By Nancy Whitaker

MOUSE, MICE, HOUSE, HICE?

It is always fun to watch our children grow from babies to toddlers and it is even more interesting to hear them say their first word.

When my own kids were little I remember trying to get them to say “Mama” for their first word. However, my youngest daughter used the word mama, milk and more.

My son Tom, though, said the word “calendar” for one of his first words.

We study English, grammar, spelling and writing in grade and high school, but let’s face it, it has been said that the English language is one of the hardest languages to learn to speak.

We take speaking English for granted, but if we explore its idiosyncrasies, you find that many of our words and meanings leave us scratching our heads and wondering how we arrived at this.

For instance, why do we call quicksand quick when it actually works slowly? Why do we call a boxing ring a ring when it is actually square?

Stop and think about it. There are no eggs in eggplant nor ham in hamburger. There is not an apple or a pine in pineapple.

English muffins weren't invented in England and a guinea pig is neither from Guinea nor is it a pig.

My mind wants to know why is it that writers write, but fingers don't fing, grocers don't groce and hammers don't ham. If teachers taught, why don't preachers praught?

If a vegetarian eats vegetables, what does a humanitarian eat?

In what other language do people recite at a play and play at a recital?

We ship by truck, but send cargo by ship. We have noses that run and feet that smell. We park in a driveway and drive on a parkway.

And, how can a slim chance and a fat chance be the same, while a wise man and a wise guy are opposites?

I have to marvel at the uniqueness of a language in which your house can burn up as it burns down, in which you fill in a form by filling it out and in which an alarm goes off by going on.

One more question, if Father is Pop, how come Mother is not Mop?

Having more than two of something in the English language can also be mind boggling. For instance the plural of box is boxes, but why isn't the plural of ox, oxes? Why is it that oxes become oxen?

One bird is a goose, but two are called geese. Yet the plural of moose should never be meese.

You may find a lone mouse or a nest full of mice. However, the plural of house is houses not hice.

I love our English language, but if I were just learning it, I would certainly have a lot of questions.

Do you ever think that English could be so complicated? Do you ever wonder or even care about the whys of our national tongue?

Let me know and I'll give you a Penny for Your Thoughts.