



Paul Azevedo

## The Reactor

### What's In A Name?

You didn't pay for it. You probably didn't select it. You may not even like it. But one of the most valuable possessions you own is your name. Your name sets a tone. It presents an image. People get a feeling for you from your name, though they may never meet you or talk to you.

Most parents take naming seriously. In my own case my wife and I had an argument about our eldest son's name three years before he was born, and months before we were even married. We compromised. The names we selected, Michael and Bryan, honored my Italian great-grandfather Michele (mick-ay-lay) and her father, who had been named after William Jennings Bryan. Oddly enough, both of these names are now in the top ten of boys names being given in recent years, according to a highly useful book called "10,000 Baby Names" written by Bruce Lansky.

Kids are receiving quite a different mix of names than they did when I was growing up. My contemporaries in the thirties were named John, and William, and James, and Richard and Charles and Robert.

The girls were Mary and Elizabeth and Dorothy and Helen and Margaret and Ann.

According to Lansky, in 1983 boys were being named Christopher, Michael, Matthew, with John in fourth place, James, then Joshua, Andrew, Brian or Bryan in eighth, Adam ninth and Jason tenth.

The girls are Jennifer, Sarah, Jessica, Ashley, Amanda, Megan, Elizabeth, Nicole, Lindsay and Emily. Some of these names were extremely unusual when I was growing up. Mary, so popular in the past that I had four Aunt Mary's, is now in 37th place.

Debbie, which went through a popular phase for a number of years, is out of the top 100.

When the Tribune printed almost 200 letters to Santa Claus earlier this month, it provided a kind of informal survey of Pacifica kids names in the process. We had multiple Christophers and Chrises, three Matthews, three Amandas, five Brians, (eight place nationally) three Jasons (tenth place nationally), two Eriks and two Erics (20th nationally) three Heathers (15th nationally) three Kevins (27th nationally) and three Lisas (33rd nationally).

Jennifer, in first place nationwide, evidently is not as popular in Pacifica, to judge from our letters. Could its popularity derive from the beautiful secretary on WKRP, played by Loni Anderson?

Biblical names periodically revive in popularity. I have mentioned Deborah. Sarah is now second, right after Jennifer. Lindsay, in ninth place, is a name I know little about. Do you suppose that the actress Lindsay Wagner had something to do with it?

Too bad we can't invent distinctive names and charge royalties. Might be an interesting way to turn a profit. I wonder how much I could have earned if I had invented Ryan or Brandon, or perhaps, Amber or Jamie or Tiffany?

Dec 25-85

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