

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 at least one month prior to publication of an issue will appear in that issue.

Many readers commented on Dmitri Borgmann's death.

Reinhold Aman: Sorry to hear that Borgmann died so young.

Marjorie Friedman: I hadn't heard Dmitri Borgmann had died, a pity. I find him at his most charming and entertaining in these last pieces. And I liked your obituary page a great deal. I guess you and Word Ways will miss him a lot.

Wallace Ashby: Over the years, I've saved but one issue of Word Ways, the February 1985 issue honoring Dmitri Borgmann. Now I have another to add to my collection .. he will be missed by all of us.

Willard Espy: I was sorry to read about Dmitri Borgmann's death at so early an age .. He was obviously a difficult man, but unique in his logological prowess.

John Henrick: The news of Dmitri Borgmann's death stirred feelings of shock and grief .. Your citation of the Christopher Wren epitaph was inspired.

Martin Gardner: I was shocked to learn from Word Ways about Dmitri's death. I have talked to him on the phone many times, and exchanged letters, though I never met him in person. What a loss to word play! The issue is a fine tribute.

Jeremy Morse: Last month's Word Ways is a fine tribute to Dmitri Borgmann.

William Sunners: I was truly quite saddened by learning about Dmitri Borgmann's untimely death. I had corresponded with him for more than thirty years. Before that, I had been in touch with his mother. In the very early 1940s, Mrs. Borgmann phoned me quite often and asked about certain words and procedures about puzzle [contests], etc. After Dmitri moved to Washington, he confided to me that his mother telephoned on his behalf. He didn't want to let me know he was just a boy .. I learned a lot from him; now he's gone.

Jeff Grant: I was deeply saddened to learn of Dmitri Borgmann's death .. Dmitri's articles in the February Word Ways reinforce his standing at the very top of logology. I know there have been many great wordsmiths over the years but to me he will always be the greatest. Personally, if I had never read Language on Vacation I don't think I would ever have realized the infinite possibilities that exist in the field of words .. Even though I never met Dmitri I feel as though I have lost a good friend. It will not be the same without his lively, thought-provoking writings

in Word Ways. The father of logology is gone, but his work and his writings live on.

Erratum: In the middle of page 7, 4-OXALO should be 4-OXAZOLO.

In the February issue, Dmitri Borgmann postulated that a presidential candidate with a short surname (five letters or less) always loses to one with a long name (six letters or more) if no third-party candidate garners more than a million votes (this explains why Nixon won in 1968 and 1972). As a footnote, Wallace Ashby of Port Republic, Maryland forwarded a March 23, 1986 Washington (D.C.) Post article analyzing Mario Cuomo's complaint that people whose names end in a vowel may face difficulty in reaching the White House. For the vowel E, the chance is about 50-50: Monroe, Pierce and Coolidge won against consonant-enders, but Coolidge, Breckenridge, Blaine and Willkie did not. Although the newspaper article didn't point it out, a name ending in Y is a far greater loser in the Presidential sweepstakes; Pinckney, Clay, Greeley, Dewey and Humphrey lost a total of eight elections, whereas McKinley and Kennedy won only three. Of course, all this misses Cuomo's point, since he was referring to prejudice against people whose names end in other vowels such as A, I or O.

Wallace Ashby mourns that Dmitri Borgmann omitted GAS from his list of three-letter body parts in "Know Thyself".

Jeremy Morse offers the following classification of tautonyms:

- Reduplication spelt and pronounced as such: haha, bonbon, cancan
- Reduplication spelt but not pronounced as such: murmur (according to OED etymology), papa (father, not pope)
- Reduplication pronounced but not spelt as such: I have no example
- Reduplications neither spelt nor pronounced as such: mamma
- Non-reduplications spelt and pronounced as if they were reduplications: coco, dodo, pawpaw
- Non-reduplications spelt but not pronounced as if they were reduplications: palpal, tartar, testes, valval, hotshots
- Non-reduplications pronounced but not spelt as if they were reduplications: papaw
- Non-reduplications neither pronounced nor spelt as reduplications: all other words

John Henrick writes "Dmitri Borgmann's list of some 300 variants on 'From rags to riches' is a monumental display of ingenuity and command of language, almost exhausting the possibilities. Almost, but not quite. Thanks to the Great Communicator and his redoubtable Speakes person, the list has been extended by 'From "Son of a bitch" to "It's sunny and he's rich"'. "

Charles W. Karns responds to Dmitri Borgmann's Kickshaws, "The Points of the Compass", by suggesting that locations containing north, east, south and west in their description are not at all uncommon. As proof, he cites the town of Carlisle, Pennsylvania,

laid out in a rectilinear pattern bounded by four streets: North Street along the north edge of town, East Street along the east edge, etc. Since these streets intersect in pairs at right angles, one can stand at the SOUTHEAST corner of NORTH and WEST Streets, the SOUTHWEST corner of NORTH and EAST Streets, and so on. Actually, North Street has two names, W. North Street for that half located to the west of a principal street emanating from the town square, and E. North Street for the half located to the east. Consequently, there is the opportunity to stand at the SOUTHEAST corner of W. NORTH and N. WEST Streets, etc.

In the August 1972 **Word Ways**, Mary Hazard presented a non-crashing word set of 19 five-letter words from Webster's Second, and in May 1982 Jeff Grant topped this with 20 five-letter words from the OED. Both lists relied on long-vanished variant spellings of common English words. Stephen C. Root of Westboro, Massachusetts has discovered 19 five-letter non-crashing words in Webster's Third: abysm, blimp, chlor, dabbs, expel, fjord, gruff, huzza, infix, lymph, motto, ngege, oddly, pshaw, rendu, scrub, twang, upski, and wight. He feels certain that this could be extended to twenty words if capitalized ones are allowed.

In the November 1984 **Word Ways**, Leonard Ashley bewailed the paucity of horse-related proverbs; Dmitri Borgmann supplied 25 from an anthology of sixteenth and seventeenth century English proverbs. Tom Pulliam subsequently consulted two books of English proverbs, printed in 1888 and 1906, and sent the editor a list of 139 more, including such goodies as "Dogs never go into mourning when a horse dies," "Better be the head of an ass than the tail of a horse" and "Seldom lend your horse to a sailor, never to a Frenchman, and as little as possible to anyone at all."

Yet another example of bathroom nomenclature: in a recent Johnny Hart B.C. comic strip, Wiley shows the Fat Broad two cave entrances labeled Critters and Varmints.