

A SIEVE IS A SIEVE IS A SIEVE

A Kind of Introduction

You're a newcomer to this thing. You walk in the door of the Rand Bar and look around. It appears so ordinary, so unpromising, so dull. A few regulars sit like lumps at the main bar, sipping beers and 7-7's; the bartender washes a few glasses, moving with the speed of lard; other folks look glum as they carry on muffled conversations at tables scattered around the bar; one or two give you an absent glance, sigh, then turn back to the burden of their companions. You think "Is this it—the Rand Bar Party? Is this tomb the place? Did they call it off?" Eventually you find the stairs.

You descend (figuratively as well as literally), follow a narrow, dimly lit hallway and reach a doorway looking into a small square room. This room is apparently arranged on the Church Basement motif, decorated with Plywood Minnesota in mind. Bingo comes to mind when you see the table arrangement. If you're early, people are just milling about at the bar. They appear a motley group, sort of like a collision between the '60's and '70's. Searching the group for a familiar face, you notice three people in the crowd that clearly stand out: one looks lost, like a victim of inertia; another emits a kind of red, white, and blue haze; the third strikes you as some sort of riddle, a human question mark, definitely a loser. About this time, someone hands you a piece of paper, asks for money, and tells you to vote for Sieve of the Year. "Sieve of the Year?" you think; "What the hell is that?"

It's a deep question, one ranking with the other cosmic mysteries—Who am I? What is life? Whatever happened to Jerry Mathers? Philosophers, mystics, and nowhere people have pondered the question for ages, but, like Evel Knevil's Grand Canyon Leap, Muhammed Ali's latest comeback, or Al Quie's attempt to balance his checkbook, the effort has been doomed to failure. Still it's worth a try.

A Pronunciation Lesson

First things first. How is the word "Sieve" pronounced? For starters, use a short "i," as in dip, drip, simp, wimp, bimbo, or Jim. (Note: Both "e's" are silent; they are superfluous, like the Sieve itself.) With alcohol, excitement, the influence of Rock 'n Roll, and the release of pecking-order hormones, the pronunciation goes through some weird changes. Nordic types begin to spit out the word sharply in curt, bullet-like volleys: siv.siv.siv. Others hiss through their teeth: S-s-sieve! S-s-sieve! S-s-sieve! Still others howl, as if their bellowing of the word were a defiant blast against all that's absurd in the world: S-i-i-I-I-I-ieve! By the climax of the night, fingers point, eyes glare, neck veins fill with blood, faces drip sweat, and the bowels of the Rand swell to bursting with the thunderous chant: SIEVE! SIEVE! SIEVE! It's the roar of a great, wild, uncontrollable beast. It's no place for a first grader.

A Paradox Sort of

A Sieve is not a sieve. A sieve is a kitchen utensil filled with tiny holes. A Sieve is a social misfit filled with big holes. A sieve is functional. A Sieve is dysfunctional. A sieve leaks water. A Sieve leaks absurdity.

Subtleties

Wimp, nerd, jerk, bozo, boob, fool, turkey, door knob—all such terms should not be confused with the label "Sieve." The term "Sieve" embraces all ignoble titles. Other slurs are minor league, just ingredients in the complex recipe of Sieviness. For example, a nerd is to a Sieve as Tattoo is to the whole idea of "Fantasy Island."

A Very Fine Distinction

The exact difference between a Sieve and a Woos is unclear. Woosiness has something to do with male hormones while Sieviness with genetic mutations. Perhaps a comparison would help: A Woos is to a Sieve as a touch of the flu is to leprosy. If being a Woos is like being Bob Sater for a day, being a Sieve is like being Wayne Adriens for a year.

An Illustration

Consider the comic strips. Some might think that Ziggy is a Sieve. He's not; his creator is. Some might think the creator of The Family Circus is a Sieve. He is but so is the guy who has any doubt.

Rough-and-Ready "Definitions"

The following are not exact definitions. They only approximate truth, in the same way as, say, dentures approximate real teeth.

A Sieve is:

- a biological fluke
- a social cockroach
- a tired joke
- a cosmic Jello-brain
- God's Edsel
- the outward sign of a wrong impression
- a freelance mediocrity
- the human equivalent of navel lint
- an odd duck

Oriental Wisdom

Master, why does the weasel laugh? Why does the sparrow fly against the solid wall?

Grasshopper, you have much to learn of the world. Think on this, little one: The stomach of the elephant is large and full of gas. The sacred dragon belches in the night. The lowly dung beetle carries its load. A Sieve moves through the world.

Hmm.

American Wisdom

Gee, Wally, what's a Sieve?

Well Beav, it's like this: ya know how Eddy smiles when he sees Mom or Dad?

Yeah.

well, uh, a Sieve is kinda like the smile Eddy smiles, only it's a person.

Oh . . . I see. . . . Well, 'night Wally.

'Night Beav.

Reality Speaks Louder Than Words

1974	Dave Hoppe, Sieve of the Year	1979	Joe and Emmy Moore, Sieves of the Year
1975	Bob Sater, Sieve of the Year		
1976	Jim Moore, Sieve of the Year	1980	Nick Ripperger, Sieve of the Year
1977	Mark Koenig, Sieve of the Year		Jim Moore, Sieve of the Decade
1978	Bob Bergland, Sieve of the Year	1981	Wayne Adriens, Sieve of the Year

SELF-TEST NO. 13

ARE YOU A SIEVE?



"Hi, guy."

sieve (siv) n. (MFS sive > OE syrd akin to G siua > IE base *seip- 'to drip' whence a drip.) 1. one who unknowingly displays a grossly unagreeable personality disorder manifested by subtle forms of asocial behavior complicated by illusions of normalcy and self-worth. 2. a dope
3. Bob Seter

Many sieves go through life thinking they are normal. Little do they know. Protect yourself against a life of ridicule and humiliation. Find out early if you are a sieve by taking the Sieve Quiz below. Even though there's no known cure for sieviness, you can avoid much of the mockery and derision that goes along with it by finding out NOW if you are a sieve. If you are, just stay indoors and avoid people the rest of your life.

The following test has been prepared by the American Psychological Association and People Magazine. Read your results as follows: (1) If you answer "yes" to six or seven (or maybe even five or four) of the questions, your sieve quotient is high—you are probably a sieve. (2) If you answer "yes" to eight or more of the questions, you are a sieve. (3) If you answer "no" to all ten questions, you definitely are a sieve. (In cases of probable or definite sieviness, contact your family personality therapist immediately.)

Answer yes or no:

1. Do you often think "But I don't get it" after someone tells a joke (probably about you)? _____
2. Do you think that "sueve" is a kind of deodorant soap? _____
3. Do people "poke fun" at you for reasons that you don't understand? _____
4. Does your first name begin with a capital letter? _____
5. Is your favorite color beige? _____
6. Do you take phrases like "personal space," "bottom line," and "existential dilemma" seriously? _____
7. Have you ever left a serious message on a telephone answering machine? _____
8. Have you ever answered with more than one word when someone asks, "How are you?" _____
9. Have you ever said "unthaw" when you meant "thaw," as in "I have to unthaw the hamburger first"? _____
10. Do you frequently hum commercial jingles to yourself? _____