COLLOQUY

Rex Gooch writes about Leonard Gordon's "Computer Jotto and Crash" in February "I don't understand why Leonard Gordon takes Peter Newby to task for saying that E is the most common letter. As my article "Letter Frequencies and Word Lengths" [in May 1997 Word Ways] shows, this is true in running text, and for dictionary words of all lengths from 4 to 15. The puzzle deepens when we see that Leonard Gordon's own figures for 5-letter words show this to be true overall as well as for heterograms (solo isograms). It is true that E does not lead by far among his heterograms, due to 60% to the words with an S having it in the final position (no doubt helped by present tenses and plurals). My own larger vocabulary of 5-letter heterograms show E way out in front, followed at some distance by A, with S a poor third."

Susan Thorpe adds a few more reverse charades to McManus's "Reversals Revisited", commenting "I suspect that some have appeared in some context or other before, but I believe some of them are new."

referees: see, refer	diamante: Etna maid`	miasmas: Sam's aim
pupils: slip up	tractor: rot cart	flexes: sex elf
Potsdam: mad stop	panda: 'ad nap	diary: yr. aid
Maori: I roam	Edison: no side	Diana: an aid
airmail: liam, ria	parabola: a lob, a rap	navigator: rot, a GI van
mirage: e.g., a rim	piton: no tip	Isis: si, si
putrid: dirt up	pupa: a pup	goddam: mad dog
Warsaw: was raw	girder: red dig	moron: no ROM
destined: den, it's Ed		

Chuck Fendell corrects the May Colloquy assertion that FIGHTBACKS is not in any dictionary: "Fightback is defined as a noun in the Chambers Dictionary - New Edition." In Kickshaws, GANDHI is the correct spelling, and in "Alphabet Plus Alpha" the G example in Alphabet Plus D should be GO to GOD.

Rex Gooch footnotes the recent articles on Jotto and Crash strategy "It would be interesting to build a program to exploit human weaknesses [a preference for certain words over others] in the cases of the games mentioned. The computer could actually build a profile of the playing style of each individual opponent, update it after each game, and modify its play accordingly. Of course, when a smart person like Kasparov observes how the computer works, he then plays in a very unnatural fashion: but games are a matter of psychology in real life, and in complex games one does play an opponent, not the game. My major point is

that the algorithms described in the articles assume random behaviour in the opponent, which is not the case."

Susan Thorpe comments on "More Words Newfound, Words Reobserved" in the May issue: (1) AFFECTIOUSLY and TRAGEDIOUSLY both appeared in the February 1994 Colloquy; (2) The OED includes AQUAKE, AIR-QUAKE, FLESH-QUAKE, MICROEARTHQUAKE, MIRTHQUAKE, TO-QUAKE which are additional to CHURCH-QUAKE and to those listed in the May 1979 Word Ways; (3) The OED includes FILIISM, OBIISM, RADIISM, SABIISM, SOLI-IPSIISM and VICARIISM in addition to INEBRIISM. LOLIISM is in Stedman's Medical Dictionary and ZEMIISM is in Pulliam and Carruth's The Complete Word Game Dictionary; (4) Is ZOAEA really a word? Below the line in Webster's Second we find 'ZOAEA n. Zool. Incorrect for ZOEA', but in Webster's Third,. there is 'ZOAEA var. of ZOEA'. And in the OED we find 'ZOAEA..see ZOEA' whilst Collins gives ZOEA or ZOAEA; (5) The Bureau of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry has agreed that elements 104-9 should be called RUTHERFORDIUM, DUBNIUM, SEABORGIUM, BOHRIUM, HASSIUM and MEITNERIUM. In doing so, IUPAC has overruled its 1994 decision that an element could not be named after a living person (Glen Seaborg is still alive).

Philip Cohen notes that Webster's Second does give a pronunciation for WLITE (see May Kickshaws). He regrets that he still has not been able to find a citation for VA-VA-VA-VOOM which would be a more current four-V example for Jeff Grant's "Alphabetic Clusters". Jeff Grant found in the OED the six-G example WAGGER-PAGGER-BAGGER (slang for waste-paper basket). He asks "Can you think of any other three-part tauto-nyms like this? The closest I can think of is the OED nonsense-word ICKYLICKYSTICKY, from Joyce."

Dana Richards forwards a comment about "Washington for Word Watch-ers" from Peter Blau who lives on Tunlaw Road in Washington DC "Tunlaw Road doesn't run through the Georgetown section...[it was] named for Tunlaw Farm, which was here when the area was developed. Tunlaw Farm was named for a large walnut tree on the property."

William Tunstall-Pedoe writes "I have quite a lot of experience writing software for this kind of application and have already written some code to find wordsquares. By way of comparison to Ted Clarke's software it tries about 100,000 placings of words in the square per second compared with COMCAL's 67, and dynamically works out the best route of search instead of just placing words from the top down. Hence I don't have much interest in the top-down/bottom-up debate. Despite the above statistics there is still considerable doubt whether my software is fast enough to find a ten square in a reasonable length of time given a sufficiently large word list but I intend to find this out in due course."