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.

The story in the August 1981 Kickshaws about the lady occupying room letter B reminded William Sunners of his school-teaching days when he passed out assignment sheets identified by letters followed by numbers, such as A-5 and C-8. Whenever a student approached and asked for the sheet labeled B-5, he would admonish him in rapidly-spoken words "Always finish B-4 before B-5!" Usually it was necessary to repeat this message slowly while pointing to the appropriate sheets before the student realized what had been said.

Jeff Grant enjoyed Alan Frank's article on low-scoring Scrabble in the August 1981 issue. In it, Frank presented a five-diamond on which no further tiles could be played using words from the Official Scrabble Players Dictionary. Jeff Grant notes that using Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary it is quite easy to break out of the diamond by pluralizing WUD (a Scots form of 'weed'). He proposes the five-diamond at right as one that cannot be extended using either Chambers or the OSPD.

Richard Wiegmann of Omaha, Nebraska comments on "Telephonemonics" in the May 1981 issue: "I first discovered this game a long time ago when our number at home was 4-5243 (back in simpler times) -- then the phone company introduced universal seven-digit numbers and ruined my image." More recently, he acquired a telephone number that translates to RED SWAN, a sobriquet which appeals to him so much that he even had it put on his office coffee mug! Richard Lederer of White Plains, New York heard on TV a used-car dealer begging people to sell him cars: dial CAR CASH. Leroy Meyers notes that 278-BEEP is Central Mobile Radio in Columbus, Ohio and 491-BEEP is Kentucky Communications in Covington.

Philip Cohen writes "The Word Game cruise sounds like it was inspired by a Games fake ad for a Crossword Cruise". Charlie Bostick says "The Caribbean Rally Cruise folded -- no takers. I suspect that the cost was prohibitive."
Owing to a misunderstanding the article on "Janeisms" in the November 1981 issue should have been credited to the editor (who wrote the narrative material based on information supplied in a letter) instead of Leroy Meyers (who supplied the examples). In "Websterian High-Scoring Scrabble", 'revised' on line 1 should be 'revised', and Move 22 of the Pocket Dictionary setup should be 'tug', not 'tag'. In "Diagonal Reversible Word Squares", 'Nelia' should have been 'Neila', and in Kickshaws, the at the beginning of line 9 in the Maori place name should have been m. Errare humanum est...

In the August 1981 Colloquy, Darryl Francis noted that Jeff Grant found words for 121 of the 127 possible choices of one through seven letters of PIASTER, missing (among others) any word for the combination PRST. This reminded Jack Griestaber of an incident in 1921, when he met a Czech who taught him a phrase with four vowelless words: STRC PRST SKRZ KRK (stick your finger down your throat). When he tried this out recently on Charles F. Pinzka, a University of Cincinnati professor, he was rewarded with a Czech palindrome: KOBYLA MA MALY BOK (the mayor has wide hips).

In a letter to Games magazine, Kyle Corbin presented five-step word ladders for four of Tom Pulliam's "Reversible Word Ladders" in the May 1980 Word Ways: SPAT seat seas seps saps TAPS, FLOG flop gloop goof GOLF, DUAL deal dead lead lead dead LAUD, and GNAT gent gant gang TANG. All words can be found in Webster's Third.

Jeremy Morse is sure that a search of other reputable dictionaries would fill in many of the gaps in "Hyphen-Straddling Bigrams" in the November Word Ways. As a start, he offers the following, culled from the OED and Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary:

To replace proper names: quasi-historical, anti-zealot, quiz-master
To fill gaps: sub-question, anti-quartan, super-zealous, by-question, laissez-aller, whizz-kid, quartz-lode, quartz-vein, buzz-wig

The evanescent nature of the hyphen is illustrated by the fact that Webster's contains the words buzzwig, quizmaster, antizealot, antiquartan, subquestion, laissez-aller, and whiz kid!

When Scot Morris, senior editor of Omni magazine, was reading back issues of Word Ways for ideas to be used in his February 1982 "Games" column, he discovered Martin Gardner's Kickshaw item about Major Minor: Scot's father-in-law, Floyd E. Minor, now retired, was at one time a major in the U.S. Army.

Philip Cohen notes that German constructs three-E words with as much facility as it does three-S words: TEEEI (tea-egg, tea-infuser).
Boris Randolph asks what would have happened to the Nevele (in "Brand Name Palindromes" of November 1981) if the party of school teachers had been of some other size -- would we now have the Ruof, the Thgie or the Ev1ewt Hotel instead?

Richard Lederer adds another oxymoron to the past collection in Word Ways: a grocery store in White Plains, New York is called the Post Road SUPERETTE. Leroy Meyers clipped from the New York Times of November 22, 1981 an item by John Vincour on the PEACE WAR. Finally, Tim Wheeler notes that lawyers are prone to filing LENGTHY BRIEFS.

Following up on the editor's "Word Roots and Branches" in the August 1979 issue, William Sinnners asks for the longest word in the Merriam-Webster Pocket Dictionary for which a root extends down to a one-letter word. He proposes EMANCIPATOR importance cremation reaction certain retain train rant tan at a. Can Word Ways readers such as Tom Pulliam do better? To keep the challenge interesting, let's insist that all steps (except the final one) be letter rearrangements -- no beheadments, curtailments, or deletions.

If only beheadments, curtailments or deletions are allowed, the best Pocket Dictionary word which can be extended down to a one-letter word is probably SHEATHED sheathe sheath heat eat at a.

Remember Stanley Payne's May 1977 sight-rhymes (When at times I'm sorely griped I take solace I was born a biped)? Tim Wheeler of Shelbyville, Indiana has come up with two more of these:

Learning to spell can be rough
Remembering endings is tough
When you think you have learned quite enough
You find that you're not really through

The fortnight past I've sat at home
To read a massive work on Rome
Now, I've seen many a weighty tome
But this one was the epitome

Webster's Second as well as the Oxford English Dictionary can be mined for words with specialized meanings. For starters, Philip Cohen came up with JEFF: to throw em quads as dice (printer's slang). That's the second specialized word to come from the field of printing; WAYZ-GOOSE is a printers' annual holiday or entertainment.

Elsewhere in this issue, Richard Lederer presents "Trite as a Cliche". Phrases of this sort keep turning up, and he sent in two last-minute additions to his collection: 'tight as a tick' and 'smooth as silk'.
A "Hair-it-is" update: the editor's daughter Margaret noted We're Hair in Livingston, New Jersey; Mary Hazard found Shear Ego in Pittsford, New York; Tim Wheeler saw Ye Olde Head Shoppe and The Mane Event in Shelbyville, Indiana. He adds "I do find it interesting that we have 64 salons in a town of 15,000. If there are two attendants per beauty salon, on average, it works out to one stylist for every 59 female inhabitants ... Amazing. There isn't a single bookstore in Shelbyville. Guess that shows where our heads are at."

Robert Klahn comments on "Crossword Construction by Computer" in August 1981: "Many programs which create crossword puzzle answers have been written. (Scrabble playing programs have been written also -- I know of one which optimizes endplay for two- and three-letter words using the Official Scrabble Players' word list.) Various people prepared books of 4x4, 5x5, etc. word squares using the MWPD. Your question 'How close are computers to producing crossword puzzles found in magazines and newspapers?' might be answered 'Apart from clue-construction, it can be done any time anyone wants to.' Who wants to?"

Alan Frank has again broken the record for high-scoring subtransposals with no letters in common: PRECEPTOR and DILLYDALLY both have scores of 1,866,240,000. (Two words are subtransposals if the products of their letter-values are equal, setting A = 1, B = 2, etc.)

Ed Wolpow recently found a new word to add to AIAIAI, SHEHEHEyanu and IOGOGOGue of "Internal Tautonyms" in February 1980: the adjective mANANAN, referring to a music and arts festival held on the Isle of Man at the end of June (as advertised on a letter cancellation).

Kyle Corbin noticed that biogeocoenology, a word cited by Darryl Francis in "Neologisms Revisited" in November, is apparently a nine-syllable word of 15 letters (bi/o/ge/o/co/en/ol/o/gy), one letter shorter than the previous record-holder in the May 1981 Kickshaws.

In the February 1969 Word Ways, "The Multiple-Letter Word Hunt" listed the shortest words containing four of each letter of the alphabet. Alan Frank suggests that the lengthy HIGH-THOUGHTED can be replaced by HUSH-HUSH; if hyphens are not allowed, how about THYMOLSULPHONEPHTHALEIN?

In the August 1978 Kickshaws William Sunners revealed that MAFIA is an acronym for Morte Alla Francia Italia Agogna (Death to the French! Italy lives!). The September 12, 1981 issue of the NY Post printed a slightly different phrase: Morte Alla Francia Italia Ancia (Death to the French is Italy's Cry). Sunners' source asserts that the two sayings are really dialectical variations on a common theme, one expressed in the Italian of the Romans, the other in the Italian of the Sicilians.