COLLOQUY

Webster's Dictionary defines colloquy as mutual discourse. Readers are encouraged to submit additions, corrections and comments about earlier articles appearing in Word Ways. Comments received up to a month prior to publication of an issue will appear in that issue.

Many readers contributed additions to J. Q. Xixx's "Strange Paradoxes"; here is a brief sampling:

- a sawyer cuts a tree down before he cuts it up; lawyers' briefs are usually lengthy (Will Shortz)
- a fine is ordinarily not fine; a slim chance is the same as a fat chance (Mary and Frank Oberlander)
- when drinking up, you down your drink; in England, the right side of the road to drive on is the left; the London Underground goes above ground for most of its route (Darryl Francis)
- until recently, signs in Harriman State Park in New York read "No Parking On Parkway" (Ross Eckler)
- a boxing ring is square; an inflammable product is flammable; a hamburger is not made out of ham (Richard Lederer)
- a factory is closed up when it shuts down; when a house burns down it burns up; a drunk woman of easy virtue is both tight and loose; if the bases are loaded a walk is a run (Robert Kurosaka)
- when a drawbridge is open it is closed to traffic; in a Pullman, the rates for an upper berth are lower (Fred Russell)

Alan Lipp of South Deerfield, Mass. is of the opinion that all the paradoxes are simply puns, or plays on the varying meaning of words. Richard Lederer of Concord, N.H. agrees, referring the reader to Chapter 9 of Robertson and Cassidy's The Development of Modern English (Prentice-Hall, 1954) for a classification of the ways in which words change their meaning with time: generalization or specialization, elevation or degradation, euphemism, folk etymology, loss of original etymology, dead metaphor, slang. Because of such changes, it is not surprising that words may end up with startlingly different meanings. Alan Lipp questions whether one should even attempt a classification -- why should one dissect a butterfly?

Sir Jeremy Morse of London, England points out that the word EXTENSIONALITY in Webster's Seventh can be used to extend Darryl Francis' "Words into Numbers" by three entries: sixty-one, sixty-nine, ninety-six. (EXTENSIONALLY is a slightly shorter transaddition for the first of these numbers.)

Various readers felt that Charles Bostick was too strict in his rules for defining pairs of words which sound alike but differ in spelling by one letter: (oar, or), (lamb, lam), ... In particular, why not allow doubled letters if the two words are not variant spellings? Or let one word be a proper name? For D, Ralph Beaman points out (veldt, velt), as does William Sunners. F is difficult, the best possibility apparently being (waff, waf) - note that one waf is not a variant spelling. For M, Sunners proposes (Mnevis, Nevis), the latter in the gazetteer of Webster's Second; if combining forms are allowed, both he and Beaman identify (-mnesia, -nesia). Beaman notes that (farther, father) is allowable for R in Webster's Third; Boris Randolph adds (marry, Mary). For X, the best possibility is Beaman's (Foxx, fox), and he suggests (bizz, biz) for Z. For J and Q, only variant spellings are known: Pontac(q), haj(j)i.

Maxey Brooke enlarges R. Robinson Rowe's "Tudor Nomenclature" with KANI and WAHINI, found on the doors of the transient officers club at Hickham Field, Hawaii. Jay Ames has been told of (but cannot personally vouch for) STANDERS and SQUATTERS, or HEADS and TAILS. George Levenbach saw HIS'N and HER'N in Nederland, Colorado. The Washington National Airport toilet is labeled GENTLEMAN, even though it can serve more than one individual at the same time. Robert W. Jewell points out that in the Navy four heads are better than two: Male Officers, Male Enlisted, Female Officers, Female Enlisted. Other terms: the gong, the necessarium, the jakes, all contributed by Maxey Brooke.

Albert Wilansky, a professor of mathematics at Lehigh University, clarifies Dmitri Borgmann's "proof" that all words are interesting. A rigorous proof of this statement is based on the Principle of Indirect Proof: if an assumption leads by correct arguments to a contradiction, then that assumption must be false. The assumption "not all words are interesting" implies that there is at least one uninteresting word. From the set of uninteresting words, select the alphabetically first one. This word is uninteresting by definition, but is extremely interesting by virtue of its position -- a contradiction. Hence the assumption is false. Ralph Beaman argues that the definition of a word should not be used as a definer of logological interest; for ENIGMA, it is better to note that the letters are contained in only a 14-letter interval of the alphabet (A through N). Rather than invent names such as Irma L. Hay, why not note that HAIL MARY is formed out of six letters in alphabetical order to which only A's need be added to make a dictionary entry? Philip Cohen questions the existence of a word such as MID-NINETY (is the singular of "odds and ends" to be "odd and end"?).

Philip Cohen reports that the "Nymo Rhymes" concept was once exploited on the TV quiz show I've Got a Secret. The "secret" of a group of people introduced to the panel was that their names, spoken in succession, sounded something like "In The Good Old Summertime".

Lest Word Ways be called sexist, Marjorie Friedman proposes the following anagrams for Presidential wives: ROLE: TO SERVE A-LONE (Eleanor Roosevelt), WE DEEM WAR MOOD; HE IS IN (Mamie Doud Eisenhower), IS AS QUEENLY ON DECK IN JEANS (Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis), LORN, SHY, 'N' DID A JOB (Lady-bird Johnson). But Rosalynn Carter does not ACT ORNERY, SNARL!

Sir Jeremy Morse proposes BAWDS JOG, FLICK QUARTZ, VEX NYMPH as perhaps the most meaningful pangram sentence using only 27 letters. For 29 letters, how about QUICK WAFTING ZEPHYRS VEX BOLD JIM? If BEZIQUE were in Webster's Pocket Dictionary, it could be combined with FIXEDLY, JACKPOTS and OVERWHELM-ING as a 34-letter set in four words exhausting the alphabet -- an improvement of five on the set in "Pangram Variations". Philip Cohen notes that the article omitted the concept of a minimum-area pangrammatic crossword: a 7-by-7 example using Pocket Webster words is in the February 1970 Word Ways, and a 3-by-11 example using extremely obscure words is given in the May 1976 Games & Puzzles magazine.

Dmitri Borgmann has a copy of the 1976 Rand McNally Commercial Atlas and Marketing Guide which usually sells for $90; he is willing to sell it for $50. If interested, write him at PO Box 300, Dayton, Washington 99328.

In the February 1975 Word Ways, Maxey Brooke reported on his survey of the ways a dog's bark is spelled in various languages. The December 1976 Verbatim Dutch version is wau wau or woef woef.

F A D O
A C H T
S T A R
T A L A

Generalizing "Russian-English Word Squares", Edward R. Wolpow of Brookline, Mass. wonders if it is possible to construct a 5-by-5 double word square in which words from ten different languages are used (and no word has a meaning in two different languages). The 4-by-4 square at the left is an imperfect approximation, with across words in Portuguese, German, English and Swedish, and down words in Danish-English, Latin, Hindi and Spanish.

Richard Andree of Norman, Oklahoma humorously responds to Rudolf Ondrejka's request for a -phobia word beginning with Q, or -mania words beginning with W and Y: four-year-olds typically suffer from queryphobia, manifesting itself as whymania or yakmania.

Philip Cohen has found a missing word for the vowel-permutation problem introduced way back in the November 1969 Word Ways: OrnAcIEUx, a populated place in the Official Standard Names Gazetteer for France.