

In a recent discussion with Specialist 4 William Hanks, I discovered that he had quite an amazing memory. He proposed that I make up a list of twenty words, and after reading the list to him once, he would be able to tell me what any word was by number, or I could tell him the word, and he would tell me what the number of the word was. Wanting to make it a real test, I made up a list of words, including some really "off the wall" words that I pulled out of the back of my head. Much to my amazement, after hearing the words just once, SP4 Hanks could, as he had said, tell me what any word was by the number.

Specialist Hanks said that he first discovered the system during his freshman year at The University of Texas. The system, which was developed by Harry Lorayne, is based on the assignment of ten letter sounds to the ten digits.

Since abstract numbers by themselves are hard to remember, the numbers are translated into meaningful words which are remembered and can be translated back into numbers. These "key" words are then associated with the event, name, or word one wishes to memorize. "For example," says Hanks, "if you give me a list of 100 words to memorize and ask me, 'what's number 32?' I can't possibly remember. But I can translate the number 32 into the word "moon" and I remember that I associated "moon" with "Paris", so I can say that number 32 is Paris." "You see, the word "moon" always stands for the number 32 on my list so "moon" and 32 mean the same thing to me. By making a ridiculous ~~abst~~ association between moon and Paris (such as visualizing the Eifel Tower standing on the moon) I can easily recall that 32 (moon) is Paris."

Having seen this system put into action I can easily vouch for its effectiveness. On another occasion Specialist Hanks was given 100 words to memorize and when asked to repeat the list, missed only three words. Says Hanks, "the associations may sound silly, but I bet you remember what number 32 was."