'.

~ THE MUSIC

Bill Brandt wrote a delightful jungle fable in the form of limericks. Strike up the bard! Here is “The Music.”

A man with some musical features,
Learned violin from his three teachers.
“To the jungle I’ll go,”
He said, “for I know,
That music can sooth the wild creatures.”

He walked there for most of the day.
He was sure he knew the right way.
Then a clearing he found,
So he sat on the ground,
And his violin started to play.

An elephant, python, and shrew,
Arrived there and took in the view.
In the clearing that glistened,
They sat there and listened,
The music was soothing this crew.

A rhino, a lion, and bear,
Heard music that sounded so fair.
They came to the clearing,
So they could be hearing,
The music that danced in the air.

A leopard jumped into the ring,
And onto the player did spring.
In a manner most straight,
The player he ate,
And the violin started to fling.

The elephant jumped to his feet.
"That music he played was quite neat. 
We thought it was soothing, 
And some thought it moving, 
So why did you pounce then and eat?"

The leopard then lifted his head, 
Put his paw to his ear then and said, 
In a voice that was loud, 
But not a bit proud, 
"Speak up I can't hear what you said."

~ CITY OF LITERATURE

In 2008, Iowa City was designated a “City of Literature” by UNESCO. It was the third city of literature out of seven at this writing. In honor of this event, I wrote the poem that follows. It is titled “City of Literature,” and each line is an anagram of the title. It’s a 12-line iambic trimeter quatrain with an ABAB rhyme scheme.

Free our tactility! 
I electrify a trout, 
Outtrace fertility 
Erratic, yet I flout.

I try out cat relief, 
Your facile titter. 
I try riot, cute leaf. 
You fire cat litter.

I flirt, yet outtrace 
A terrific toy lute, 
Trite fit, your lace. 
Airy title for cute.

Erratic, yet I flout, 
Outtrace fertility. 
I electrify a trout. 
Free our tactility!

Tristan Miller tells of an unusual geographic onomastic situation: "On May 15, 2012, François Hollande took office as President of France (and Co-Prince of Andorra). In French, the word "Hollande", like the English "Holland", is a common name for the country more formally referred to as the Netherlands. Does Hollande's ascendency mark the first time a country's head of state or head of government was named for another country or nationality? (The UK's Benjamin Disraeli was a near miss.)"
~ THRONES

Jeff Grant has “a CD at home titled HERE’S TO THE HEROES sung by THE TEN TENORS. It’s interesting that the artists and title can be derived from just the seven letters in THRONES.

~ ANTI-SCRABBLE

A few years ago I started writing a Xictionary, which is a dictionary of words beginning with the letter X. Some of these words appeared in Word Ways. The words and their definitions were all made up. Recently I found a website that was, basically, a dictionary of frequent typos and misspellings. You type a word in, and the computer sends you a list back. It’s great for playing Anti-Scrabble, where you have to use typos and misspellings that have to be allowed in the game. Legal misspellings can be verified using The Official Anti-Scrabble Players Dictionary. Given the fact that to there are more incorrect spellings than correct ones of any word, it isn’t surprising that the hardcopy OASPD is 260 volumes long, ten for each letter.

Let’s see at how it works. The 1st player lays down the letters of a mew (main entry word) and a pew (pseudoword). For example, the 1st player begins the game by selecting XITIONARY and XICTOONARY. The 2nd player doesn’t think this is a valid misspelling, so he or she gets volume 243 down from the bookshelf and turns to the entry for XITIONARY. Following that entry is a list of frequent typos and misspellings of the mew. It doesn’t matter whether the mew or the pew is a word or not. What matters is whether a pew is listed among the misspellings and typos entries for a mew. And of course there are lots of ways to misspell any given word. Here’s what appears under the OASPD entry for XITIONARY:

xictionary: xicitonary xictoinary xictionray sictionary cictionary xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray xictionary xictionray

The 1st player was right! XICTOONARY is a valid misspelling or typo of XITIONARY. The pew correctly misspells the mew and scores points for the 1st player. If the 1st player had played XITIONARY as a mew and BITIONARY as a pew, he or she would’ve lost points since BITIONARY isn’t on the pew list.

Alas, there is no Anti-Scrabble, but there is a website that lists misspellings and typos, and the above list is the actual list you get when you type XITIONARY. Here is the link, in case you want to pursue this very weird and fascinating language concept. http://frenchfragfactory.net/typo-trap/xictionary/3/
~ DICTIONARY ENTRY OF THE DAY

EULAMELLIBRANCHIATA is defined in Web-3 as a synonym of EULAMELLIBRANCHIA. I couldn’t vouch for it, though. I’ve often used the first one in reference to “looking at European or Los Angeles mellow tree branches in Iowa as you’re saying goodbye in England.” But I’ve never used the second word, and without the TA at the end, it makes very little sense.

~ MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME

Christian County is wet.
Bourbon County is dry.
Barren County has the most fertile land in the state.

Anil was inspired by the above facts to create some of his own. As he describes it, “I read this somewhere and can’t vouch for those facts. As far as I know they could be fifty or a hundred years old. But it would still be funny as an historical document. They inspired me to renew my acquaintance with KY counties and create some ‘arty facts’, mostly fabulous and untrue slander, about other KY counties (120 in all, third most of any state in the US). How about a similar expose of the counties of any other state? Texas has the most.”

I. Simple Fictions

Bracken County has no ferns.
Graves County has compulsory cremation.
Green County is a barren red desert.
Hart County has no deer.
Mason County bans Freemasonry.
Pike County has no fish.
Rowan County has no rowan trees.
Warren County has no rabbits.

II. Inapt Name-droppings

Boone County was never visited by Daniel.
Lee County was commanded by General Grant during the Civil War while Grant County wasn’t.
Lincoln County was never the residence of Abraham.
Ohio County does not border Ohio or the Ohio River. (true)

III. Getting More Personal

Bath County has the dirtiest people in the state.
Bell County doesn’t ring a bell, does it? Huh?
Butler County is too poor to have butlers.
Clay County’s soil is all sand.
Union County wishes to secede.

~ SUMMER SUMS

Anil has come up with "yet more truthful number words from Web-3. FOUR, with four letters, isn’t the only truthful number word. Here are four or more from Web3.

SENARY is a 6 letter word meaning 6 of, of 6 or sextuple.
SEPTOLE is a variant of septimole, septuple.
OCTONARY means 8 of, of 8 or octuple.
DECAMEROUS means 10 of, of 10 or decuple.

Contrast quaternary and quadruple (4 of) with 8 and 9 letters, quinary and quintuple (5 of) with 7 and 9 letters, septenary and septuple (7) with 9 and 8 letters, and novenary and nonuple (9) with 8 and 7 letters. But by stretching the point a bit, these others might qualify:

HEXANE, HEXENE, HEXINE, HXYNE and HEXOSE are 6-carbon compounds.
HEXODE and HEPTODE are 6- and 7-electrode vacuum tubes.
HEPTANE, HEPTENE, HEPTINE, HEPTYNE and HEPTOSE are 7 carbon compounds.
SEXTET is a group of 6 or a composition for 6 musicians.
OCTARCHY is government by 8 persons.
OCTODONT means of 8 teeth.
OCTOFOIL has 8 leaves or layers.
DECAHEDRON and DECAHEDRAL describe a 10-sided figure.
DECEMVIRAL means of a ruling board of 10 decemvirs, a decimvirate.

These are not the only number names to usurp FOUR’s long-held throne. In earlier Kickshaws I nominated three others.

A is a 1-letter word that always and only means 1.
NINETEEN AND TWO HALVES has 20 letters.

And with a slightly different truthfulness,

PENTASYLLABIC and PENTASYLLABLE have 5 syllables.”

~ OF PINTEREST

Anil has found “another great bit of wordplay, a very apt and aware homophonic ‘ladder’, a graffito I saw in a street photo on Pinterest.
Real eyes
Realize
Real Lies.

To which I would add the other side:

"Reel-eyes"
Relies
Real Lies.

Reel-eyes is the robotic viewer who believes whatever is read or heard on a screen, eg a movie reel."

~ IN THE BIG INNING GENESIS WON ONE

In the last Kickshaws, I asked the readers to answer the King James Limerick Challenge—that is, to write a limerick based on the first two verses of Genesis. I included the lines from the King James version of the Bible, as shown here:

1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
2 And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

Anil replied, “Jumpin’ Jehovah!” and wrote the following limericks:

1. It was all begun by Jehovah
   In a bigger bang than a nova.
   But the world lacked shape,
   Sky blacker’n an ape,
   No thanks to Maria Sharapova.

2. ditto, with a more pertinent (ie, less impertinent) last line, which assumes the multi-universe hypothesis, each universe starting from a cosmic egg:

   Our universe came from Jehovah
   In a bigger bang than a nova.
   But the earth lacked form,
   Black sky was the norm.
   Just another of His infertile ova?

3. Jehovah started it all
   From nothing by making a call,
   But at first it was flat
   And blind as a bat,
   So He turned it into a fire ball.
4. This was my original quick go before reading your version, but great minds think alike so I tried harder. Besides, like 3, it strays beyond your quote and into further events from the rest of Genesis 1:2 et seq.

    It started with a God
    Who created sky and sod,
        But it had no shape
    And was black as an ape
    So He gave it a beautiful bod.

~ A TRIPLE WORDPLAY

Anil sent these little gems of wordplay:. I especially favor the middle one. It offers a clear and clever challenge. My suggest is, well, see below...

Irish Headline (according to Rich Hall)
CORK MAN DROWNS

NAUTONYMS: a challenge for Susan (or anyone) not to retreat from. How many sounded but not spelled tautonyms like retreat can you find? Another possible phonic-only tautonym except that I'm not sure of the pronunciation, is the Thai top-100 woman tennis player Luksika Kumkhum. (The closest I can find to a good tautonym is hubbub, but does it work?-DM)

A FUNNY CONTRONYM: According to Web-3 Panax is a genus of herbs, while panax is a closely related tree formerly in Panax, indeed its type species, but it's now been moved to the genus Polyscias! Who was betrayed here, panax or Panax? The botanists are probably still pan-axing over this embarrassment.

~ ANAGRAM TIDBIT

Mike Morton reports that his "colleague Daniel Vlasic pointed out that his last name anagrams to, appropriately, Slavic! Can anyone come up with a similar anagram tidbit?

~ THE NEWEST MATH

An EVEN number name has the letters spelling EVEN in it, and an ODD number name has the letters spelling ODD in it. The number names usually can't overlap. For instance, in ONE HUNDRED MILLION FIVE, ODD overlaps with EVEN. Only one of the two embedded words can be used.

TWO HUNDRED FIVE MILLION
    O    D    E    D    V    E    N

Here are the numerically first (lowest value) of the four types:
sEVEN, an odd number, is the numerically first EVEN number name.

One hunDreD, an even number, is the numerically first ODD number name.

Add One hunDreD and sEVEN together, and you get One hunDreD sEVEN, the first ODDEVEN number.

Add sEVEN thousand and One hunDreD together, and you get sEVEN thousand One hunDreD, the first EVENODD number.

Here are the numerically last (highest value) of the four types:

The numerically last EVEN number name is—
  ninE hundred ninety nine Vigintillion ninE huNdred

The numerically last ODD number name is—

  nine hundred ninety nine vigintillin
  nine hundred ninety nine OctoDecillion
  nine hundred ninety nine thousanD

The numerically last EVENODD number name is—

  ninE hundred ninety nine Vigintillion
  ninE huNdred ninety nine OctoDecillion
  cxnine hundred ninety nine thousanD

The numerically last ODDEVEN number name is—

  nine hundred ninety nine vigintillliOn
  nine hunDreD ninEty nine noVemDecillion

The rules can be changed in different ways to produce additional challenges. For instance, if EVEN and ODD can appear more than once in a number word, here are some questions. For the answers, see Answers and Solutions.

(1) What is the greatest number of EVENs that can appear in a number word?
(2) What is the greatest number of ODDs.
(3) If EVEN and ODD alternate in a number word, what is the greatest number of EVENs and ODDs that can be involved?
(4) If ODD and EVEN alternate, what is the greatest number of ODDs and EVENs that can be involved?
~ WEATHER

Here are a couple of items I heard on the tube.

Some of the Olympic events are divided into long programs and short programs. One of the Olympic gold medal winners commented on two women who excelled, saying "those two were really on fire in their shorts."

Channel 7 KWWL reporter about the snow: "The roads in Butler County are really covered, and we can attest to that because they are really covered."

~ ESREVER STAR TREK, THE BACKWARDS EPISODE

In this episode, some of the words and names are made by simply reversing the order of the letters. I chose words that suggested certain things or that simply had a pleasing look when reversed. Turn on your nosivelet, sit back, and xaler. The erutnevda begins.

I was trapped in the noollab with Captain Kert. He was injured—shot in the dexioni, also known as the bad luck bone. The shooter was a high level Gazgiz who used a high-powered moozmooz gun with a quick reggirt.

"Hey, Spoc, can you give me bowl of nicain?" Kert gasped. "Hurry. A pordmug or two will do."

I hesitated. Nicain was a combination of nicotine and cocaine. However, the captain would think I was a daehtihs if I didn’t give him some. He looked bad, too, as if he’d been denooram on the World of the Screaming Sotatop, who would have kicked the rebos out of him if he got drunk.

"Eew!" Kert said. "For God’s sake, Spoc, give me the nicain. Eew!"

"I—I can’t, Captain. All we have left is a bottle of this stuff called Nosiop."

"Oh, kcuf a kcud! Then give me that Onard. Quick, Spoc. Eew! I’m in pain."

Suddenly I heard phaser shots just outside the cabin. The Gazgiz were firing double-barrelled ultraphasers. Motmot! Motmot! Captain Kert was lapsing into sessensesselesnes. I could barely say the word. I was scared that the Gazgiz would break through the hail hull and cut a heel hole in the holy hill of hoary hell.

"Who’ll help me," the Captain groaned. "I’m not a kcender. Spoc, are you a kcender. You have a funny ezepart. You have driew ears. Oh, look at the pretty nachsart."
The Captain was going fast. He was starting to fall asleep. I tried to shake him awake, but he was a tsilatnemadnuf.

"Zzzatamzzzar! I don't want to yalp anymore. Waszzub zzub zzub... z..." I handed him the bottle of Nosiop that we got from the Elves on Planet Elffaw.

"Here, Captain. Drink the Nosiop. It's a cure-all."

He drank. Then I took the bottle. I was just about to drink the rest of it when Captain Kert fell backwards and died. I noticed in the mirror on the wall that "Nosiop" spells "Poison" backwards.

"Captain, I gave you a potion that kills," I said with a gasp. I was shocked. "Maerd! Maerd! O, Maerd! Captain. Now I will have seramthgin about your death for the rest of my life!"

To my surprise, his eyes blinked open, and he spoke.

"Don't worry, Spoc," he said. "This is only a television show."
THE TOM WALZ HALF FILLED COFFEE CUP NON AWARD

Rob Connolly wrote the words, and I arranged them to form the picture. It was etched on a copper plaque and given to Tom Walz, founder of Uptown Bill's Small Mall, a set of businesses owned and operated by handicapped people.

This non award represents our communal desire to not let Tom be made aware that he is respected, admired, and loved by so very many whom he has made welcome and helped over all of his years not devoted to this cause. May other members of the Extend the Dream Foundation have accolades bestowed upon them.

Tom, the "Maverick Professor," will have to settle for this.