

ONE SUP HONOR THYME

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Fable One: Food Forethought

The Electoral College Dining Club of 1932 was run by the husband and wife partnership of Francis and Lynne Rue. They typified the man (and woman) in the street of their day - pitying, repentant but evergreen. The members of the College were acutely aware of this and, desiring to know their opinion of the current political situation (would a new broom be more popular than the old Hoover?), sought the Rues opinion by means of a most ingenious ruse. They persuaded the chef to offer the partners a choice of main dish for the next supper at which all would be present. Consequently, the chef suggested that Francis and Lynne choose between dressed American cod and South African ungarnished eel.

The selection was made, and the toastmaster announced the decision that changed the course of American history. His famous words were "Frank, Lynne Rue say veldt's nude eel."

Fable Two: Indian Inc

The names Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse are justly famous, but the most significant of all the Sioux was the attractive young wife of Crazy Horse who was a most enterprising woman. Realising the potential for trade, she set up in business as a mortician and commissioned a capacious travois on which she would carry away the dead. A vain woman, she loved to sunbathe topless even at the height of warfare; she was the object of much of the invective of the US 7th Cavalry whenever they saw this beautiful sun-worshipper piling the corpses on her travois. Though no one to this day knows her name, her activities were immortalized by an unknown Scot who served with the 7th Cavalry. As he lay dying he uttered the words that are forever associated with the Battle of the Little Big Horn: "Cussed hearse-lass tanned."

Fable Three: Lamb Source

Mary (famed possessor of a little lamb), Raymond Massey and Indiana Jones all had problems which they presented to the official agony aunt employed by the Library of Congress. Mary's aim in life was to obtain suitable revenge upon a certain literary resident of Morristown who had denied her full alphabetical status in a series of scurrilous verses. She wished to see him incarcerated in some manner which would prevent his publishing ever again his infamous lipograms. Ray Massey wondered if the word OV (a Middle English form of the personal pronoun YOU) would be under-

stood by a modern movie audience. Indiana Jones could not solve the crossword clue "Thick. (5)".

The agony aunt answered all three in a statement which made history. She said, "The aim, Mary, canned Eckler. Ray, shun OV. Indy, pen DENSE."

DICKSON'S WORD TREASURY

This is the title of the 1992 paperback sequel to Dickson's *Words*, reviewed in the November 1982 *Word Ways*. Although it contains five new chapters entitled *Animal Talk II*, *famways* (see *Family Words*, reviewed in February 1989), *Journal-ese*, *Slogans and Wordland*, plus insertions in other chapters, it is only 12 pages longer (378 vs. 366), a trick achieved by using somewhat larger pages. The earlier edition consisted largely of specialized word-lists with brief definitions, some very tongue-in-cheek (see the chapter on *Kadigans*, which are words like *gizmo*, *dingus* and *thingumjig*) and others written in the sardonic style of Ambrose Bierce (see *Journal-ese*). The new edition continues this tradition, but adds a number of essays as well (see "filler" in the chapter *Written Words*, or the *Wordland* chapter which describes the Merriam-Webster offices in Springfield, Massachusetts). *Soused Synonyms* (for which Dickson earned a mention in Guinness) has been expanded from 2231 to 2660 entries.

Word Ways readers should turn first to the chapter on *Oddities* (discussing words with extreme properties) or *Word Words* (giving definitions for figures of speech, recreational linguistic terms, and the like). There's something for everyone; for example, the editor found *IGGRY* (an OED word which is the English spelling of an Arabic word meaning "to hurry up") as a new *-GRY* word, and *NESOMANIAC* (a neologism attributed to James Michener in 1977 meaning "one who is mad about islands") which partially answers the query about *NESOMANES* by Darwin Rolens in the May 1991 *Word Ways*.

My one criticism of the book is that John Wiley & Son rushed it into print without an adequate proofreading; there are numerous misspellings, two chapters (30 and 31) begin with duplicated definitions, and (p 207) *kudos* contains a discussion that should have been placed under *kinnikinnik*. Still, this need not detract from the reader's enjoyment; this is the sort of book that can be opened at random and browsed for unsuspected arcana like *BWBACHOD* (a Welsh brownie who will work free for anyone save teetotalers), *TYROSEMIOPHILY* (the collecting of Camembert cheese labels), and *RENIFLEUR* (one who gets sexual pleasure from body odors). Dickson also invites readers to help him with collections-in-progress: *klangers* (words that give the wrong impression, like *NOISOME*), *chronisms* (dated words, like *PHONOGRAPH NEEDLE*), *foodslang*, and *marbles slang*.