MAYBE THE COOL, WET WEATHER in the Southeast this summer made us a bit lazy; maybe the need (for a change) to mow grass that actually grew between mowings sapped whatever energy was left in us; consequently, this installment of new words is short but perhaps sweet. Some of the forms included here seemed fairly important during the time we prepared this column. Others did not seem all that important, but they struck us nonetheless as interesting and funny—if nothing else. Citations come from the generous contributions of George Cole, Ludwig Deringer, and Frank Nuessel.

Apocalypse Sex; terror sex; Armageddon sex  n Sexual activity resulting from the need for physical intimacy after a terrorist attack  2001 Sept 27 Alex Beam Boston Globe D1 (Lexis-Nexis) This week, Time [magazine] leavens the load with a dispatch on “Dating After Doomsday,” complete with a first-person account of “Apocalypse Sex.” Did the earth move? Alas, Time does not tell. Oct 2 Herald Sun (Melbourne) 8 (Lexis-Nexis) MANY [sic] Americans are turning to post-disaster sex to soothe their jitters, suggesting a baby boom in nine months’ time. [¶] In New York City it is being called “end-of-the-world sex” or “terror sex”, and it has become a means for some people to cope with terrifying feelings of fear, vulnerability and sadness, the Los Angeles Times reported yesterday. Dec 2 Milwaukee Journal 3L (Lexis-Nexis) Has your love for a boyfriend, girlfriend or spouse deepened or weakened, even subtly, in the wake of Sept. 11? We’ve heard about those last-minute, I-love-you calls, and we watched couples jumping from the WTC holding hands. Did it make you re-evaluate your own relationship? [¶] Some say, it’s been a love boon: Phone calls to old lovers, engagement rings flying off shelves, divorce proceedings delayed and “Armageddon sex.”  2002 May 19 Sarah Baxter Sunday Times (London) np (Lexis-Nexis) After September 11 New Yorkers indulged in more of everything: there was a rise in drinking and drug-taking, and anecdotal evidence suggests there was an increase in what became known as “terror sex”. Sept 11 Elspeth Probyn Australian 24 (Lexis-Nexis) Huge numbers were said to be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Others were said to be turning to “terror sex” and the singles bars were filled with people seeking the feeling of intimacy.

craptacular  [crappy + spectacular]  adj Ambiguously bad and good at the same time  2002 Dec 28 Toronto Star M2 (Lexis-Nexis; subhead & text) Relax and
Among the New Words

try this fast, fun, light-hearted quiz Questions from Life, Health, Food, Fashion, Boom! / Columnist Hannah Sung thinks The Bachelor [television series] is: a) a critical factor in the intellectual development of today’s youth, b) can’t-miss TV, c) a way for women to land a really swell dude, d) a craptacular TV product aimed at people who love to hate it.

embed 1: v Assign a reporter to a combat military unit 1997 Sept 8 Harry Levins St Louis Post-Dispatch 3A (Lexis-Nexis) For its deployment to Bosnia, the Army tried something new—“embedding” reporters with units. An “embedded” reporter spent all day, every day, with a unit. After a week or two of sleeping in tents and eating field rations, the reporters came to appreciate that the soldiers met hardship with patience, skill and good humor. In turn, the soldiers gradually warmed to the reporters. The GIs came to see the press as fellow mud-sloggers, not as an enemy poised to ambush them with pen and pencil. One high-ranking officer agreed to “embed” a reporter from an elite newspaper. The reporter joined the officer’s headquarters and tagged along at the officer’s side for much of the early period in Bosnia. 2001 Oct 4 Mark Jurkowitz Boston Globe 3d ed D5 (Lexis-Nexis) There were complaints of Pentagon stonewalling; fears about the extent of future military “censorship” of overseas reports; requests to “embed”—i.e. include—reporters in military units; and a spirited discussion about whether the last names and hometowns of some military personnel would be off-limits to the media. 2: v Be assigned as a reporter to a combat military unit 2001 Dec 7 Carol Morello Washington Post final ed A43 (Lexis-Nexis) The incident in Afghanistan came after seven weeks of unusually tight control of information by the Pentagon. In other conflicts, such as the Gulf War, the Vietnam War, the Korean War and World War II, reporters have been permitted to “embed” with military units and cover their daily operations. But not this time. For example, more than 1,000 regular infantry troops from the Army’s 10th Mountain Division have been in Uzbekistan for nearly two months, and in Afghanistan for at least two weeks, but no reporters have been allowed to cover them. 3: n Reporter assigned to a combat military unit 2003 Feb 9 Maureen Dowd New York Times late ed—final 4/15/6 (Lexis-Nexis) Network anchors are packing their bespoke flak jackets and zooming off to Turkey, Syria and Kuwait. The new chic thing here is an “embed”—a journalist slated to be “embedded” with the troops in the gulf. Feb 13 Robert Feder Chicago Sun-Times 59 (Lexis-Nexis) How will things be different this time? “The major difference we hope to see in this war coverage is that the Pentagon is promising to change its previous policy of shutting the American news media out,” [Jim Avila] said. “More than 100 ‘embeds’ [embedded journalists assigned to combat units] have been arranged with front-line military troops. . .” [brackets in text]. Feb 15 Oliver Poole Daily Telegraph (London) 20 (Lexis-Nexis) The “embed” system, it is feared, is simply a new way to keep reporters away from the action by offering the carrot of special access while assigning them to troops never intended to be included in battle plans. Feb 16 Carol Brightman Los Angeles Times home
“Embedding for life” is how Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Bryan Whitman portrayed it. At a recent orientation meeting with Washington bureau chiefs, Whitman described the ideal “embed” as one who follows a unit (ground, air or sea) from load-out to deployment through combat (subject to field approval) to the “march on whatever capital we happen to march on” to the return trip home and the “victory parade.” This could take “two weeks, two months, two years,” he warned, and if reporters leave a unit there is no guarantee they can return or even join another unit. Nearly 300 potential “embeds” have already received training at a half-dozen media boot camps along the East Coast. Participants are briefed on U.S. military policy and weapons capabilities and taught rudimentary survival skills, including how to suit up in the event of chemical or biological weapons exposure.

**jump the shark** phrase Go bad; deteriorate 2001 May 11 All Things Considered NPR [Jon Hein:] Jump the shark comes from an episode of Happy Days where Fonzie literally, clad in his leather jacket on water skis, jumps over a shark, and at that point, you knew the show was never going to be the same—it was all downhill from there. So we’ve taken the phrase, jump the shark, and applied it to over 1,850 shows on our [Web] site. . . . [Linda Wertheimer:] Now one of the things that’s a clue that a show is about to jump the shark is that there’s some sort of life change—birth, death, puberty—all these can be dire signals.

[JH:] Correct. Chances are if there’s a baby or a main character dies or someone’s voice cracks, the show’s probably going to jump the shark.

2002 Apr 16 Kevin Walker Tampa Tribune Baylife 1 (Lexis-Nexis) It’s in almost every movie. A scene appears that makes you say, “Oh, come on” or “No way” or “That’s just stupid.” Some movies recover from these moments. Some don’t. It’s sort of like the “Jump the Shark” theory about television shows. I wrote back in 2000 about the Jump the Shark Internet site, where television junkies talk about specific episodes that marked the point where a television series started to head downhill. The site’s title refers to the “Happy Days” episode in which Fonzie performs a ski jump over sharks. (I don’t even remember that episode, so I must have bailed long before that.) Movies are that way, too. There comes a point where it peaks, and everything afterward is disappointing. It can happen in many ways: a too revealing scene, bad dialogue, thin character motivation, just plain silliness.

Dec 9 Michelle Griffin Age (Melbourne, Australia) Culture 1 (Lexis-Nexis) If Jon Hein had a dollar for every time someone used the phrase “jump the shark” to describe the moment when something good goes bad, he’d be wealthier than a lot of the top-gun computer programmers he went to college with. They just developed software. He created a catch-phrase that has crossed so convincingly into public usage that the dictionary compilers have been calling Hein at home. The phrase “jump the shark” was coined in 1985 when Michigan student Sean J. Connolly told his room-mate Hein that the TV show Happy Days was never the same after Fonzie jumped over a shark on water-skis at the start of
series five. From then on, their little group of college friends used the phrase “jump the shark” to describe the moment where good TV shows start to go downhill, in fact where anything good starts to sour—a rock band, a relationship, a politician’s career. Twelve years later, on a slow Christmas eve, 1997, Hein created a Jump the Shark website (jumptheshark.com) to celebrate all those good TV shows gone bad. He listed the eight original signs that a show is about to jump the shark—same character different actor; death; birth; live; puberty; singing; and Ted McGinley, a B-list actor with bland-out good looks whose appearance almost inevitably signals a show’s decline. He was the cousin Roger who replaced Ritchie Cunningham on Happy Days, before moving on to a career in the final seasons of, among others, The Love Boat, Dynasty, and Married With Children (as Marcie D’Arcy’s husband Jefferson). Now appearing in the White House drama The West Wing, McGinley is “the patron saint” of the jump-the-shark movement. Dec 28 Sophie Cunningham Age (Melbourne, Australia) 14 (Lexis-Nexis) Shark alert: many believe that Will & Grace jumps the shark this week (Thursday, Channel Seven, 9.30pm) when the couple start to think about having a baby. I have always been wary of this show. 2003 Feb 15 Caitlin Moran Times (London) Features 28 (Lexis-Nexis; subhead) With its breathless plotlines, 24 quickly became one of last year’s must-see dramas. But did it “jump the shark” before the end of the first series, [sic] asks Caitlin Moran.

Kokomo Hum n Low-frequency vibrations causing property damage and health problems in residential areas 2002 May 12 Brian Albrecht Cleveland (Oh) Plain Dealer A1 (Lexis-Nexis) Fear ripples in silent, invisible waves in this small factory town surrounded by green horizons of corn. People say pulses of low-frequency sound are pounding neighborhoods with an unseen fist; making them hurt, making them sick. They say their houses crack and vibrate from the same mysterious force that drives spikes of pain through their eyes and ears, bones and joints; churns their guts in bouts of diarrhea and nausea; robs them of sleep and nearly their sanity; wakens their children in the middle of the night with bloody noses. . . . They, and others in this city north of Indianapolis, blame a phenomenon called “the Kokomo Hum.” June 23 John W Fountain New York Times 1/14/1 (Lexis-Nexis) A mystery is simmering in this sleepy industrial city. To Billy Kellems, it sounds like butter “cracking in a skillet.” In the middle of the night, it is more like the buzz of a busy interstate, though there is no highway for miles, Mr. Kellems said. Others say it sounds like the deep growling of a train idling. The phenomenon is called the Kokomo hum, and it is more than an annoyance. Many blame the hum, which began in 1999, for health problems, including headaches, nausea, diarrhea, fatigue and joint pain.

SARS acronym Severe acute respiratory syndrome 2003 Mar 16 Rob Stein Washington Post Ao1 (Lexis-Nexis) The World Health Organization issued an emergency global alert yesterday, warning that a mysterious, sometimes fatal pneumonia-like illness posed a worldwide threat after spreading from Asia to
Europe and North America. . . . The disease typically begins with flu-like symptoms—a high fever, coughing, headache, malaise, shortness of breath or other difficulty breathing. It often progresses to pneumonia, with some patients deteriorating to where they require a respirator. So far, the disease has not responded to antibiotics. . . . So far, every test for a known pathogen has come back negative, raising concern that the disease may be caused by a previously unknown virus or other infectious microbe. [¶] “It’s always worrisome when you can’t put a diagnosis on a disease. You can’t predict anything,” said David Heymann, head of communicable diseases for the WHO, which has named the disease severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Mar 16 Andrew Johnson Independent on Sunday (London) 20 (Lexis-Nexis) The World Health Organisation warned of a “worldwide health threat” yesterday after a mystery killer pneumonia bug spread from Asia to Europe. [¶] The flu-like virus—which results in severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)—has infected scores of people in Hong Kong, Vietnam and Singapore and killed eight people since it was first detected in China in February. June 5 Morgan Mellish Australian Financial Review 1 (Lexis-Nexis) Federal Treasurer Peter Costello has warned that the economy is slowing due to weakness in the rural, mining and professional services sectors. . . . Mr Costello said the SARS scare, the drought and the weak global climate were hurting activity and it was likely to get worse before it got better.

third-person peculiar  Reference to one’s self in the third person  2002 Jan 1 Arthur Hirsch Seattle Times C10 (Lexis-Nexis; Baltimore Sun) Geraldo Rivera’s recent appearance on the wrong end of news coverage strikes a familiar note. It’s not just that Rivera is again becoming a laughingstock—this time with his Afghanistan war reporting—it’s the historical echo in his statement: “It’s time to stop bashing Geraldo.” [¶] That’s Geraldo speaking about himself in an interview, using what might be termed the “third-person peculiar” for its hints of a personality cracking along some public-private fault line. Who could hear that and not think of Richard M. Nixon’s famous line: “Well, you won’t have Dick Nixon to kick around anymore”? [¶] Nearly 40 years have passed between the two remarks, during which use of the third-person peculiar would appear, on the basis of completely unscientific observation, to have grown more prevalent. [¶] “It is a phenomenon that’s developing,” says Dennis E. Baron, a professor of English and linguistics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. “It bears watching. I don’t know if it has something to do with whether post-modern life is verging toward the impersonal.” [¶] Whether the third-person peculiar is a cultural or psychological signifier or some combination of both is hard to say. Professionals who pay attention to language and human behavior are unable to cite anything approaching a formal study.