

**By ANNE DONNELL**

*I'm reading *The Presidents' Club*, an excellent book I'd recommend to anyone interested in American history "at the top." When Harry Truman returns to Washington after being president, Eisenhower didn't invite him to stop by the White House; Truman cleverly brushes that off by saying something about Eisenhower's not having time for every "Tom, Dick, and Harry." Is that the origin of this term? Thank you. -Where Will the Buck Stop Next?*

First, the signature above is a reference to the placard reading The buck stops here on **Harry Truman's desk**.

[Harry Truman (1884-1972) was the 33rd President of the United States and, previously, the 34th Vice President under

**Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

. At Roosevelt's death April 12, 1945, Truman succeeded to the presidency, to such matters as the ending of World War II and the decision to drop atomic bombs on Japan, to a battle and a half in 1948 against the Republican nominee

**Thomas E. Dewey**

, to the coming of the Cold War, and to a few other tall challenges. A good book about him?

*Truman*

by David McCullough.]

Second, the book being read is *The Presidents Club: Inside the World's Most Exclusive Fraternity*

by Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy. The book is about former presidents and particularly how they help (sometimes not) the man holding the office.

[You young people, mark my words, writes the FEMALE columnist. Someday there will be a woman president.]

I've read this book and loved feeling perched on the desk in the Oval Office. What's so surprising is finding out how extremely active former presidents are in matters of state. Well, there's finding out how human, and at times, plain ordinary (and ornery), the guys were and are. The book reminds us, though, no one, except the President, knows all that faces the President. It's frequently noted in other sources how the office ages the man. This book gives some

insight into that and into the compelling lifelong hook into personality being president creates.

So, how about Tom, Dick, and Harry? This expression that's used to mean anybody and everybody, but nobody special, has been around some time. One account takes it back to 17th century British Isles. QPB Book of Word and Phrase Origins leans toward late 19th century United States.

QPB rejects the anonymously made explanation that Tom, Dick, and Harry are nicknames for Satan, an easy fit with much of political rhetoric then and now. Old Harry and Dick (dickens) have been the devil's other names, but not Tom. It seems the three male names are grouped because they've been common names for some time, at least before their recent abandonment for such as Trevor or Peyton. Whoa, now hold on. No offense intended.

Anyway, Harry Truman used the phrase, but didn't coin it.

*ONLINE DEPARTMENT "A Woman's Poem" (Thanks, C.D.) He didn't like the casserole/And he didn't like my cake,/He said my biscuits were too hard/Not like his mother used to make./I didn't perk the coffee right/He didn't like the stew,/I didn't mend his socks/The way his mother used to do./I pondered for an answer/I felt without a clue/Then inspiration struck/ I smacked him very hard/The way his mother used to do. □ "Another Blonde Joke" (Thanks, A.W.) A plane on its way to Milwaukee when a blonde in economy class gets up and moves to the first class section and sits down. The flight attendant watches her do this and asks to see her ticket which clearly reads "Economy." The attendant then tells the blonde she'll have to sit in the area she paid for - economy in the back. The blonde replies, "I'm blonde, I'm beautiful, I'm going to Milwaukee, and I'm staying right here." The flight attendant goes into the cockpit and tells the pilot and co-pilot there is a blonde bimbo sitting in first class who belongs in economy, and she won't move back to her seat. The co-pilot goes to the blonde and tries to explain that because she paid only for economy she will have to leave first class and return to her seat. The blonde replies, "I'm blonde, I'm beautiful, I'm going to Milwaukee, and I'm staying right here." The co-pilot tells the pilot he probably should have the police waiting when they land to arrest this blonde woman who won't listen to reason. The pilot says, "Oh, so she's a blonde? I'll handle this. I'm married to a blonde. I speak blonde." He goes back to the blonde and whispers in her ear, and she says, "Oh, I'm sorry," and gets up and returns to her seat in economy. The flight attendant and co-pilot are amazed and ask him what he said to make her move without any fuss. "I told her, 'First class isn't going to Milwaukee.'" □ "The First Blonde Guy Joke" (Thanks, C.D.) An Irishman, a Mexican and a blonde guy were doing construction work on scaffolding on the 20th floor of a building. They were eating lunch and the Irishman said, "Corned beef and cabbage! If I get corned beef and cabbage one more time for lunch, I'm going to jump off this building." The*

*Mexican opened his lunch box and exclaimed, "Burritos again! If I get burritos one more time I'm going to jump off, too." The blonde opened his lunch and said, "Bologna again! If I get a bologna sandwich one more time, I'm jumping too." The next day, the Irishman opened his lunch box, saw corned beef and cabbage, and jumped. The Mexican opened his lunch, saw a burrito, and jumped, too. The blonde guy opened his lunch, saw the bologna and also jumped. The Irishman's wife was weeping. She said, "If I'd known how really tired he was of corned beef and cabbage, I never would have given it to him again!" The Mexican's wife also wept and said, "I could have given him tacos or enchiladas! I didn't realize he hated burritos so much." Everyone turned and stared at the blonde guy's wife, who angrily responded, "Don't look at me. That idiot made his own lunch!"*

**BW (Bigtime Word) lacustrine – things to do with lakes, that live in lakes, that sit on the bottom of lakes. That latter is to be avoided as a permanent occupation. Well, some of the things that live in lakes, or that might live in lakes (Nessie, the Loch Ness gal, for example), are to be avoided altogether. However, this is "Ask Anne," not "Ask Ranger Rick."**