

Word, perfect ... people, not so much

by Charita M. Goshay

If you're a "word" person, consider Ben Schott's best-selling "Schott's Almanac 2007," a treasure trove of the useful, useless and quirky.

Win a bar bet with these facts:

The U.S. Mint produced 668,800 \$100 bills in 2006.

The top baby names of 2006? Jacob and Emily.

The 73rd-most popular? Jesus and Mary.

Schott's Almanac also offers a barometer of Americans' views on moral issues such as gambling, adultery and drug use. Some of it appears to be contradictory - which sounds about right. For instance, the almanac reports that 9 percent of us think it's OK to lie to a spouse or partner about an affair, but only 3 percent of us think that having an affair is morally acceptable.

If 32 percent of us think that overeating is morally wrong, why are 60 percent of us obese?

Because language is a living, breathing organism, Schott's Almanac also features the latest catch-phrases, some of which I've never heard, such as "house fluffing," which means to spruce up one's house in preparation for sale.

"Smirting" is the flirting that reportedly takes place between smokers who now are forced to indulge in their habit outside.

So, what do people who chew tobacco, do?

I don't want to know.

I'm well aware of "boomeritis," that cornucopia of sports-related injuries suffered by baby boomers. I've pulled muscles jumping to conclusions.

Some words are borne of war, such as "drawing down," meaning to reduce troop levels; "big blu," a 30,000-pound bunker-busting bomb, and "IEDs," deadly improvised explosive devices that have wounded and killed thousands of U.S. troops in Iraq.

We've all seen a "muffintop" or two: It's the belly fat that hangs over a pair of low-slung jeans. No word on what percentage of sinful overeaters wear them.

"Helicopter parents" have a hard time letting their college-bound kids leave the nest, while "sock her" moms will do just that to ensure their little darlings get what's coming to them.

"Truthiness" will forever be attached to those who attempt to pass off a facsimile of a fact.

Will the newest words be authentic phrases that stick to the wall, or will they go the way of the cat's pajamas and 23 Skidoo?

You be the decider.

IMUS HAVE BEEN CRAZY...

In a case of words gone wild, nationally syndicated radio host Don Imus lost his job following his unprovoked characterization of the Rutgers University women's basketball team's all-black starting five as "nappy-headed hos."

Black women can't win. If they're poor, they're assumed to be hookers and welfare queens. If they're outspoken, ambitious, well-educated or successful, they're tagged as jaw-breakers by resentful men and radio cranks.

Such a remark is reminiscent of the misogynistic rap musicians who are aided and abetted by record

companies who profit from poisonous lyrics that degrade black women.

Because of his charity work, and because his profitable show has largely become a forum for national politics, Imus had gotten a free pass for years for his increasingly loopy, bigoted and anti-Semitic rants. This time, apologies didn't work. It's like your mother used to say: "Sorry" doesn't fix everything.

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