

WORDS FROM THE WILD WEST

TO HELP YOU OUT ON YOUR TRIP TO DEADWOOD

A

ACE-HIGH ~ first class, respected.

ACCORDING TO HOYLE ~ Correct, by the book.

A HOG-KILLIN' TIME ~ a real good time. "We went to the New Year's Eve dance and had us a hog-killin' time."

A LICK AND A PROMISE ~ to do haphazardly. "She just gave it a lick and a promise."

ALL DOWN BUT NINE ~ missed the point, not understood. (Reference to missing all nine pins at bowling.)

ARBUCKLE'S ~ slang for coffee, taken from a popular brand of the time. "I need a cup of Arbuckle's."

AT SEA ~ at a loss, not comprehending. "When it comes to understanding women, boys, I am at sea."

B

BACK DOWN ~ yield, retract.

BALLED UP ~ confused.

BANG-UP ~ first rate. "They did a bang-up job."

BAZOO ~ mouth. "Shut your big bazoo."

BEAR SIGN ~ cowboy term for donuts. A cook who could and would make them was highly regarded.

BEAT THE DEVIL AROUND THE STUMP ~ to evade responsibility or a difficult task. "Quit beatin' the devil around the stump and ask that girl to marry you."

BEEF ~ to kill. (From killing a cow to make beef to eat.) "Curly Bill beefed two men in San Antonio."

BEND AN ELBOW ~ have a drink. "He's been known to bend an elbow with the boys."

BETWEEN HAY AND GRASS ~ neither man nor boy, half-grown.

BEST BIB AND TUCKER ~ your best clothes. "There's a dance Saturday, so put on your best bib and tucker."

BIG BUG ~ important person, official, boss. "He's one of the railroad big bugs."

BILK ~ cheat.

BLOW ~ boast, brag. "Don't listen to him, that's just a lot of blow."

BLOWHARD ~ braggart, bully.

BLOW-UP ~ fit of anger. "He and the missus had a blow-up, but it's over, now."

BONE ORCHARD ~ cemetery.

BOSH ~ Nonsense.

BOSS ~ the best, top. "The Alhambra Saloon sells the boss whiskey in town."

BULLDOZE ~ to bully, threaten, coerce.

BULLY ~ Exceptionally good, outstanding. (Used as an exclamation.) "Bully for you!"

BUNKO ARTIST ~ con man.

BURG ~ town.

BY HOOK OR CROOK ~ to do any way possible.

MURDER AT THE DEADWOOD SALOON

C

CALABOOSE ~ jail.

CALIFORNIA WIDOW ~ woman separated from her husband, but not divorced. (From when pioneer men went West, leaving their wives to follow later.)

CHISEL, CHISELER ~ to cheat or swindle, a cheater.

CLEAN HIS/YOUR PLOW ~ to get or give a thorough whippin'.

COFFEE BOILER ~ shirker, lazy person. (Would rather sit around the coffee pot than help.)

CONSUMPTION ~ slang for pulmonary tuberculosis.

COPPER A BET ~ Betting to loose, or being prepared against loss. "I'm just coppering my bets."

COME A CROPPER ~ come to ruin, fail, or fall heavily. "He had big plans to get rich, but it all come a cropper, when the railroad didn't come through."

CROAKER ~ pessimist, doomsayer. "Don't be such an old croaker."

CROWBAIT ~ derogatory term for a poor-quality horse.

CURLY WOLF ~ real tough guy, dangerous man. "Ol' Bill is a regular curly wolf, especially when he's drinkin' whiskey."

CUT A SWELL ~ present a fine figure. "He sure is cutting a swell with the ladies."

D

DICKER ~ barter, trade.

DIFFICULTY ~ euphemism for trouble, often the shootin' or otherwise violent kind. "He had to leave Texas on account of a difficulty with a gambler in San Antonio."

DIRECTLY ~ soon. "She'll be down, directly."

DEADBEAT ~ bum, layabout, useless person.

DINERO ~ from the Spanish, a word for money.

DON'T CARE A CONTINENTAL ~ Don't give a damn.

DOWN ON ~ opposed to. "His wife is really down on drinking and cigars."

DOXOLOGY WORKS ~ a church.

DRAGGED OUT ~ fatigued, worn out.

DREADFUL ~ very. "Oh, her dress is dreadfully pretty."

DRY GULCH ~ to ambush. Reference from abandoning a body where it fell.

DUDE ~ an Easterner, or anyone in up-scale town clothes, rather than plain range-riding or work clothes.

E

EUCHER, EUCHERED ~ to out-smart someone, to be outwitted or suckered into something.

MURDER AT THE DEADWOOD SALOON

F

FANDANGO ~ from the Spanish, a big party with lots of dancing and excitement.

FETCH ~ bring, give. "Fetch me that hammer." / "He fetched him a punch in the nose."

FIGHT LIKE KILKENNY CATS ~ fight like hell.

FINE AS CREAM GRAVY ~ very good, top notch.

FISH ~ a cowboy's rain slicker, from a rain gear manufacturer whose trademark was a fish logo. "We told him it looked like rain, but left his fish in the wagon anyhow."

FLANNEL MOUTH ~ an overly smooth or fancy talker, especially politicians or salesmen. "I swear that man is a flannel-mouthed liar."

FLUSH ~ prosperous, rich.

FORK OVER ~ pay out.

FOUR-FLUSHER ~ a cheat, swindler, liar.

FULL AS A TICK ~ very drunk.

FUSS ~ disturbance. "They had a little fuss at the saloon."

G

GAME ~ to have courage, guts, gumption. "He's game as a banty rooster." Or, "That's a hard way to go, but he died game."

GET A WIGGLE ON ~ hurry.

GET IT IN THE NECK ~ get cheated, misled, bamboozled.

GET MY/YOUR BACK UP ~ to get angry. "Don't get your back up, he was only joking."

GET THE MITTEN ~ to be rejected by a lover. "Looks like Blossom gave poor Buck the mitten."

GIVE IN ~ yield.

GONER ~ lost, dead.

GONE UP THE FLUME ~ same as goner!

GOSPEL MILL ~ a church.

GOSPEL SHARP ~ a preacher. (Apparent opposite of a card sharp!)

GOT THE BULGE ~ have the advantage. "We'll get the bulge on him, and take his gun away."

GO THROUGH THE MILL ~ gain experience. (Often the hard way.)

GRAND ~ excellent, beautiful. "Oh, the Christmas decorations look just grand!"

GRANGER ~ a farmer.

GRASS WIDOW ~ divorcee.

H

HANG AROUND ~ loiter.

HANG FIRE ~ delay.

HALF SEAS OVER ~ drunk.

MURDER AT THE DEADWOOD SALOON

HARD CASE ~ worthless person, bad man.

HEAP ~ a lot, many, a great deal. "He went through a heap of trouble to get her that piano."

HEELED ~ to be armed with a gun. "He wanted to fight me, but I told him I was not heeled."

HERE'S HOW! ~ a toast, such as Here's to your health.

HOBBLE YOUR LIP ~ shut up.

HOLD A CANDLE TO ~ measure up, compare to.

HOOSEGOW ~ jail.

HOT AS A WHOREHOUSE ON NICKEL NIGHT ~ damned hot.

I

IN APPLE PIE ORDER ~ in top shape.

IS THAT A BLUFF, OR DO YOU MEAN IT FOR REAL PLAY? ~ Are you serious?

J

JIG IS UP ~ scheme/game is over, exposed.

K

KICK UP A ROW ~ create a disturbance.

KNOCKED INTO A COCKED HAT ~ fouled up, rendered useless.

KNOCK GALLEY WEST ~ beat senseless.

L

LET SLIDE/ LET DRIVE/ LET FLY ~ go ahead, let go. "If you think you want trouble, then let fly."

LIGHT (OR LIGHTING) A SHUCK ~ to get the hell out of here in a hurry. "I'm lightin' a shuck for California."

LIKE A THOROUGHbred ~ like a gentleman.

LUNGER ~ slang for someone with tuberculosis.

M

MAKE A MASH ~ make a hit, impress someone. (Usually a female.) "Buck's tryin' to make a mash on that new girl."

MUDSILL ~ low-life, thoroughly disreputable person.

N

NAILED TO THE COUNTER ~ proven a lie.

NAMBY-PAMBY ~ sickly, sentimental, saccharin.

MURDER AT THE DEADWOOD SALOON

O

ODD STICK ~ eccentric person. "Ol' Farmer Jones sure is an odd stick."

OF THE FIRST WATER ~ first class. "He's a gentleman of the first water."

OFFISH ~ distant, reserved, aloof.

OH-BE-JOYFUL ~ Liquor, beer, intoxicating spirits. "Give me another snort of that oh-be-joyful."

ON THE SHOOT ~ looking for trouble. "Looks like he's on the shoot, tonight."

P

PASS THE BUCK ~ evade responsibility.

PAY THROUGH THE NOSE ~ to over-pay, or pay consequences.

PETER OUT ~ dwindle away.

PLAY TO THE GALLERY ~ to show off. "That's just how he is, always has to play to the gallery."

PLAYED OUT ~ exhausted.

PLUNDER ~ personal belongings. "Pack your plunder, Joe, we're headin' for San Francisco."

PONY UP ~ hurry up!

POWERFUL ~ very. "He's a powerful rich man."

PROMISCUOUS ~ reckless, careless. "He was arrested for a promiscuous display of fire arms."

PULL IN YOUR HORNS ~ back off, quit looking for trouble.

PUT A SPOKE IN THE WHEEL ~ to foul up or sabotage something.

Q

QUIRLEY ~ roll-your-own cigarette.

R

RICH ~ amusing, funny, improbable. "Oh, that's rich!"

RIDE SHANK'S MARE ~ to walk or be set afoot.

RIGHT AS A TRIVET ~ right as rain, sound as a nut, stable.

RIP ~ reprobate. "He's a mean ol' rip."

ROOSTERED ~ drunk. "Looks like those cowboys are in there gettin' all roostered up."

S

SEE THE ELEPHANT ~ originally meant to see combat for the first time, later came to mean going to town, where all the action was.

SCOOP IN ~ trick, entice, inveigle. "He got scooped into a poker game and lost his shirt."

SCUTTLEBUTT ~ rumors.

SHAVE TAIL ~ a green, inexperienced person.

MURDER AT THE DEADWOOD SALOON

SHIN OUT ~ run away.

SHINDY ~ uproar, confusion.

SHODDY ~ poor quality.

SHOOT, LUKE, OR GIVE UP THE GUN ~ poop or get off the pot, do it or quit talking about it.

SHOOT ONE'S MOUTH OFF ~ talk nonsense, untruth. "He was shootin' his mouth off and Bill gave him a black eye."

SHOVE THE QUEER ~ to pass counterfeit money.

SIMON PURE ~ the real thing, a genuine fact. "This is the Simon pure."

SKEDADDLE ~ run like hell.

SOAKED ~ drunk.

SOFT SOLDIER ~ flattery. "All that soft solder won't get you anywhere."

SOMEONE TO RIDE THE RIVER WITH ~ a person to be counted on; reliable; got it where it counts.

SOUND ON THE GOOSE ~ true, staunch, reliable.

STAND THE GAFF ~ take punishment in good spirit. "He can really stand the gaff."

STOP ~ stay. "We stopped at the hotel last night."

STUMPED ~ confused.

SUPERINTEND ~ oversee, supervise. "He just likes to superintend everything."

T

TAKE ON ~ grieve. "Don't take on so."

TAKE FRENCH LEAVE ~ to desert, sneak off without permission.

TAKE THE RAG OFF ~ surpass, beat all. "Well, if that don't take the rag off the bush."

THE OLD STATES ~ back East.

THE WHOLE KIT AND CABOODLE ~ the entire thing.

THROW UP THE SPONGE ~ quit, give up, surrender.

TIE TO ~ rely on. "He's a man you can tie to."

TO BEAT THE DUTCH ~ to beat the band. "It was rainin' to beat the Dutch."

TO THE MANNER BORN ~ a natural. "He's a horseman to the manner born."

TWIG ~ understand.

U

UP THE SPOUT ~ gone to waste/ruin.

W

WAKE UP/WOKE UP THE WRONG PASSENGER ~ to trouble or anger the wrong person.

WHO-HIT-JOHN ~ Liquor, beer, intoxicating spirits. "He had a little too much who-hit-John."

WIND UP ~ settle. "Let's wind up this business and go home."