

LOONEY'S MY NAME, BUT I'M NOT INSANE

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Interesting names are everywhere. Take, for example, the editor of Better Homes and Gardens, who signs her John Henry as Jean Lem Mon. Don't tell me she didn't doctor up her name so she wouldn't be associated with a sour yellow fruit!

We have neighbors named Red Bright and Rule Stout. We are acquainted with Dr. Charnia Cheatwood, Dr. Babson Fresh and Dr. Ulla Ule. Dr. Walton was my husband's chief of medicine at the LSU School of Medicine. The Reverends Bill Belcher and Henry Booze, and Woodrow Trickey and Willie Obey were my husband's patients before he retired from medical practice. My daughter went to high school with Sterile Hongo. My husband's name is Rufus. Something ought to be done about parents who give names like that to their kids.

My mother in her later years wrote down in a notebook strange, unusual or wonderful names which she saw in the obituary column of the paper. My mother's maiden name was Looney.

My mother's older maiden sister, Nora Looney, and her school teacher roommate Miss Saine were featured in Ripley's Believe It Or Not some 60 years ago. I have a first cousin, Dr. John Looney, who is chief of psychiatry in a prominent southeastern medical school.

It's a little embarrassing, but I must admit that when I go places, I am inexorably drawn to reading the names in the phone book of the city I'm visiting and writing them down à la Mama. Phone books are word mines. There's a lot of entertainment there if you're a Looney like me.

Here are a few of the names found over the years from just three phone books I have loved (there are many others). Names before the first semicolon were taken from the 1984-85 Colorado Springs directory; names between the first and second semicolon from the 1996 Alexandria-Pineville directory; names after the second semicolon from the 1990 North Dallas-Richardson-Addison directory. I have put them into arbitrary categories for the fun of it.

A MATTER OF CHARACTER H Doxy, C A Pickup, Hardy Favors, William Loveall; Kathy Hussey; Bingo Goodtime

UNPRONOUNCEABLE S Hnatiw, Samuel Hadisutjipto, Bill Zzyczcic;

S Anaulhhq, Ginggaew Dumrongpanich, Yves L'Helgoual'Ch; P L Vlk

PERJORATIVE-SOUNDING Ronald Gripe, Thomas A K Grody, Herbert P Guck, Bill Creapo, Rogert S Cutlip, Aundre F Piggee, Michael C

Schmutz, L Frownfelter, Layman Harang, P Head, Seung Koo Kook, J W Twaddle; Harry Butensky, John Nutini, Eva Pee, Don G Raper, Glen M Stinchcomb; Kenneth Carnal, Yvonne Dread

THE RICH AND FAMOUS Dan Rather, Benjamin Franklin Wigfall, Oscar H Wilde; Daniel Boone, Booker T Booze Jr, Joe Cool, Ste(v)en Foster, Eddie Foy, Peter Gunn, C C Ryder, George Washington, Daniel Webster, Baby Ruth Veal, Victor Mature Jones; Charles Lamb

TITLED PEOPLE, BUSINESSES, ETC. Col Robert C Doctor, Major Arthur L Majors; Rev J D Cheatham, Rush Funeral Home, Rev Jon M Betts; Eddie Carr Wrecker Service, Joe G Roach Jr MD, Rev Stanley F Seat, Claude E Swords MD

DESCRIPTIVE WORDS Allan D D'Mellow; Carol Fancy, Arvil S Dowdy, Sam Hot, David L Brilliant, Brian Buttery, Hurley L Lovely, Steven J Peachy, Lightle E Wooley, Roger A Ready, B Moody

RELIGIOUS OR NOT Margaret Baptist, Edward M Bible, Herbert W Idol DUH! J C Airhead, Robert Hollopeter, Howard M (Hanky) Pankey; J M Dumville

JUST FUNNY! Helen Freek, Sillie Wrinkle, C Lubbers; Fannie Truss, Green Shorts, Pleas Battle Sr; Ahoi Boaters

GOOD! Ethel M Darling, Elvira Funny, P J Laughter, Oscar Nice; Jerome Witty; David Droll, Jud Good, Julie Goodnight, Conley R Goodrum, Robert M Goodside, Robert Goodfellow, R Goodfriend, J Goodman, S Goodspeed, Rob Goodson

BODY PARTS Vance Forepaugh, Ronald Arms, Finley Back, D V Lightbody, H W Sidebottom, Robert Colon, Emmet Goodbody; Minor S Cheek Jr, Kate Legg; Meechy Forehand

ALIMENTATION Todd Ambrosia, Harlan W Apple, Albert Bacon, Adolph Bakun (my high school history teacher), Ingebord Pickle, Frank Turnipseed, J E Goodbread; Corrie Butter, Travis Chestnut; A F Salami, Francisco Tostado, Michael Coke, Peter Cola, Rev John Almond

INITIALS HELP D A M Roof, P Wine, I P Love; O L Hyde, E Minor, B E Wrong; C A Cat

JUST INTERESTING Richard M Wetnight, M Sharkoffmadrid, Nop You; Rose Ambush, Larry H DeBlieux (pronounced double-U), Grady Gravel (pronounced grahVEL), Jack Mule Jr (pronounced mewLAY), Icem Nation, Enoch F Nicewarner, Moves Night, Wornie Lee Player, Kyle Quash, Hosie and Daisy Rockett, Hubert Sit, Freeman Stackpole, Dennie Lee Suddlars Swiggums, Yang-Tung Tang, Cecilia Tidies, Billy Tinkle; Edward Ferree, D Unfried, C Yu, Penny Nickel, Rusty Hedges

PORTMANTEAU WORDS Tommy Loveday, Robert Warddrip, Donald E Roadcap, David Dollarhide, M Kickingbird, Gerald Redlighting, Michael Yearout, Anthony Yellowhorse, James R Fillerup, M K Finefrock, Miocki Fishgrab, Vernie Flaxbeard, Irene Bedgood, John R Gardenhire, Stan Halfpop, Russell Applebee, Ailean C Kneebone, S Cornstubble, Val O Beachboard, Edward Ted Bellringer, Leir Birdtail; Bumper Beeson, S R Birdsong, M L Coldiron, Jeff Creekkiller, Mike Damewood, Charles M Didlake, Deandred Dwellingham, Charles Goodgame, Brianwin Brian Hadwin, Easter Hallback, Gowan Dishman, Calvin Allday, Louis Wiseman, Effie Birdlong, Ed Bedwell; Paul D Firehammer, David Leadabrand, Gary Mothershed, Christopher Oathout, Frank X

Pennylegion, Richard Petershack, Todd Redpath, E V Rigmaiden, Barbara Sirleaf, Glenda Corntassel, Jill Gentleman, Gordon Highfill, Allen Pothoof

You know the old adage about people's names and people's faces. I like what the famous Rev. William Archibald Spooner said best: "I remember your name perfectly, but I just can't think of your face."

LE TON BEAU DE MAROT

This weighty tome by Douglas Hofstadter, published for \$30 by Basic Books in 1997 (ISBN 0-465-08643-8) is difficult to characterize succinctly; it consists of a large number of reflections on "language and languages, minds, words, constraints, poetry, creativity, humor, pattern and music" packaged in essays of a few pages each. Although Hofstadter's playful (but predictably prolix) prose is a pleasure to peruse, one ends up surfeited, as if one has eaten a 5-pound box of chocolates. At the end, there remains in the reader's mind a kaleidoscope of specific insights but no general message (other than, perhaps, "translation is an art, not a science"). The coherency was not helped by the fact that Hofstadter kept adding material to the computer-generated final draft right up until his self-imposed completion deadline of the 500th anniversary of Clement Marot's birth!

The strongest feature of this book is its inspiration: some 60 translations of a 1537 French poem of Clement Marot to an ailing girl. The original consists of 28 lines of three syllables each, with rhyme-scheme abbcc...nna. This translation corpus (some echo the antique flavor, others are in modern idiom) splendidly illustrates the almost-infinite possibilities open to the imaginative writer. Unlike Nabokov, Hofstadter believes that preservation of form is as important as preservation of content.

Readers of *Word Ways* and *Making the Alphabet Dance* (which he criticized in the *New York Times Review of Books* for an emphasis of logology as list-making) should find his ruminations on constrained writing, which he considers a form of "translation", of greatest interest. He has analyzed in some detail (pp 106-118) the problems of writing E-less prose, in particular those encountered by Adair when he translated Perec's *La Disparition* into E-less English. He also quotes (with approval) David Shulman's sonnet-anagram of *Washington Crossing The Delaware*. He concludes (pp 439-442) that books on language wordplay like *Making the Alphabet Dance* and *Opperlandse Taal- & Letterkunde* (see August 1997 *Word Ways*) are untranslatable by his standards, i.e., Dutch wordplay cannot be translated into the same English wordplay.