

By Nancy Whitaker

### PEAS PORRIDGE OR DEAD RINGER?

There are so many old sayings, beliefs and old wives tales which are passed down through the years, sometimes it is hard to distinguish fact from fiction.

I know there is probably some type of story as to how each of these old sayings got started, so I did some research on the topic. I was very surprised to find out some of the stories behind some of the old sayings so I thought I would ask you, "Did you know?"

Years ago urine was used to to tan animal skins. Now I do happen to know that statement is true. It is said that some families in order to survive and earn a bit of money all used to relieve themselves in the same vessel.

Once every day the body fluids were taken to the tannery and sold. If this was a family's main source of income and they had to do this to survive they were referred to as "p--s poor."

Some were even worse off and could not afford a pot. They were referred to as "not having a pot to p--s in." Therefore these old sayings were supposedly derived from that situation.

The next time you are washing your hands or taking a shower and get upset because you can't get the temperature regulated, think back of the way things used to be. This is how things were supposedly done way back when.

Most people got married in June, because they took their yearly bath in May. By June, they still

smelled pretty good, but the brides would always carry a nice bouquet of fresh flowers to hide any body odor. Therefore the custom of carrying a bridal bouquet was born.

Baths many years ago, consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house got the privilege of taking a bath first in the good hot clean water. Then all of the sons and any other men of the house, followed by the daughters and the women and young children.

Getting the last bath were the babies and by the time it was their turn, the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water."

In some of those good old days cooking was done in an old iron kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day the fire was lit and usually more vegetables were added to the big pot. Not a lot of meat was added because meat was sometimes scarce.

Families would eat the stew for supper and would leave the leftovers in the pot overnight. The whole thing would start over the next day and sometimes that stew had food in it that had been there for quite a while.

I always did wonder about the old nursery rhyme: "Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old."

To me this type of history is interesting. England is old and small and the local folks started running out of places to bury people. So they would dig up coffins, take the bones to a bone-house and reuse the grave.

It was reported that when reopening these coffins, 1 out of 25 were found to have scratch marks on the inside. People then realized they had been burying people alive.

So to solve the problem, they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the

coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell.

Someone would then have to sit out in the graveyard all night (the graveyard shift) to listen for the bell. Thus, someone could be “saved by the bell” or was considered a “dead ringer.”

I am not saying that the origins of these sayings are true or false, but I do believe they are food for thought.

Have you ever heard of any of these old sayings? Have you ever heard how they got started? Do you know any old wives tales? Let me know and I'll give you a Penny for Your Thoughts.