



Dudley and Dudley

There will be those, if they happen upon this collection of stories, who wonder who Dudley was. Susie, that's who. My wife!

If Johnny Cash can sing about a boy named Sue, why can't I have a wife named Dudley?

Dudley was born Susan, but the woman I married was Susie (sometimes Suz and sometimes Sue by her family, but never by me).

I can attribute her renaming to my propensity to nickname. It is an inherited trait – male-linked no doubt. Dean was Rusty to Dad (don't ask me why), and I was Klinkapunk or Klink for short to him. I could have hated the

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name because to me it connoted clumsiness, but I didn't. I might have if others in the family had used it but they did not. Not my Mother. Not my sisters and not my brother. It was just Dad's name for me, sort of like Nava is my name for Edward and Ruppelputt for Allison.

I think the last time I saw Dad (a few months before he died when we came back from Baltimore for a visit) I was still Klink.

At Cal Pac I was Slats, after the comic book character by the same name – I did not like the name but no one asked me about my preference and my preference would not have mattered anyway. In college I was Bucks, Meint, and Snake Eyes depending who was doing the calling.

My Mother called me Curt - Curtis when I was in trouble. A strange thing about conditioning - to this day my ears go up when someone calls me Curtis. Immediately I think “What now?” I ask people I work with to call me Curt because of the conditioning. Indeed, though recipients may not know it, there are profound differences in letters from me signed Curtis L Meinert versus Curt Meinert.

My Brother and Sisters called me Curt, save for Carolla after she was married. Often she called me Curtie. I hate it now if anyone calls me that because it was Carolla's name for me and her's alone. I miss her!

Dudley's name comes from a drive for economy. It came while hiking a trail on Cadillac Mountain in Acadia National Park in the early 70s. Being the troop leader (to the discontent of all save one), I had the job of keeping the troops “in line” (I would hate to go into battle with them the way they follow orders!).

As with any good troop leader, I was out on point. The rest were usually strung out like penguins on the way to the sea. I would imagine (because it was often the case) that it was Nancy who was closest behind with Jill 20 to 30 feet behind her, and then Judy a goodly distance behind her and with, soon to be, Dudley about 20 yards behind Judy.

My habit there, as in other family “outings”, was to call out names in cadence “Judy, Nancy, Jill ... Judy, Nancy, Jill, ...” ad nauseam. The more they groaned the more I persisted – no doubt simply to teach them patience

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and tolerance! (Once a teacher always a teacher!) When I needed a reply I would punctuate the name in ways that they recognized. If no answer I would call again and again until I would get an answer - usually first from Judy with a disgusted "Dad!". Generally, that would shut me up (for awhile).

There was the name drill that I practiced on the way home after an evening with the Tingeys in Newark (Delaware). It would start about ten miles from home, about when we got on I 695 off I 95. All three would fall asleep within the first mile of the trip home and God knows that lugging them into the house was not something you wanted to do. So I would call "Julie!, Nancy!, Jill!" in my best voice, then fall silent for 30 seconds, and then repeat like clockwork. It would be about five miles from home before any response. Generally, Julie would be the first to respond (not happily!). Usually by the time we got home they were all madder than hatters and my end had been achieved. They walked into the house on their own power!

I should imagine I learned that practice from my Dad. When there were jobs to be done or a school bus to catch, Dad would start calling "Curtis, are you up?". I, of course, answered "Yes" in my most alert voice and even rattled a few things on the floor before rolling over again. (I was taught not to lie so the "workaround" was to sit up in bed while answering.) Before long, again, "Curtis, are you up?" and again "Yes". "Yes, up in bed!" he would reply. Eventually things would escalate. He would take to rapping the stove pipe and there was less patience in his voice. I knew then that my time was drawing short. He was slow to anger and I had things pretty well titrated as to how long I could linger before he would get angry.

I would, on the trail, periodically call out the three names always in order and usually without any purpose in mind. It would always be Julie! (she wasn't Judy yet), Nancy!, Jill! But if I wanted one of them I had to use the right name. I had to say Jill! if I wanted Jill. But, as any parent knows, the names get all mixed up when you want a particular kid. Mother would run through "Bonnie, Curtis, Carol, Deanie" and then would say "You know who I mean, get over here!". Well I am no different.

It was then that it came to me - why not call everybody by the same name. That way I would never be wrong when I called for someone.

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I don't know where the idea came from. Like a lot of my good ideas, they just come, sort of like from God.

That night I announced that henceforth everyone would be called Dudley. There was the usual amount of grousing but I turned a deaf ear (grousing is something troop leaders are accustomed to!). Eventually that night we voted and the resolution carried, 5 to 4, with everyone voting against the resolution except me.

Some might wonder why the generic name was Dudley instead of Rudy. Because at the time my generic person name was "Dudley". Once it came into specific use I had to have a new generic name. That is when Rudy came into vogue.

Eventually I came to see some of the problems with the system, but being one to never give up on a good idea I suggested a numbering scheme with me as Dudley I (of course), with Dudley as Dudley II, Judy as Dudley III, Nancy as Dudley IV, and Jill as Dudley V.

Eventually, the system failed. I cannot say why. Perhaps because people had trouble counting. Maybe because of bad connotations associated with #I and #II. Who knows?

But I persisted. I kept calling Dudley Dudley (and often Dud for short). She reciprocated by calling me Dudley (and Dud for short) and that is how she got her name. Now she is Dudley. If people call her Susie I have to think a minute as to who they are talking about. And if I am forced to introduce her as Susie I wonder who I am talking about.

Dudley of course has other names but not from me. There are her childhood names, of course, the one I hear a lot when the clan is together is Sisty. But she has acquired some from her kids. Nancy is responsible for Meeps (do not ask me how it came about) and Meepskily Jane. Nava calls her MeMa and ditto for Allison and as with Rachael and Matthew. But to me she is Dudley.

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I don't know why, but people on the outside do not have the foggiest when I say I must first check with Dudley. Too bad for them. I like having a wife called Dudley – Dud for short!
