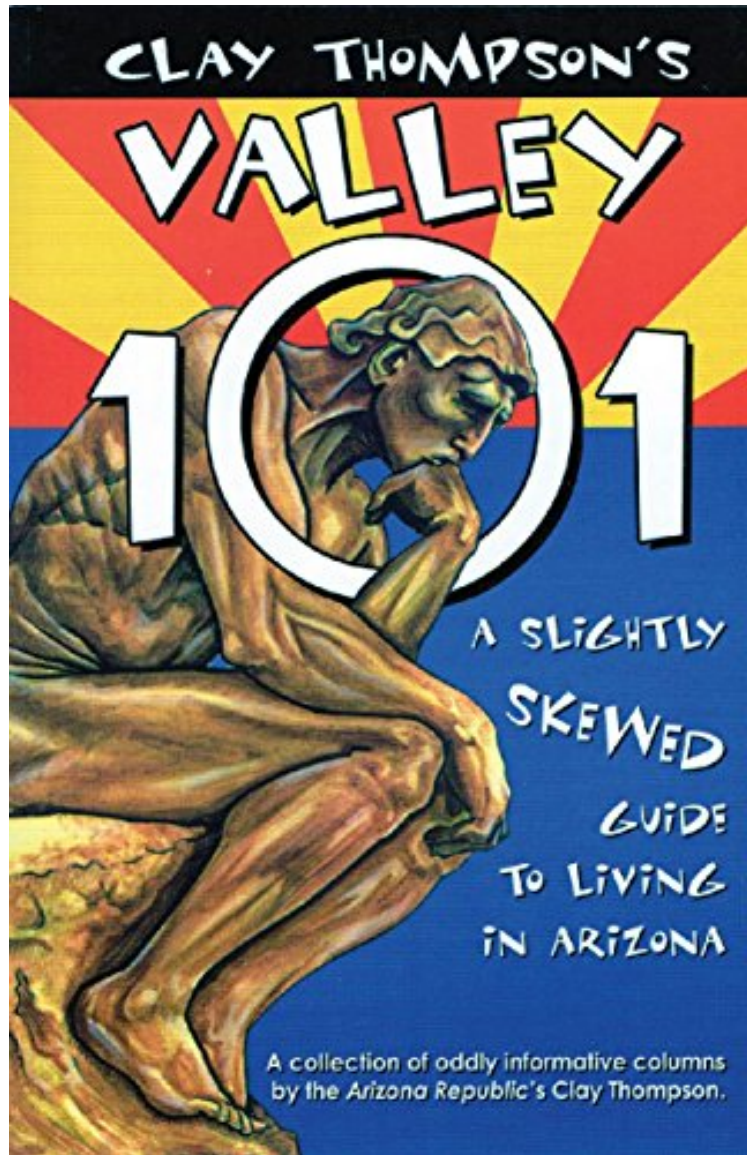


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# Clay Thompson's Valley 101: A Slightly Skewed Guide to Living in Arizona

Clay Thompson

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## Clay Thompson's Valley 101: A Slightly Skewed Guide to Living in Arizona

Years ago a wise old newspaper editor told me that success in journalism is determined by a writer's ability to understand the difference between useless information and news. Unfortunately, Clay Thompson never worked for that man. It's impossible to find a contemporary writer with whom Clay can be compared. When I think of Clay's work for the Arizona Republic I'm reminded that if E.B. White were alive today...he'd be 104. God, I miss him.E.J. MontiniColumnist, The Arizona Republic -- About the AuthorDaily columnist for The Arizona Republic.Former daily columnist for The Phoenix Gazette.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.OPAQUE QUESTIONS CLOUD THE ISSUEDate: Thursday, April 6, 2000Here's a question I get asked a lot:OK, not a lot, really, but it's a question that came in twice from two people in the space of a week or so, which kind of makes it a lot.Actually, I do get asked certain questions a lot, but they tend to run along lines of inquiry I probably shouldn't go into here. Stuff like:"Is this the lady of the house?"or:"Could you possibly be any dumber?"or:"Did you get dressed in the dark this morning?"or:"What were you thinking?"or:"Are you new here?"or:"What's wrong with your hair?"or:"Is that it?"Anyway, this is the question I received twice this past week or so:What is the difference between partly cloudy and partly sunny?What a question! Could you possibly be any dumber? Did you think of this question while you were getting dressed in the dark? What were you thinking? Is that it?Sorry, just venting a bit there.Actually, this is a very good question and one that I never really thought about much, but which now intrigues me greatly, especially because it came in twice in a week.My first guess would have been that there's not much difference at all, kind of like the difference between the two major political parties or the difference between Madonna's cover of American Pie and a that crud under the refrigerator. You know, there should be some sort of law about stuff like that.But I digress.It turns out there actually is a difference between partly cloudy and partly sunny, according to Austin Jamison, a meteorologist at the Phoenix office of the National Weather Service and a very patient person who is willing to speak slowly and in words of few syllables for those of us who don't catch on very quickly.First of all, says he: It is a somewhat subjective matter. But in a nutshell, if there is going to be less than half of opaque cloud cover, the forecast will be partly sunny. If there is going to be more than half opaque cloud cover, it will be partly cloudy.There also is a day/night issue here. The degree of daytime cloud cover tends to affect, obviously, the partly sunny question because a partly sunny forecast for the night hours would be fairly remarkable and perhaps the subject of an entire column.Opaque is one of those words that has always given me trouble (see question No. 2 above). I always have to look it up. In the case of cloudiness, it means you can't really see the blue sky very well or the stars or very much moonlight.If you have any more weather questions, send them along. Again, see question No. 2 above. Maybe all the others, too.