

How I Got My Name

Your name is a big deal. In most cases, it stays with you for life. You mention it several times each day, and other people call your name just as often. Your name sometimes describes how you look and act, too, as in “She just doesn’t look like a Martha.” Nicknames can get even more descriptive: Too Tall Jones, Pee Wee Reese, Fats Domino.

The stories you sent us about your names are terrific. Some are outrageous, other sentimental, others unbelievable.

Thanks to everyone who sent in a story. The judges’ selections are on these pages. You can see more on our Web site: www.carolinacountry.com

Next month we’ll publish your “home improvement horror stories.” [Deadline was Dec. 15.] For the remaining themes and rules in our “Nothing Could Be Finer” series, see page 20.

— Michael E.C. Gery

THE PHANTOM GIRLFRIEND

In 1942 when I was born, World War II was going on, and my mom’s brother was stationed overseas. Mom writes a letter to my uncle and asks him to name her newborn baby girl. At that time some people didn’t name their babies until they developed their personality, so the name would fit the child.

Uncle doesn’t have any idea what to name the baby. He doesn’t want his sister to worry about the situation he was in. He writes a letter telling Mom about the beautiful woman that he has met. Tells how they have fallen in love, and in spite of everything he has found happiness. He tells Mom to name her baby Mildred Marie after his girlfriend. In the letter he sends a 1942 hard dollar for the baby.

My mom never knew that my uncle was not telling the truth. Years later after her death, he tells me the real story. He did not have a girlfriend. While he was eating lunch in a café, the waitress came over to get his order. He asked the waitress her name. “Mildred Marie,” she replied.

My name is Mildred Marie, and I still have that 1942 hard dollar.

*Mildred Marie Kidd
Seagrove
Randolph EMC*

THE PIANO MAN

I was born at Bailey in 1922. Some years earlier, my parents had bought a piano from Cullom Music Company in Wilson. Periodically, Mack Cullom, the son of the owner of the company, would come to the house to tune the piano.

On May 18, the day I was born, Mr. Cullom arrived to work on the piano soon after I had been delivered. As I was the tenth of 12 children, the seventh of eight boys, my parents had already used the names Johnny, Joseph, William, Clarence and other common names. Mr. Cullom asked if they had assigned me a name. When they said no, he suggested that they name me after his father. Thus I acquired the name Ambrose Nuel.

The elder Mr. Cullom’s tombstone can be found in Maplewood Cemetery in Wilson. My wife and I have visited it.

*Ambrose Nuel Manning
Emerald Isle
Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative*



THE BANTAM AND THE BEE

My son was always sort of clumsy and large. In his senior year of high school at Rosewood High School he was continuing his football career. He also enjoyed raising bantam chickens and had an old rooster with long spurs. One day he arrived at football practice and informed the coach he would be unable to practice because the rooster had spurred him on the top of his foot, and on the way back to the house he stepped on a bumblebee with the same foot. His coach replied, "Okay, sit down Bumblechicken." This became his nickname. After 18 years now, people still call him that.

*Olivia Rash
Goldsboro
Tri-County EMC*

ALL THAT IMMIGRATION

The way I got my name is a small part of American history. My great-grandfather's name was Samuel Levintonsky. He was born in Gluk-Hov, Russia. He was a Russan Jew. He came to New York as one of the thousands of immigrants wanting a better life. He must have felt encouraged when he saw the Statue of Liberty in New York for the first time. When he got to the immigration office, they shortened his name to Levinson.

One of Samuel's sons immigrated to Florida and shortened his name to Aaron Vinson for business purposes. Aaron had seven children, including my dad, Steve. When my dad grew up he changed his last name back to Levinson to carry on the family name.

Steve had five children, including me, and immigrated to North Carolina. My brother and I will be proud to carry on the family name, and I hope never to immigrate again because "nothing could be finer than to be in Carolina."

*Joshua Levinson
Rutherfordton
Rutherford EMC*

THE CARING NUN

At great personal sacrifice, my immigrant grandparents sent my mother to boarding school in Canada where she had been born. When she was about 14, my mother contracted a serious infection and was put in the isolation section of the infirmary. This was 1930. Her

father was a factory worker, and there were many younger siblings, so her parents couldn't go to her. She was very ill, possibly contagious, but a kind and caring young nun took a mattress and stayed with my mother night and day. My mother always credited her with saving her life and told the nun that she would name her first daughter after her. Sister Charlotte thought that this was a nice thought but the young teenager would surely forget all about this by the time she married.

They corresponded for over 60 years, and my namesake and I got to see one another many times during the course of that friendship. During her retirement years she would take a yearly vacation to visit my parents and my family. I have several of her needlepoint pictures hanging in my house alongside my mother's oil paintings.

*Charlotte Montillo
Wake Forest
Wake EMC*

I WAS PESTER TO HIM

My name is Kristi. Twenty years ago I had another name. It was Pester.

I can't tell you when I acquired that name or if a certain event caused it to become mine. I can only tell you that my grandfather gave me the name.

When I was a kid I followed my grandfather everywhere. He was a tobacco farmer, so the trips were early and at times messy. He had a truck that made an "ahooga" sound. He would drive around to my bedroom window and toot the horn to pick me up.

When I turned 13, I went out to see my grandparents. When I came in the door Granddaddy said, "Happy Birthday, Kristi." He said, "You are too old to be called Pester."

"I will always be Pester to you," I said.

I did not always like the name anyway. I would get mad sometimes about my name. It took him taking it away from me to realize how precious a gift the name was.

Others have called me Pester, but that is not who I am anymore. The most important part of that name is gone: my granddaddy.

*Kristi de Costa
Moncure
Central EMC*

THE MAN FROM THE CO-OP

My mom and dad, Jesse and Ruby Thompson, from the Pee Dee community near Mt. Gilead, were devoted members of Randolph EMC for many years, and my mom is still on Randolph EMC. My mother is now 87 years old, and my father passed away 10 years ago.

For many, many years since I was a youngster, the annual Randolph EMC Membership Meeting was something that they looked forward to each year. Back in the early days, I remember that one big prize, such as a stove or washing machine, was given away. During the earlier years when my parents attended the meetings, they became familiar with an EMC director or employee — I'm not sure what his exact title was — but his name was Quinton Hussey. My mom liked the name so much that she named me Quinton.

I still live in the Pee Dee community and am a member of the Randolph EMC. I appreciate them and the good service we receive. My wife and I and our children have always attended the Randolph EMC annual meetings also. I can thank Quinton Hussey for the name that I now have had for 52 years. I also passed it down as a middle name to my son.

*Quinton Thompson
Pee Dee
Randolph EMC*

Editor's note: Mr. Hussey was the manager of member services at Randolph EMC for nearly 40 years. He is still an active member of the co-op and lives in Asheboro.

INSPIRATION FOR MY GRANDMOTHER

When I was born 15 years ago, my parents gave me the name Faith Danielle Gilliard. My middle name isn't really important, but my first name never fails to serve as a reminder of what God has done for me, my family and especially Mom-Mom.

A few months before I was born, my grandmother, Mom-Mom, was diagnosed with breast cancer. I have grown up with a wonderful Christian background, so as soon as word got around, family and friends began praying. We had to have faith that she would be healed. It was a difficult time for everyone.

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Holding her grandbaby.

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She probably knew she would be so weak from all the chemotherapy by the time I was born, and that she wouldn't even be able to hold me. So, as one more statement of hope, my parents named me "Faith." This inspired Mom-Mom. I've even heard her say that she just knew she "had to make it so she could see her grandbaby."

Mom-Mom was released from chemo seven months later. And guess what? She's still with us today, happy and healthy as can be.

*Faith Gilliard
Lexington
Energy United*

TOO MANY BETTIE LOUS

In regards to how I got my name, I was born at home. A crazy woman who helped when babies were born was there. She named all boy babies something, and she named all girl babies Bettie Lou. My parents were young and didn't say anything.

The doctor was as crazy as the woman was and put Bettie Lou on my birth certificate. My daddy didn't like Bettie Lou, so he called me Marie. Until I was grown I thought I had three names.

*Marie R. McSwain
Cherryville
Rutherford EMC*

WHAT HAPPENED TO MARION?

I was born in 1927 near Leicester, N.C. My mother, who gave birth at home, intended that my name should be Marion Curtis.

My maternal grandmother insisted that I be called Fred. So I went through 11 years of school as Fred Curtis Murphy, thinking that my real first name was Marion.

When I decided to join the Navy at the age of 18, I wrote to Raleigh to request my birth certificate. I received a birth certificate in the mail with a letter explaining that there was no record of the birth of Marion Curtis Murphy, but the certificate enclosed was for the son born to my parents on the date indicated. For the first time I learned that my name was Christopher Douglas Murphy.

Did the doctor who delivered me forget my name, or did he confuse me with another baby he had delivered? I will never know. I often wonder if somewhere there was a Marion Curtis who thought his name was Christopher Douglas.

Having spent nearly 50 years as a Christian minister, I am glad, in spite of the confusion, that I have a name that means "Christ-bearer."

*C.D. 'Fred' Murphy
Lincolnton
Rutherford EMC*

THE HELPFUL TRAIN PASSENGER

When my mother was a girl of 17, she was traveling by train on her first trip out of the North Carolina mountains to visit her older married sister in New Jersey.

She knew nothing about how she should act nor what to say or do. On the train was a girl on her way back to college, an older and more sophisticated traveler. They sat together. She told Mother what to do and say and what to expect. She was very kind.

Mother never saw her again nor heard from her, but when she married and had her first baby, she remembered the kindness of a stranger and called her baby girl Lois after the girl on the train. I was born six years after that train trip in 1934.

*Lois A. Heun
Mill Spring
Rutherford EMC*

Send us your best

Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

MARCH 2004

"My Gardening Secrets"

What have you tried that really works?

Deadline: Jan. 15

APRIL 2004

"The Camping Trip I Will Never Forget"

Where was it and what happened? Send pictures.

Deadline: Feb. 15

MAY 2004

"What We Did When the Power Went Out"

Smart – and maybe not-so-smart – ways to cope during an outage.

Deadline: March 15

JUNE 2004

"Being a Teenager Today"

What are you going through? Or: How does it compare to when you were one?

Deadline: April 15

JULY 2004

"Our Money Pit"

What was the biggest waste of money you remember?

Deadline: May 15

AUGUST 2004

"Was I Wrong!"

Lessons you learned the hard way.

Deadline: June 15

SEPTEMBER 2004

"My Favorite Photo"

North Carolina people and places. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and printable size.

Deadline: July 15

OCTOBER 2004

"If I Were Governor of North Carolina"

What would you do?

Deadline: August 15

NOVEMBER 2004

"Mama's Cooking Was Always the Best"

Send a recipe, if you have one, and photos.

Deadline: Sept. 15

DECEMBER 2004

"Meeting Your Grandparents"

Something you never knew about a grandparent.

Deadline: Oct. 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less. We retain reprint rights.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mail or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616. Or by e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com. Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com