



What's in a name?

I was baptized Curtis Lynea Meinert. “Meinert” is from southern Germany from Meinhardt meaning strength (mein) and bravery (hardt).

Curtis Lynea. I have no idea what led to the choice or who made the call. My parents had no choice in regard to the last name but they were in charge with my first and middle name. They picked Curtis Lynea.

According to Google “Curtis” or “Curtiss” is a common English given name and surname of Anglo-Norman origin derived from the Old French curteis which means polite, courteous, or well-bred. How about that!

Polite, courteous? Me? The adjective “curt” is more apt meaning sparing of words, terse, marked by rude or peremptory shortness, brusque.

What is in a name

Growing up I regarded Curtis as a sissy name. Reinforced by my younger sister's propensity to call me Curtie or Curtie Boy when she wanted to get under my skin.

I never came to peace with Lynea. I use it only in legal documents where it is required, otherwise the closest I get to it is with L, as in Curtis L Meinert. It is always Curtis L Meinert in scientific publications. Few people know what the L stands for.

I grew up as "Curt". The only time it was "Curtis", or worse, "Curtis!", was when trouble was coming from mother for something I had done. Even now, decades later, I tense up when someone calls me "Curtis". My knee jerk reaction is to wonder "Now what?".

I hate it when people call me Curtis, especially people I do not know like some sales person or telephone solicitor. Mr Meinert or Dr Meinert, but please, not Curtis.

Over my lifetime I have had lots of nicknames – Bucks, Skeeter, Sket, Skets, Slats, Meint, and Snake Eyes to name a few. But Klinkapunk, or Klink, has a certain euphonic ring.

I got the name from my dad. I have no idea when or how I got it. I think it was a comment on the fact that I was a gangly uncoordinated kid who had his fair share of stumbles and falls.

At work I am Dr Meinert, Curtis Meinert, Curt Meinert, Meinert, or CLM.

I do not like Dr Meinert. Too stiff. Toads (gradual students, a.k.a. graduate students) call me that out of respect and fear. I am like my father. Big bark but a paper tiger. All students hear is the bark. It takes years for them to realize they are dealing with a paper tiger.

With work colleagues it is Curt or CLM; CLM when people do not feel comfortable calling me Curt.

What is in a name

I have several colleagues and friends where last names are first names. “Hey Meinert, how are you doing?” “Meinert. Have you had a chance to look at that paper I sent you the other day?” Strangely, the use is more personal than first name.

I thought the practice was a “male thing” until I remembered my middle daughter has a friend where last names are first.

You can learn a lot about my mind set by the way I sign off in correspondence. If it is Curtis L Meinert it is either an official document or I am P.O’d.

If it is Curtis Meinert it means I am not on first name basis with the correspondent.

If it is Curt we have corresponded before and moved to first names.

Sometimes it is CLM but only rarely because I have a special relationship with CLM. He is my Harvey. For those not in the know, CLM is akin to Harvey in a film (1950) by the same name starring Jimmy Stewart. Harvey was a 6'3" talking rabbit invisible to all except Jimmy Stewart.

I have, on various occasions, over the years distributed work-related memos from CLM to me to staff in the Center. Typically, they addressed important topics or issues, too touchy for me to address, but OK for CLM to discuss. I am most comfortable with CLM. He does a better job reflecting me than Curt or Curtis.

This name business reminds me of a shtick created by Bill Saluga as Ray J Johnson, Jr. producing a rant when he was called by his last name.

My name is Raymond J. Johnson Jr. Now you can call me Ray, or you can call me J, or you can call me Johnny, or you can call me Sonny, or you can call me Junie, or you can call me Junior; now you can call me Ray J, or you can call me RJ, or you can call me RJJ, or you can call me RJJ Jr, but you doesn't hasta call me Johnson!

What is in a name

My rant would be:

My name is Curtis L Meinert. Now you can call me Curt, or you can call me C Meinert, or you can call me Meinert, or you can call me Snake Eyes, or you can call me Bucks; now you can call me Curtis L, or you can call me CM, or you can call me CLM, but you doesn't hasta call me Curtis!
