A NAME GAME

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When I was at Princeton, we called it the Princeton Name Game and argued that the challenge was to invent a name that would completely conquer the admissions director and gain the bearer instant acceptance. The method was to put together the names (and presumably the impressiveness) of two or more famous people: Thomas Jefferson and Jefferson Davis, for instance, would produce Thomas Jefferson Davis. Today Princeton is co-educational, so I suppose we might consider Marlo Thomas Jefferson Davis.

I was reminded of this old but amusing pastime when New York magazine, which regularly runs competitions challenging verbal skill, revived it. Here's how we play the game: I'll give you the description of the person and you seem if you can catch the name. A transvestite ex-CIA head? Boy George Bush. OK? Let's go.

1. A piano-playing, sensitively Southern American writing president
2. A blind, black, piano-playing master of dad photography
3. A titled friend of Noel Coward who has experience as a telephone operator
4. A tennis-playing mad monarch of a lady
5. A singing and poetic fellow who is good for what ails you
6. A man who might get blacks to start fancy department stores back in Africa
7. A patriotic novelist and poet, not just Catholic but Jesuit
8. A man who put the soft drink back on its feet and may run for president
9. A right-wing cynical French epigrammatist
10. A lexicographer who featured the letters E and T
11. A Southern general who fired several shots heard round the political world
12. A Southern general who fired several shots heard round the political world
13. A very young man interested in talking animals and the rich and famous
14. A stream-of-consciousness early Irish patriot
15. A young sporting man who writes both impenetrable and comic Irish novels
16. A soul-mouthed comedian who performs rock music
17. A clarinet-playing radio personality with two comic talents
18. A novelist, poet, and financial expert
19. A detective of the organization man stripe

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with complete accuracy (Samuel Johnson, who ought to know,
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none, and the best cannot be expected to go quite true").
Rhyming dictionaries, dealing with the vagaries of pronunci-
ation, are especially frustrating to compile. It is all-too-easy
for the reviewer to cite nits (why does Franglais rhyme with
...? Why is thinks listed under INGS, when it can be
inferred from the note telling one to pluralize ING words?).
A more basic quarrel with rhyming dictionaries: why do they
classify words such as discourteous and carniverous, or re-
gency and Timothy, or banishment and government, as hav-
ing single or masculine rhyme (accent on the last syllable)?
Because of this, each of these pairs is considered a legiti-
mate rhyme.

Let's focus instead on more positive things: the comprehen-
siveness of Espy's book (he has some 80,000 rhyming words
to Clement Wood's 70,000), its up-to-dateness (Wood's book,
the last American rhyming dictionary, is 50 years old), and
its thorough discussion of prosody, splendidly illustrated
by Espy's own verses. A nice feature: Espy places together
all words having the same preceding consonant-group (as FRing e, beFRing e, unFRing e), cautioning the reader that these
are not rhyming words; one must use words having different
consonant-groups (as FRing e, Sing e, CRing e). Finally, logol-
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verse devoted to wordplay, some of which has previously ap-
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Baffled? Answers are in Answers and Solutions at the end of this
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22. A patriotic and beautiful pirate
23. A young actor, handsome but with only one ear
24. A painter, poet, and Nobel laureate in economics
25. A-one, A-two, and seven pillars of wisdom
26. A teenage idol and action painter
27. A Gallic woman able to sing both opera and pop
28. A biographer of Napoleon who also composes music
29. A movie star with two strings to her bow, if papistical
30. A feminist and actress once married to Ruth Gordon

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