

Marjorie Kemper's review of May's book:

We use idioms and expressions every day. Usually we aren't even aware we're using them; they've become the verbal equivalent of wallpaper. And even when we do notice them, for the most part, we've forgotten their origins. If we ever knew them. How many of us know that the expression "hand over fist", as in, "he's making money hand over fist at his new sushi restaurant", is derived from a 19<sup>th</sup> century British naval term?

Well, if you love words as I do, you'll be interested in May Pare's new book, *Body Idioms And More*. Although she wrote the book for ESL students, it is a thoroughly enjoyable read for the native English speaker as well. I sat down with it, intending only to skim through it, and two hours later, I was still reading.

The book is arranged around expressions that feature parts of the body – hence its title *Body Idioms* – as in, "Here's mud in your *eye*". (I'm pretty sure most readers don't know the origin of this expression; I know I didn't.) There are 18 pages of listings for *Eye(s)* alone, and six pages devoted to shoulder analogies (as in, "Put your *shoulder* to the wheel") I'd previously had no idea how many of these 'body idioms' were in every day use. I'm sure you can think of quite a few just off the 'top of your head' – "footloose and fancy free," "a broken heart," "out of one's mind," etc!

If English is your native language, to appreciate the need for a book like this, imagine yourself in France, with the typical American's sadly rudimentary knowledge of French, and a person speaks to you of "*nostalgie de la bou.*" Though you understand the words, it's not likely that you'll understand the reference. Nostalgia of (or for) the mud is its literal translation, but it really refers to a longing for old time and old ways – when the majority of the French lived on farms and raised their own food and livestock. Often it carries a sardonic implication. Generally speaking this nostalgia is felt by the people farthest away from the actual experience of it. As you can see, idioms get a lot trickier in a language you didn't grow up speaking.

Which is why Ms. Pare's book will be such a boon to people for whom English is a second language – whatever their first language, be it Spanish, Armenian, or Farsi. As well as definitions, Ms. Pare thoughtfully lets her readers know whether or not certain expressions or idioms are permissible, or advisable, in polite conversation. She even includes some common rude expressions so the reader will know when he/she has been insulted!

Ms. Pare taught English at the university level in her native Thailand, and during that time wrote popular books and articles for Thai English students. She is a Glendale area resident, and works here in Glendale at Shaker's Restaurant.

She first had the idea for this book ten years ago, and began collecting the expressions and idioms on index cards. When she and some of her Thai friends began planning a program to be called Project Techno Thai – to help Thai adults become computer literate and proficient – Ms. Pare decided to finish the book and use the profits from its sale to fund the project.

Though she confines herself to body idioms in this book, Ms. Pare is planning additional volumes on idiomatic speech centered around clothing, money, food, and names.

I think the book would make an excellent graduation gift, particularly for young people still learning to navigate the tricky waters of English vernacular. For the rest of us, it's just plain fun. Or, anticipating Ms. Pare's next volume – to be centered around clothing – "a kick in the pants"!