COLLOQUY

Anil writes "The Norton [article on Word Groups] I must confess eluded me entirely. In all Word Ways I've never encountered such an obscure piece. I think it was poorly written, or aimed at math PhDs only, but I didn't grasp enough of it even to say that with confidence. He didn't define his terms or his goal clearly nor did he ever help the reader long with examples..." A sentence should have been added at the end of the first paragraph, inviting the non-mathematical reader to skip to the top of the next page for a demonstration of his procedure.

In the May 2004 article, Austin showed how one can create (almost) any word by the addition and subtraction of number-names with letter rearrangement allowed (SEXTET = SIXTEEN + TEN - NINE). This can be systematically accomplished by generating individual letters by subtraction only, and then using these letters to form words. Norton's article shows how to start with 25 different number-names and generate 24 different letters, without rearrangement! As the second page of his article shows, taking EIGHT from EIGHTY generates Y; taking SIX and Y from SIXTY generates T; taking T from TEN generates EN; taking SIX, T and EN from SIXTEEN generates E; taking E from EN generates N... As Norton demonstrates by starting with chemical elements, one can start with *any* set of words, not just number-names. Further, one can look for "elegant" solutions that use the same number of words in the initial set as letters.

One of the objectives of Word Ways is to show how logology relates to other intellectual endeavors—in particular, to mathematics (an objective Dmitri Borgmann strongly deplored). Norton shows how the generation of new letter-groups or individual letters from an initial set of words can be formulated in terms of algebraic group theory, an extremely fecund branch of modern mathematics.

A reader writes "The Word Ways lexicon has been growing exponentially in recent issues, mostly due to the increased use of the Internet. The Nov 2004 issue included QIQ, the Klingon word for 'mutiny'. To me, it seems absurd to allow this, since this is an English-language journal , and even using words from foreign languages that actually exist is crossing the line. Susan Thorpe added a caveat to 'My New Pals' in the May 2003 Word Ways: 'beware of the minefield of spelling mistakes on the web!' but went on to list CUBUC, defining it as 'Cubuc Zirconia is a jewelry stone'. This is obviously a misprint for cubic zirconia. Of the many 5-pals she gives, I would accept only a few as real English words (including names of languages and ethnic groups); these are DICID, DIOID, NYRYN, QOZOQ and WAXAW. I also accept place names and place name partials: AIEIA, AOBOA, AUNUA, BIZDIB, BOROB, DASAD, FAFAF, FENEF, HIJIH, KUQUK, LANAL, MAVAM, ONUNO, QEZEQ, RUCUR, RUPUR, TEUET, UALAU, UPOPU, WUYUW, YUCUY, ZYXYZ. I have not confirmed these place names, but some of them are doubtful. AUNUA may be Aunu'u Island in Samoa, and AIEIA Heights may be Aiea Heights. In conclusion, I would allow the following:

- English dictionary words, including "OED variant forms but not names, polyhyphenated strung-together compounds, or mystery words in quotations (like PROVIT)
- First name from baby name books, but not first or last names from censuses, phone books, etc.
- Place names and place name partials—populated places and natural features, as opposed to buildings, roads, etc. (I will allow canals, manmade lakes such as Lake Mead, etc.)

- Phrases, including non-dictionary ones if they are common (e.g. CLASS REUNION).
- Taxonomical classifications (kingdom, phylum, subphylum, class, subclass, order…)
- Scientific terms formed according to the rules of nomenclature"

Rex Gooch fills in the Campbell-Bannerman hole in Puder's "The Prime Ministers, More or Less" in the Feb 2005 Word Ways. Sixteen letters can be added to produce KEMENDORE MALACCA RUBBER PLANTATIONS in Malaysia, and five letters can be subtracted to obtain BALANCE PLANE in Web 2, LACMANNBREEN in Svalbard, or NALEMBALEMBA or NAMBALEMBALE in Fiji.

Anil writes "Glad to see two readers suggesting additional coincidental self-synonyms in the Nov 2004 Colloquy. Unfortunately I fear two if not all three of the examples may fail on closer inspection. Will Nediger's **gusla** and **gusli**, according to Webster's Third, are related etymologically as well as being quite different stringed instruments, one bowed, one with keyboard. And Eric Albert's **forlorn** (and **forlorn hope**, from Dutch *verloren hoop,* lost band of men) may be merely doublets—same root, different route into English. Chambers Dictionary of Etymology (1988) under **forlorn** says the Middle English *forlesen* is related to the Dutch *verloren.* **Hope**, on the other hand, may be a coincidental self-synonym, but I lack the resources to verify it Chambers seems to deny it; it says hope is cognate with modern Dutch *hopen*, yet adds that it is also 'cognate with…Middle Dutch *hope* (modern Dutch *hoop*)'. The editor reports that Cassell's Dutch Dictionary defines *hoop* as (1) heap, pile of things, (2) heap, crowd, multitude of people".

Jeff Grant notes that the long Maori place-name with letter-sums of 891 and 980 in "Super Heavyweights (Part 2)" is spelled incorrectly in both versions. The start of the word should read Taumatawhakatangihangakoauauao… It should be classified 913 85.

Rex Gooch comments on Eric Iverson's article in the Feb 2005 Word Ways "Probing the limits of heterogrammatic nonvicinals (Z and A being consider vicinal), I found 53 examples including Eric Iverson's three. Here I exclude place names and genus/species names, so all are to be found in Webster 2 and the OED except for *lacqueying*, in the Official Scrabble Players Dictionary. The word *wateringly* is found in an 1828 quote under OED spade.

agrypnetic	anti-clergy	caperingly	clearing up	coxalgique	escapingly
germ-cavity	kerygmatic	lacqueying	lapwynches	livery-coat	panegyrick
parceyuing	pecuniarly	pernackity	phlyctenar	practively	preuayling
prevayling	taperingly	trivalency	upcrawling	violet-gray	vlcerating
vncraftily	wateringly	waueringly	wet packing	winglebury	wing player
winterplay					

I found just one example of 11 letters: *parcel-tying* in Web 2." It should be noted that Susan Thorpe previously discovered parcel-tying and noted eight of the ten-letter examples in the Feb 1999 Colloquy.

Anil writes "Good on Will Nediger for finding another anagram imbedded in a dictionary definition of a word, even if only as an example (talent: latent). However, we obviously don't consult the same dictionaries when it comes to **impregnate** containing the word 'permeating' in

its definition (see Aug 2004 Kickshaws and Feb 2005 Colloquy) He may not be 'awl wrong', of course, as except for American Heritage he didn't name his sources (nor did I), but the spelling 'permeating' appears in all three of my regular dictionaries—Macquarie Australian 3rd (definition 3), Webster's 3rd 1987 (def. 2b(2)), and Random House Unabridged 1966 (def. 3)."

Arthur Goulet noted an unusual feature of the word Zzyzx—pronounced "Zey-zix", it is a two-syllable word with only one vowel. He asks if there are any other such words. Indeed there are: dirndl, prism, chasm, ism, etc.

Anil writes "I did enjoy yours and Dave's follow-up on the question of interestingness. I agree with Dave's ruminations but I'm afraid I strongly disagree with your approach. Interesting doesn't necessarily mean extreme or vice versa. Having an affinitive or definitive anagram (DA) makes a word far more interesting to me than being first, last, largest or smallest (etc) in some particular property or narrow list. If extreme merely means one of a kind, second and third etc are also unique (unless in a tie with other words). Palindromes and charadable words are also very interesting, yet like DAs there are thousands of such. Ditto isograms, tautonyms, charitable and hospitable words, etc etc. Did the great American dogma that 'winning is everything' influence your approach? Dolphins are as interesting to me as whales, aardvarks as elephants, gila monsters as crocodiles.

"I just thought of an alternative *quantitative* approach. Not that I subscribe to it, nor I think would Dave (or you), but it's an interesting(?) way of broadening the discussion. It involves defining interesting by how much *interest* a word arouses; in other words an *average* or 'democratic' definition, whereby subjective opinions are subsumed under a quantitative and measurable yardstick. All it takes is to poll every reader on each word after explaining its putatively interesting properties. By this definition, historically, the most interesting word would probably be the longest word, harping back to 'antidisestablishmentarianism' which we all gleefully learned as kids. But you'd really need to poll the whole English-speaking public (half the world?) to define interesting absolutely. In that case the most interesting word would more likely be the dirtiest word!

"I'm surely being the Devil's advocate by suggesting this since it's exactly the same horror as lowest-common-denominator and market-driven 'truth'. If the advertisers and the media and thence the majority say 2+2 = 5, it *is* true. But I should also state the other side, supporting this approach. (1) The alternative is elitist—which is taboo, or else individually subjective—which is the original problem. (2) Or, to turn it around completely, if only the elite (eg, our readership) matter then polling them is a valid approach to defining interest *among those who care*. This somewhat resembles the approach of traditional academia, with polling replaced by peer review. (3) It will prevent any bias that the editor might introduce into the apparent (ie, *published*) level of interest in various words or their properties or interrelationships."

Anil introduced sentential word ladders in "Meaningful Word Ladders" in Aug 2002. Here's another he found: **Sow** (How **hog** bog big **Pig**!) [How he bogs her down! Ooeee!]. A hog can be any swine but is often used to mean a male. I can think of no other animal whose feminine, masculine and neutral forms have the same number of letters, much less crashing spellings (common letters in corresponding positions). Ox-cow-bull, ass-jack-jenny, hen-cock-chick and male-human-female make nice partially-crashing pyramids.