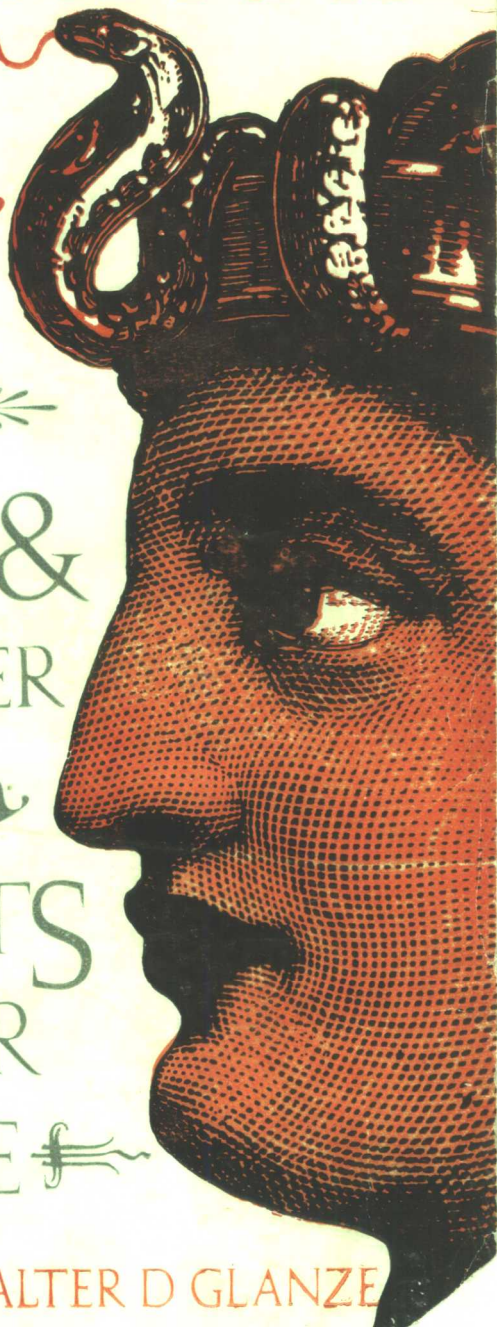


CLEOPATRA'S NOSE,

THE
TWINKIE ✦
DEFENSE, &
1500 OTHER
VERBAL 🐸
SHORTCUTS
IN POPULAR
PARLANCE ✦



JEROME AGEL & WALTER D GLANZE

Cleopatra's Nose, the Twinkie Defense, & 1500 Other Verbal Shortcuts in Popular Parlance

Jerome Agel and Walter D. Glanze

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About the Authors

JEROME AGEL is the author/producer of more than forty books, including collaborations with Marshall McLuhan, Richard B. Bernstein, Carl Sagan, Herman Kahn, Stanley Kubrick, R. Buckminster Fuller, Humphry Osmond, and Isaac Asimov. His works include *The Medium is the Massage*, *I Seem To Be a Verb*, *The Making of Kubrick's 2001*, *Predicting the Past*, *Herman Kahn's Consciousness*, *The Cosmic Connection*, *The U.S. Constitution for Everybody*, *Fasting: The Ultimate Diet*, *Understanding Understanding*, *Pearls of Wisdom*, *War and Peace in the Global Village*, and exclusive 200-year histories of *The Congress*, *The Presidency*, and *The Supreme Court* under the umbrella title *Into the Third Century*. He has coauthored with Eugene Boe two nonfiction novels, *Deliverance in Shanghai* and *22 Fires*. His new books are on geography, the 26 amendments and the 10,000 proposed amendments to the Constitution, English grammar and usage, and 100 fascinating Americans from Aaron to the Wrights.

WALTER D. GLANZE has written or edited over fifty reference works: dictionaries of science, music, law, psychology and psychiatry, geography, mass media and communications, poetry, medicine, and other fields, including *Art of Our Century* (Prentice Hall Press); reference works on the English language (dictionaries, thesauruses, crossword-puzzle dictionaries, and quotations books); and foreign-language dictionaries (French, Spanish, Italian, German, and Latin). He is also the editor of over 200 general books, from nonfiction to fiction. He has lectured widely and has chaired professional meetings on lexicography and linguistics.

Do You Know What They're Talking About?

THE ASWAN CONUNDRUM. THE NIXON IN CHINA SYNDROME. THE DORD EDITION. SOVIETNAM. THE ETERNAL PREPPIE. HER DEEPNESS. THE NATIONAL RAZOR. THE ONE-MAN PRISON. DH BURNOUT. THE EICHMANN EXPERIMENT. BEAUTIFUL PARRICIDE. THE ULTIMATE HIGH. THE GANDHI SOLUTION. CLEOPATRA'S NOSE

All entries in this book are expressions that the authors have encountered in conversation and print in just the last two-and-a-half years. All are familiar to people who use them—in the expectation that the listeners and readers *do* KNOW WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT, the way a William Buckley might use words like *vexillology* or *theriomorphic* or *eleemosynary* or *osculatory* or *dyslogistic*, understood by many but perhaps not by most of his listeners or readers, who if necessary can go to their dictionaries to expand their verbal range. But there has been no dictionary for terms like ANNA O and THE WOODEN O; THE BUTTERFLY BRIDGE and THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT; WHISKEY VAN (President Van Buren) and BRANDY NAN (Queen Anne); a SIX-HOUR RETARDED CHILD and THREE FIFTHS OF A PERSON; THE DISHONEST DECADE and THE DISMAL SCIENCE; THE DUMB OX, THE DOG, and THE CROCODILE MAN; McLUHAN'S MESSAGE and A MESSAGE TO GARCÍA, and nearly 1,500 more.

In our high-speed, fast-paced times, verbal shortcuts and shared watchwords allow the cognoscenti rapid, intelligent, and *warm* communication—allusions and metaphors as shared references and signs of recognition among members of the same society, class, or group.

"I see so many new folks nowadays who seem to have neither past nor future," the American novelist Sarah Orne Jewett wrote. "Conversations have got to have some root in the past, or else you

have got to explain every remark you make, and it wears a person out."

If you are looking for a particular term, consult the alphabetical index. The entries themselves are in chronological order (going back in time). This book is also meant for browsing—and to entertain.

Jerome Agel
Valter D. Glanze

The 1990s and Beyond

The Ohs. The Oughts. The Naughts. The Zeros. The Twenty Hundreds

All of these watchwords have been suggested as names for the first decade of the next millennium—2000–2009. The *New York Times*, for one, seems to prefer “the Ohs”: “with a connotation of wonder, it would be fittingly optimistic for the start of a century.” (Of course, there will be the quibble that 2000 is the last year of the old century and that the millennium does not begin till January 1, 2001, but that’s not when all of humanity will celebrate.)

The Orphan Issue

In international negotiations, “the Orphan Issue” is the spread of The Bomb. Policymakers seem to be ignoring dramatically increased dangers of nuclear proliferation. In addition to the superpowers, South Africa, Pakistan, India, and Israel have nuclear capabilities. (An Israeli bombing strike took out Iraq’s capability.) Among the nations with nuclear ambition is North Korea. The main and growing concern would seem to be the prospect of nuclear explosives in the hands of individuals—terrorist groups or the lone psychopath. A nuclear device can now be hidden in an attaché case; it could, for example, be left in a parked car in one of the largest cities and set off by remote control.

The 1980s

Rocky Mountain High. The Broncos Zoo

The Denver Broncos gave a new meaning to “Rocky Mountain High” in 1987, 1988, and 1989. Players on the Mile High City’s entry in the National Football League were involved in at least 17 clashes with the law. These incidents included charges of assault, kidnapping, rape, solicitation of prostitution, drug use, false imprisonment, officer impersonation, driv-

ing under the influence, speeding, alienation of affection, and driving without a license. Reporters dubbed the team "the Bronx Zoo," punning on a nickname of the raucous New York Yankees baseball team, "the Bronx Zoo." Denver coach Dan Reeves, who led the team into two straight Super Bowls, said, "Hopefully, the players will learn from their mistakes." Denver lost the Super Bowl game in 1990, 1989, and 1987.

The Last Word on Words. The OED

The revised 20-volume second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "the OED," is the repository of the Queen's English, comprising nearly 60 million words (1989). Coeditor John A. Simpson says he likes to think OED 2 is "the dictionary of record of every aspect of human emotions."

History's Most Peaceful Rebel. The Father of the Soviet H-Bomb

The physicist Andrei Dmitrievich Sakharov (1921–1989) helped the Soviet Union develop its first hydrogen bomb, in the 1950s, then became its leading dissident, the conscience of Soviet society. In midcentury, he vanished for a decade, working on the top-secret nuclear weapons project in remote Turkmenistan. In December 1979, he was stripped of his state honors and sent into internal exile in the city of Gorki, 250 miles east of Moscow, for denouncing the Kremlin's military intervention in Afghanistan. He was honored in 1975 with the Nobel Peace Prize for his human-rights campaigning. "History's most peaceful rebel," he was indefatigably and imperturbably active in struggles against oppression, censorship, and the threats to civilization from war and society's destruction of the environment.

November 9

The 44-year "cold war" between the Soviet Union and the "free world" ended on this day in 1989 with the cracking of the Berlin Wall—the cold-war symbol—and the free flow of peoples and goods between East and West Germany through Berlin for the first time in 28 years. (November 9 is also significant because it was on this day in 1923 that Hitler and storm troopers tried to overthrow Munich's republican government: 16 Nazis were killed, but Hitler emerged a national hero.) (See also 1938: Kristallnacht.)

The Pac Man Defense

The description "Pac Man Defense" refers to the video game Pac Man, in which small, snapping characters pursue other small, snapping characters, which suddenly turn on the hunter. When Paramount Communications

made a bid to buy Time, Inc., in 1989, Wall Street traders said that if Time turned around and made a bid for Paramount, "it would be the first time in a long while that such a strategy, known as the Pac Man Defense, was raised in a takeover battle."

The Sinatra Doctrine

The Soviet Union in 1989 began employing what it called "the Sinatra Doctrine"—relaxing controls and letting its eastern European satellites "do it *their way*." Frank Sinatra's lyric "I did it my way" is well known even in the USSR.

V-A Day

The surprise announcement in 1989 that Japanese real-estate groups had purchased the controlling interest in Rockefeller Center—mid-Manhattan's most famous landmark—prompted coinage of "V-A Day" to mean, in some eyes, that the Japanese had won World War III (as "V-J Day" stands for the Allies' unconditional victory over Japan in 1945). Some New Yorkers griped that the traditional huge, ungraceful Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center would, of course, be replaced by a discreet bonsai tree. (Canada and Great Britain also have bought huge shares of the American dream.)

Pearl Mesta Bush. The Eternal Preppie

President George Bush has been dubbed "Pearl Mesta Bush" because he's always ready to have a party or to have guests in the White House for the evening, often to Mrs. Bush's regret. (The US diplomat Pearl Mesta, 1889–1975, was known in Washington entertainment circles as the "hostess with the mostest." She was the subject of Irving Berlin's 1950 Broadway musical *Call Me Madam*.) Because the hyperactive Mr. Bush doesn't project substance, he's also been called "the Eternal Preppie."

The Yacht People

Twenty thousand well-off residents of Hong Kong, fearing the consequences of the takeover of the British crown colony by the People's Republic of China, near the end of the century, have fled to Vancouver, British Columbia. Because they have the wherewithal, buying up property and boosting rents, they have taken on the appellation "the Yacht People." (See also 1975: The Boat People.)

America's Troubadour

An immigrant from Russia, songsmith Irving Berlin (1888–1989) became "America's Troubadour." Many of his 3,000 tunes will be standards forever: *White Christmas*, *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, *Easter Parade*, *A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody*, *Always*, *Blue Skies*, and *Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning*. There have been recently strengthened moves to have his *God Bless America* replace *The Star-Spangled Banner* as the national anthem of the United States.

Sovietnam

The Soviet Union admitted in 1989 that its 1979 invasion of Afghanistan had been a mistake and was morally wrong. More than one million Afghans were killed in the 10-year war, and another million fled before the Red Army. Moscow found itself in a quagmire there, much as the United States had in Vietnam in the preceding decade. Afghanistan, in other words, had become the Kremlin's "Sovietnam."

The First Lady of Letters

Norman Mailer called novelist-memoirist-journalist-critic Mary McCarthy (1912–1989) "the first lady of letters" and many other things: "our saint, our umpire, our lit arbiter, our broadsword, our Barrymore (Ethel), our Dame (dowager), our mistress (Head), our Joan of Arc." Ms. McCarthy, whose works include the popular books *The Groves of Academe* and *The Group*, seemed preoccupied throughout her career with two themes: what she called "the idea of justice" and the notion of self-reliance.

The Great One. No. 99

In only his 11th season, Wayne Gretzky (born 1961) became the greatest point scorer in the history of the National Hockey League. "No. 99" broke Gordie Howe's (born 1928) record of 1,850 points late in the third period of a Los Angeles Kings victory over "the Great One"'s former team, the Edmonton Oilers, in October 1989. (Howe had set the record, with 801 goals and 1,049 assists, in 26 seasons.) Gretzky's two goals in the game—one tied the score, the second won the game in overtime—gave him 642 career goals to go with his more than 1,000 assists. Edmonton had sold Gretzky to LA for \$15 million in 1988. Gretzky's 10-year contract with the Kings is worth \$31 million.

America's Conscience

Bird dog, maverick journalist, late-blooming Greek scholar, I. F. Stone (1907–1989) was "America's Conscience," burrowing into thick, unreadable documents to learn the truth of government action and to defend free

speech everywhere in the world. "Izzy"'s suspicion of official wisdom led to scoop after scoop in his weekly newsletter, published from his garage in Washington, DC. He entered the hospital in Boston during the students' freedom campaign in China in 1989; coming out of anesthesia, he asked immediately, "What's happening in Beijing?"

The Rather Scale

The gravity of a situation can be determined on "the Rather Scale"—how CBS television-news anchor Dan Rather (born 1931) is dressed as he reports the event. For example, when he first covered the earthquake in northern California in October 1989, he was wearing a jacket. As the death toll mounted, he took off his jacket and his tie. At the scene itself, he rolled up his shirtsleeves. Viewers never saw him exiting the limo in which he had arrived at the camera position. (The *New York Times* has written, "Dan Rather's nervous, confrontational intensity is going to get us all into trouble someday.")

The Son of Heaven on the Chrysanthemum Throne. The God King. The Enlightened Peace

Showa—"the Enlightened Peace"—was the title chosen for the reign of Japanese Emperor Michinomiya Hirohito (1901–1989) when he succeeded his father in 1925. Hirohito had a tax-exempt annual salary of \$1.6 million and a household staff numbering 5,000. Stunned commoners first heard his voice 19 years after he had become emperor, when he went on radio in mid-August 1945 to announce that Japan had surrendered unconditionally and that World War II was over. The God King was the first Japanese royal personage to leave the Floating Kingdom in more than 2,500 years.

Soft Society

Coined by fashion-media kingpin John Fairchild (born 1927), "Soft Society" reflects new attitudes among fashion-conscious couples. They no longer sport their jewelry and other finery when they go out at night in cities plagued with street problems. Many no longer go to big parties, instead hosting small ones in their homes.

Cultural Defense

Dong Fu Chen, a Chinese immigrant in New York, bludgeoned his unfaithful wife to death and later told the judge that he had merely expressed cultural identity. In China, Dong said, marriage is sacred, and a spouse could take appropriate action on discovering infidelity. Dong got off with

five years' probation, and another quasi-legal term, "Cultural Defense," gained currency (1989).

The Van Buren Jinx

President George Bush broke "the Van Buren Jinx" in 1988 when he became the first sitting Vice President since Martin Van Buren, 152 years earlier, to be elected President. Nine Vice Presidents have become President following the death or resignation of the incumbent. Four others have won the presidency, but not immediately after serving as Vice President.

The Meal Ticket. King Carl

Southpaw Carl Hubbell (1903–1988) was one of major-league baseball's sterling pitchers for 16 years, with 253 wins, only 154 losses, and a .622 winning percentage. The New York Giants' "Meal Ticket" won a record 24 consecutive games over the 1936–37 seasons and 21 or more games five years in a row. "King Carl" led the National League in earned run average three times and earned the Most Valuable Player Award twice. In 1933 he twirled a record 46½ consecutive scoreless innings.

The Gray Market

"The Gray Market" is the importation into the United States of costly foreign-made goods. They can be sold by discount retailers at lower prices and over the objections of foreign companies and their authorized distributors. A Supreme Court decision (1988) upheld the most significant provisions of the 50-year-old customs-service regulation governing "the Gray Market," whose imports are profitable only when foreign businesses sell their products overseas for much less than they sell them for in the United States.

The Thin Blue Line. The Thin Red Line

A US judge observed that only "the Thin Blue Line"—the police—stands between the citizenry and the tidal wave of encroaching barbarism (1988). The description was presaged by Sir William Howard's reference to British infantry—"the Thin Red Line"—at Balaclava in the Crimean War (1853–56). Rudyard Kipling was to write: "Then it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' 'Tommy, 'ow's yer soul?' / But it's 'Thin red line of 'eroes' when the drums begin to roll."

Antarctic Donuts

Massive releases of chlorofluorocarbons from aerosol products form ozone "holes" over the South Pole. These "Antarctic Donuts" occur in the absence of sunlight, most particularly when winter darkness blankets the pole. The holes coincide with the location of polar stratospheric clouds, which also are thought to play a key role in the process by destroying the ozone.

DINKS. OTNM. WOOP. Nimby

In the 1980s' fondness for "alphabet labels," market researchers came up with the acronym "DINKS," for "double income, no kids" (about 7.4 million US households, or much of the "Yuppie" generation); the letterword "OTNM," for "over thirty, never married" (another marketing "target group"); and the acronym "WOOP," for "well-off older people" (a group singled out by "Snies": Special National Intelligence Estimates). More serious is the "Nimby" syndrome, namely, many individuals' and communities' acknowledgment of the need for finding locations for drug-rehabilitation centers, shelters for the homeless, garbage dumps, prisons, highways, and the like, as long as it's "Nimby"—"not in my backyard."

The Great Black-Dragon Fire

Fires swept the Hinggan forests of Manchuria and Siberia for a month in 1987, blackening an area about the size of New England. It destroyed about 18 million acres of timberland, including the world's largest stand of evergreens. The inferno was one of the worst environmental disasters ever. The Soviet Union has never revealed the full extent of "the Great Black-Dragon Fire."

The One-Man Prison

For a score of years, the only inmate in the West Berlin prison of Spandau was Rudolf Hess, once Hitler's loyal deputy Führer (his fellow Nazi inmates had all died). Hess had been sentenced to life behind bars by the International Tribunal at Nuremberg after World War II; he was spared the death sentence because his behavior both before and during the trial raised questions as to his sanity. The Spandau fortress on the Havel River was run at huge cost by British, Russian, French, and American authorities. The Russians didn't give an inch on releasing the octogenarian, who in 1987 finally took his own life. (See also 1941: The Hess Landing.)

The Last Refuge of the Insane

The British comedian Derek Nimmo (born 1932) has likened the British crown colony of Hong Kong to a psychiatrist: "It's the last refuge of the in-

sane." The Chinese reckon it to be a three-legged stool, with one leg in London, the second in Beijing, and the third in Hong Kong itself. Britain's 99-year lease on the 399 square miles expires on June 30, 1997; the People's Republic of China will then march in.

Country 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

During the Iran-contra hearings in Washington, DC, in 1987, witnesses, lawyers, and legislators intentionally used a number of code names to confuse just about everyone, perhaps muddying the waters to escape closer scrutiny. It is believed that "Country 1" referred to Israel; "Country 2" to Saudi Arabia; "Country 3" to Taiwan; "Country 4" to China; and "Country 5" to South Korea.

Nosey Tongue

A person who ferrets out intimacies and other "good stuff" about celebrities, then gossips wildly about what he or she has learned, is known as a "nosey tongue." Such a person, for example, nosed about among friends of Truman Capote and then rushed around quoting the mighty mite about "Mr. Bidet, Mrs. Ronald Reagan's First-Lady-in-Waiting." A "nosey tongue" is also a person with a sense of rumor.

The Horizontal Telephone Booth. The Torture Chamber

Dick Rutan (born 1938) and Jeana Yeager (born 1952) became in 1986 the first to fly nonstop around the world without refueling. Their radical lightweight, nonmetal, 33-foot-long plane called *Voyager* was created from composite materials and "a lot of high-tech glue." The unpressurized cockpit—"the torture chamber" or "the horizontal telephone booth"—was seven feet long and three-and-a-half feet wide. The historic mission of 25,012 miles lasted nine days, three minutes, 44 seconds.

Glass Widows

Women who are forsaken by their alcoholic husbands are "glass widows," a description coined by the author Joyce K. Lubold (born 1924).

Water City

London's once-derelict East End docks, formerly the heart of the British Empire's mighty merchant fleet, have been transformed into an eight-mile "Water City." Docklands, a glass-and-metal metropolis, is the city's biggest property development and a symbol of England's yearning for economic respectability.

The Lily-White State. The Green Mountain State

In 1986, Vermont's population of 541,000 was 99 percent white, making the Green Mountain state the most homogeneous in the Union. Only 1,135 residents were black, and only 3,304 were Hispanic. In 1989 *Forbes* magazine declared that Vermont was a "third-world state" and needed all the business help it could get.

The Father of Streamlining

The industrial designer Raymond Loewy (1893–1986) was "the Father of Streamlining." He applied to modern materials and methods of manufacture the ancient principle that form should follow function. Loewy put his streamlining hand to refrigerators, planes, trains, pens, soda bottles, and department-store interiors. His most famous design was the 1952 Studebaker automobile.

The Bitburg Blunder. The B.B.

After refusing time and again to make the obligatory visit to the site of a concentration camp on his trips to Europe, President Ronald W. Reagan, in May 1985, made a controversial visit to a cemetery in Bitburg, West Germany, whose many soldiers' graves include those of 48 SS men. His spokesperson said, "He meant no disrespect toward those who had died during the Holocaust. It was simply that if you had a choice of places to go, a concentration camp to him was too horrible even to be reminded of." Nancy Reagan said her husband decided to go to Bitburg in spite of the face-to-face, emotional, public protest in the White House by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel (born 1928, in Romania) because Mr. Reagan "didn't feel we could ask new generations of Germans to live with this guilt forever without any hope of redemption."

The Girl in the Black Helmet

Her face framed by her trademark pageboy bob, the movie actress Louise Brooks (1906–1985) was "the Girl in the Black Helmet"—a remarkable beauty with incendiary sensuality. She was touted as the quintessential flapper, a symbol of '20s licentiousness, the preeminent party-girl nihilist. She played Lulu in *Pandora's Box* and starred in *The Diary of a Lost Girl* for the German director G. W. Pabst, then made a half dozen films in Hollywood. Her career was over at age 33, and she lived the last three decades of her life alone in Rochester, New York, exuding, in the phrase of a movie biographer, "alleged integrity."

The Book of Life

Scientists call the 3-billion-letter genetic message that determines how human beings are made "the Book of Life." Strung along the 46 chromosomes of every human cell are about 100,000 genes, seven or eight of which can be lethal. Mapping a person's "Book of Life" will enable us to predict his or her future. To date, only a few sentences have been deciphered.

The Night Stalker

Richard Ramirez, "the Night Stalker," terrorized southern California in 1985, entering unlocked houses late at night, killing 13 people, and committing at least 30 other felonies, including rape, sodomy, and burglary. In 1989 he was sentenced to death in the state's gas chamber.

The Pitch of the 1980s

Introduced by former pitcher Roger Craig (born 1931), the current manager of the San Francisco Giants in the National League, the split-fingered fastball—"the pitch of the 1980s"—is really only a fast forkball. Because of the way it is gripped and thrown by the pitcher, the baseball sinks suddenly as it gets to the plate.

The Middle Parent. The Sandwich Parent

An adult who cares for both his or her parent(s) and his or her own child(ren) is today popularly called "the middle parent" or "the sandwich parent."

Slasher Flicks

In "slasher flicks," such as the *Friday the 13th* series, blood and gore flow by the bucketful. A study of 474 victims in 56 such movies revealed that libidinous women and domineering men are the most likely to be slasher victims in these movies. The study director noted that "the message that the bad woman is sexual may be almost as pernicious as the message conveyed in pornography that violence can be fun for women."

Boomerang Kids

Offspring who return to their parents' homes to live—a more and more common occurrence in these days of tight, expensive housing in the United States—are known as "boomerang kids." Even some who have

been "thrown out" so that they could "grow up" find themselves returning to the nest like a boomerang.

The Buckle of the Bible Belt

Nashville, the capital of Tennessee, is home to so many churches that their listings fill a dozen pages in the telephone directory. All but a few are Protestant, most of them Fundamentalist. The largest denomination is Southern Baptist, which has been described as "the religion of hellfire and damnation."

The Ultimate High

As more states opt for lethal injection as the preferred method of execution, the designation "the Ultimate High" for this perhaps euphoric kind of death gains currency beyond the language of death-row inmates, where the term seems to have originated.

The Amadeus Syndrome

Although this term was coined in the early 1980s by the German writer Wolfgang Hildesheimer (born 1916), it came into public focus with the release of the movie *Amadeus* in 1984. It refers to the apparent split between the shallowness of an individual and the profundity of his or her creation, as between the person and the music of Johannes Chrysostomus Wolfgangus Theophilus ("Amadeus") Mozart (1756-1791). (The Austrian writer Stefan Zweig suggested to Freud that he analyze Mozart's letters for their "infantilism and coprophilia.") But not all was shallowness outside Mozart's music; to his dying father he wrote that death is the "best and truest friend of mankind . . . the key that unlocks the door to our true happiness."

The De Facto Leader of the United States

Television in time of crisis becomes the de facto leader of the United States. Everyone, including government officials, now turns to the four networks—CNN, ABC, NBC, CBS—to find out what's going on. The medium first achieved this role when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas in November 1963.

The Sharpeville Six

South Africa employed a prosecution for "common purpose" to convict, in 1984, six blacks, "the Sharpeville Six," for the murder of a township official in the Transvaal. An international outcry developed over the harsh-

ness of the original sentence—death by hanging—and the five men and one woman were reprieved by President P. W. Botha, who substituted long prison terms.

The DLE

The Great Salt Lake in Utah, lying between the Wasatch Range in the east and the Great Salt Lake Desert in the west, generates its own weather, called the Dreaded Lake Effect ("DLE"). In 1984 a meteorologist said, "If you compare it with earthquakes, it would be as if you had the Richter scale and the last two years were 15."

The Wheeze Kids

The Philadelphia Phillies baseball team that won the 1983 National League pennant included several relatively old players, "the Wheeze Kids." Among them were 42-year-old first baseman Pete Rose, 40-year-old infielder Joe Morgan, 38-year-old Cy Young-Award-winning pitcher Steve Carlton, and 39-year-old showboating relief pitcher Tug McGraw. But they bowed in the World Series, four games to one, to the Baltimore Orioles. Carlton was the first 300-game winner to pitch in a World Series in 55 years; he lost a 3–2 verdict. (See also 1950: The Whiz Kids.)

Mr. B.

George Balanchine (1904–1983), a Russian emigré, kept the dance world on its toes by choreographing classic after classic, principally for the New York City Ballet. He insisted on new rhythms for time-honored movements. Affectionately called "Mr. B." by his dancers, he once said in rehearsal, "First comes the sweat. Then comes the beauty—if you're vairy lucky and have said your prayers," Balanchine, who once noted that his muse "must come to me on union time," urged adoring balletomanes to "see the music" and "hear the dance."

The Comprehensivist of the Twentieth Century. The Comprehensivist

R. Buckminster Fuller (1895–1983), best known as the inventor of the geodesic dome, was also a mathematician, a philosopher, a cartographer of Spaceship Earth, a choreographer, a poet, and a tireless lecturer on nearly every subject. He once characterized himself in this way: "I live on Earth at present, and I don't know what I am. I know that I am not a category. I am not a thing—a noun. I seem to be a verb, an evolutionary process—an integral function of the universe."