MERRY AM WEBSTER!

TOM PULLIAM
Somerset, New Jersey

What makes a word interesting? I ask this rhetorically, not inviting specific response. One has only to scan Word Ways articles to realize that some logophiles fancy word length, while others prefer word construction, word sounds, geographical names, and so forth. Chacun a son gout! The charm of any word obviously lies in the eye of the beholder.

Yet I'll warrant that each of us, consciously or unconsciously, has a favorite word, one that has an indefinable subtle personal appeal. For instance, Ross Eckler is enthralled by UCALEGON (Webster's Second), which means, roughly, "a neighbor whose house is on fire". Now, there is a word to conjure with!

I share his fondness for this gem and, while recognizing his as a prior claim, would like a vested interest in it. To compensate, I hereby earmark for my own NOSARIAN (Webster's Second) which means "one who argues that there is no limit to the possible largeness of a nose". How often can you wedge that little beauty into cocktail conversation?

Webster's Second Edition is unparalleled as a mother-lode of interesting words. Let me share with you some that have intrigued me. There are factors that are common to most of those that I have set forth below: the word has at least one definition which runs contrary to normal reckoning and usage, or it has two or more definitions which seemingly contradict each other, or the definition is intriguingly worded.

Keeping in mind that all words are from the Second Edition, I append the numbers of the definitions in those instances where I deem it necessary in order to quickly pinpoint them.

ACIDITY means 'alkalinity'
AFFECTION means 'animosity'
BENT means 'leveled' (2)
BLEACH means 'blacking'
BLESS means 'curse'
BLUEFISH means 'greenfish'
BOSOM means 'depression'
BRIDE means 'a spouse of either sex'
BUDGE means both 'jocund' as well as 'solemn'
DRIZZLE means rain having a velocity of between 144 feet per hour and 2-1/4 feet per second. I think it’s the specificity that attracts me here.

EFFIGIES means 'effigy'. How many other plural forms do you know that are defined specifically by the singular form?

EMANCIPATE means to 'enslave' (4)

FILL means 'to pour out' (8)

GENERAL means 'admiral' (7)

GROCERY means 'barroom'! This should produce a lot of volunteers for shopping.

HAIRSBREADTH means 'forty-eighth part of an inch'. With such exacting parameters, I’ll be more careful in its use.

HAND means 'foot' (4a). Admittedly, this is a cheap shot on my part— we’re speaking of an ape.

FILL means 'entertainer' or 'male menial'! This greatly expands my list of harlots I have known, and adds respectability to it.

HEIGHT means 'depth' To fishes, of course.

HELP means 'hinder' (4b)

HOG means 'sheep' (2)

INEQUALITARIAN means 'one who believes that men are not born equal'. What if they had been the majority party in 1787?

INFATUATE means 'frustrate'. Come to think of it, it usually turned out that way for me, too.

INFINITESIMALISM means 'the doctrine that the more a drug is diluted, the more potent it becomes'. How’s that again? This ranks #5 on my list of those worthy of a second thought.

INHABITED means 'uninhabited'

INROAD means 'raid'. So does OUTROAD.

INVALUABLE means both 'priceless' and 'worthless'.

JACK means '1/4 pint' but also '1/2 pint'.

INVALESCENCE means both 'ill health' and 'health'.

INVARious means both 'priceless' and 'worthless'.

JACK means '1/4 pint' but also '1/2 pint'.

JUROR means 'false witness'.

KING means 'queen bee'.

KNEE means 'throat'. Of a frog, that is, at least on the railroad.

LAP means 'bosom' (2)

LAWS means 'thieving' (7c)

LET means 'prevent'. All tennis players know this, but it’s worth listing.

MAHOUND means 'Mohammed', but also 'the Devil'.

MANESS means 'woman'. Let’s don’t shre this one with the Women’s Lib movement!

MANKIND (adj) means both 'mad' and 'savage'. Uh-huh.

MOODY means 'brave'.

MOSES means both 'leader' and 'meek man'.

MYTHOMET - I like to see

NEPHEW means 'mon'.

NICE means 'ignorante

NOON means 'mon'.

NOVANTIQUE

NUTTY means

ORIENT means

PALACE is:

PECULIAR in

Ways, I c

PHILEMATOS you really

Engineer!

PIKER means:

POLITICIAN

PRACTICAL

PIECE means:

PRECIOUS means

RAT means

RAVEL means

REANSWER

RESOLUTE means

RESTIVE means

REVERSE (v)

RIDDLE means

ROUT means

RUFFIAN means

SAD means

SCOT means

of this!

SEDELEYE C

There’s a

recognizes a

was, to hi

SEVENBARK

SEVERAL means

SHE means 'h

SHEEND means

SHOWER means

velocit y of

ing on the

SINOPLE means

SINUS means
et per hour that attracts you know

volunteers with such ex-

attractively expands to it.

not born?

usually turned

drug is dilut-

doesn't sound recent.

resumes single', 'an item' and 'an individual'

SHE means 'he' (3)

SHEND means 'ruin' and 'destroy' but also 'protect' and 'defend'

SHOWER means drops 'about 1/25 inch in diameter and fall at the velocity of 10-25 feet per second' I'll think twice before comment-

SINOPLE means both 'blood red' and 'green'

SINUS means 'bosom'

MYTHOMETER means 'a measure for judging myths' Now this I'd like to see! It ranks #4 on my list.

NEPHEW means 'niece' (2b)

NICE means all the following: 'foolish', 'silly', 'stupid', 'simple', 'ignorant', 'lewd', lascivious', 'wanton', 'strange', 'uncom-

NOON means 'midnight' (3a)

NOVANTEQUE means 'new but yet old' This ranks #7 on my list.

NUTTY means 'fascinating' (3a)

ORIENT means both 'blue' and 'bright red'

PALACE is a 'cellar'

PECULIAR means 'wife' (1d) Because my wife does not read Word Ways, I can say boldly that I've long suspected this.

PHILEMATOLOGY means 'the science of kissing' Now, wouldn't you really prefer a Master's degree in that rather than Civil Engineering?

PIKER means either 'second-rater' or 'third-rater'

POLITICIAN means 'schemer' So, what's new?

POSTGLACIAL means 'recent' Somehow it doesn't sound recent.

PRACTICAL means 'unscrupulous' (6b) It follows that most politi-

cians must be practical.

PRECIOUS means 'worthless', 'poor' and 'bad'

RAT means 'cat' (5)

RAVEL means both 'entangle' and 'disentangle'

REANSWER means 'answer'

RESOLVE means 'firm', but also 'infirm'

RESTIVE means 'inactive', but also 'fidgety'

REVERSE (v) means 'face' (8b)

RIDDLE means 'unriddle'

ROUT means 'assemble'

RUFTIAN means 'paramour'

SAD means both 'satisfied' (1) and 'bad' (9)

SCOT means 'Irishman' But don't let either the Scots or Irish learn of this!

SEDELEY CURSE is too long to present here; take a look at it.

There's an inner satisfaction knowing that Merriam-Webster rec-

SEVENBARK means 'ninebark'

SEVERAL means 'single', 'an item' and 'an individual'

SHE means 'he' (3)

SHOWER means drops 'about 1/25 inch in diameter and fall at the velocity of 10-25 feet per second' I'll think twice before comment-

SINOPLE means both 'blood red' and 'green'

SINUS means 'bosom'
SHREWSTRUCK means 'struck by a shrew'. This is definitely #2 on my list. A shrew, of course, is a tiny mammal which lives on insects and worms. When, and by whom, would this word ever be used? Do you dare to return to your spouse in the wee hours, dished, with dented fenders, and claim to be shrewstruck?

SIT means 'stand' (6a)
SLEEVELESS means 'bootless'
SNOB means 'one not an aristocrat'
SNUG means 'sizable'

SQUARE means 'agree' but also 'differ'
STAND means 'lie flat' (17)
START (n) means 'end' (2)
STARVE means 'die of cold'
STIFF means both 'certain to win' and 'certain not to win'. Mull on that one for awhile!

SUPERMUSCAN means 'above the power of a fly'. This is #6 on my personal list.

SWEAT means 'dry thoroughly'
TAKE means 'give' (22)
TEN means 'many' -- but, so does TWENTY

THRILL means 'bore'. I was not thrilled to learn that.
TICKLE means 'whip' and 'chastise'.
TONIGHT means 'last night'
TWOSOME means 'single'
UNDERCOOL means 'supercool'

UNDERCREEP means 'overreach'
UNDERTAKE means 'overtake'
UNDOCTOR means 'to make unlike a doctor'. This holds #3 on my personal list. Come to think of it, I spent the major part of last week undoctoring.

UNIVERSAL means 'local'
UNRELENTLESS means 'relentless'
UNREMORELESS means 'remorseless'
UNRUDE means 'rude'
UNSLIP means 'slip'
UNSTRIP means 'strip'
UPRIGHT means 'supine'

VILE means 'great'
WAN means 'pale', of course but also 'dark black'
WIDOW means 'widower'
WOLD not only means 'wood' but also 'region without woods'
WONDER means 'admiration', but also 'evil'

WORTHING means 'mire', 'filth', 'manure' but also 'reverence' and 'glory'
WRIST means 'ankle'

---

Darryl F Hampton, M
The city Montreal, (a population Lawrence Re
diderable dis
All very int
itself is pro
Consider:
three of whi
Universa

---

LAMER?
NORME?
REALM?
TERM L
Consider
remaining le
or term:
M: LATO
O: MAN
N: MOLI
RAT T: ALMO

Seven of thes
as Thomas of
Consider