

# PROBLEM LINE

By Anita Richterman

**Q.** We can't wait any longer. Won't you tell us if someone sent in the elusive word ending in "gry?" —T.R., Long Beach

**A.** We'll do better than that and give you three words to add to our original pair, "angry" and "hungry," although none of the three appears in all dictionaries (even so-called unabridged dictionaries) and one of the three, "puggry," isn't spelled that way in every dictionary in which it does appear. (Our Webster's Third New International 1966, has five variations of the word, none of which end in "gry." They are puggaree, pugaree, puggree, pugree and pagri. The word means a light scarf wrapped around a sun helmet, such as is worn in the Foreign Legion.) Several readers did find "puggry" in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, 1963 edition (that spelling seems to have been dropped from later editions). A few readers submitted "aggr," defined as a variegated glass bead found buried in the earth in Ghana and in England. The third word (it appears in very few dictionaries), which was sent to us by the majority of readers, most of whom admitted they heard the riddle on the Bob Grant Talk Show on WMCA radio, is "gry." It is an obsolete word, rarely heard since the 18th Century and means (depending on which dictionary you've consulted) a grunt; a morse; anything very small or of little value (which prompted one reader to write that our offer of a prize of scribbles from the wastepaper basket "was very gry"); dirt under the nail; to rage or roar (which prompted another reader to write "don't gry at me, please"); a gypsy horse (although one reader thought it simply meant gypsy); also one-tenth of a line. Several readers had heard the word on the talk show but weren't sure what it meant and so supplied their own meanings. One thought it had something to do with journalism or printing; another decided it meant "abusive"; one said it was one-tenth of any segment; another thought that it was an abbreviation for a sentence but didn't know if it was a spoken sentence or a jail sentence; another believed it to be a fruit; another said it was one-hundredth of an inch or a thousandth of a foot (mathematically, it can't be both); but another

decided it was one-one hundred-and-twentieth of an inch, while several said one-tenth of an inch; one reader was sure it was part of a sword. Several readers were equally sure it was an obsolete spelling for the word "cry," and one person wrote that the author Alan Paton probably called his book, "Gry the Beloved Country," which was changed by an editor who thought the word had been misspelled. There also were readers who made up their own words. One who said he was a spelling whiz, sent in "pingry," a word no one has been able to find; another was sure she had the word when she submitted "skulldugry"; and another was disappointed to learn, when she called excitedly with her find, that "augry" was not the correct spelling for "augury"; and one shrewd reader couldn't be faulted for sending in "overangry." And finally, there were the two readers who sent in "lethargy."

**Q.** I have just returned from Hawaii, where I visited Pearl Harbor and the Arizona memorial. I understand that the ship is still considered to be commissioned and the men entombed on active duty. If so, to what extent are the crew's family entitled to benefits?

—J.C., Long Beach

**A.** That is not so. The ship has been decommissioned and the men that went down with her have been officially declared dead. Any benefits that have accrued have been paid to the survivors the same as would be paid for any other war casualty.

**Q.** Can you please settle a bet between two good friends and let us know if Ginger Rogers and Phyllis Cerf are sisters?

—J.B., Islip

**A.** No, they're not sisters but they are related. Mrs. Cerf (now the wife of former mayor Robert Wagner) is the cousin of the actress.

*Questions to "Problem Line," Newsday, 550 Stewart Ave., Garden City, N.Y. 11530, are answered within space limitations. Don't phone; send name and address. Only initials will be used.*