

Signs of the Times

By

T. Mike Walker

Although we know the name is not the thing, we still go nuts when someone calls a name we don't like. We hate it when someone calls us by the wrong name or even worse, invents a nick-name for us. Because I knew I wasn't really Terry, which is what school officials and the bureaucracy insisted on calling me for the first 24 years of my life, as soon as I could I changed it to T. Mike, the name I identify with now even though I know I'm not my name. After a Peyote vision in 1972 I tried on the name Michael White Elk for a while, to accord with my sudden vision, but it felt too pretentious and I soon abandoned it as impractical.

That did not stop me from inflicting my vision on my children, however. Like tens of thousands of hippies all across the land who ingested various exotic and organic substances and ideologies during the 60s and early 70s, many of us were awakened and shaken from our bodies, shown deep visions, and transformed in mid-flight. We caught glimpses of our Higher Self and momentarily melted into the One. When the door closed again and we were flushed back to our bodies in the here & now, we often gifted ourselves with new names to reflect our new insights. Thousands of seekers were given new names by their gurus from the east or by their shamans from the west. At the same time that our black brothers and sisters were throwing away their last names and marking an X, or joining Muslim or Baptist or Civil Rights groups and taking on Arabic or Historical or Old Testament names, reborn hippies also took on new names that reflected the Aquarian Conspiracy. Our search for Self ranged from ancient texts to Modern physics. My bookshelf filled with texts on Yoga, Zen, Buddhism, Taoism, The I Ching, Sufi dancing, Astrology, Edgar Casey, Fantasy & Science Fiction such as Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, Western Mythology, Nutrition and Organic Gardening, the Tarot, Psychic Phenomena, Native American Ways, Shamanism and Telepathy. Each teaching embodied its own vast literature, including names and technical terms, thus providing diverse sources of possible names for the emerging multitudes of flower children and their children all of whom were named and renamed after our own fancies

As adults, one of the ways we dropped out of normal society was by changing our names. Many people stopped using whatever legal moniker they had and suddenly became Crystal, Cosmic Lady, Fredwood, Climbing Sun, Ekos, Mountain, Rainbow, Raven, Sola, Sparklefoot, Starla, Sunshine, Strider, or Michael White Elk. I had friends named Sky Drummer, Tomato Tom, Gray Wolf, Tofu, Mercedes Bob, Mountain Girl, Emily Ice Cream, and Wavy Gravy. My friend Storm gave birth to Ocean and River. Marcus & Nancy produced Zumara. Ekos and Sola brought forth sisters Zara Star and Rosina. Fredwood and Roberta birthed Ginger-berry. Sterling and Mare brought through Poppy-Rose. One kid was named Bombadillo, after a figure in Lord of the Rings.

I wonder if Bombadillo changed his name later in life, as my own son did.

I must admit I was crushed when my son, Surya Elrond Moon-Walker, utterly rejected his name. I had thought it out so carefully: Surya means the sun in ancient Hindu. Elrond was the King of the Elves in the novel, The Hobbit. Since Surya was born on the night of a full-moon, and also because Neil Armstrong had recently walked on the moon, I added Moon to Walker, connecting it with a hyphen.

The problem was, Surya didn't like his name at all. He shot the moon and killed the King and moved the sun itself in order to become himself.

Soon after he was born we visited Mexico. Our Huichole friends quickly translated Surya into Sol, for the sun in Spanish, and because he was still a little guy he became Solito, or little sun. We continued calling him Sol when we returned to Santa Cruz. However, when my son entered kindergarten and his teachers started calling him Surya he realized that all of his names were weird. He preferred Sol to Surya, but he hated them all. Elrond was not even to be discussed not even after I read the whole Lord of the Rings series to him.

So I promised Sol that when he reached 14 years of age I would take him down to the County building and pay to have him legally change his name to one of his own choosing, if he found a name he liked better. Over the next few years he tried on a variety of names, sometimes two or three new ones a day, but he finally settled on Griffon Sol Walker. That's the one we recorded down at the courthouse when he was 14.

It cost \$150, but I figured I owed him that much, at least!

After all, I had struggled to create my own name, and still have to fight to claim T. Mike as my moniker. Whenever the phone rings and I hear a voice ask, Is Terry Walker at home? I always get a sinking feeling of fear in my stomach, as if they've caught me at last, before answering sweetly, Nobody by that name lives here

And I hang up!