

What's in a Name?

By Liz Gibbons

I am satisfied with my given name, Elizabeth Ann, and do not have any desire to change it. As a child I was known by a nickname as was my brother. His given name is Warren George which is a combination of our grandfathers' first names. For several years when we were very young, my parents would rent a bedroom in our home to a student at Purdue University. One student who lived with us one year said that Elizabeth Ann and Warren George were just too long, and he began calling us Snooky and Sonny. That stuck all through our childhood and even today when my brother calls he will sometimes say, "This is Sonny."

When I was in my latter years of college I decided that Snooky was not a name I wanted to carry with me through life. I debated whether to go by Elizabeth or Elizabeth Ann, which my Mother often called me, but decided on Liz as it was shorter. But one of my husband's brothers said that he saw me more as an Elizabeth and always called me that. Also when I married I changed by last name from Dunham to Gibbons, a last name that I liked better. Dunham reminded me of cooked ham.

In reflecting on names, I wondered what effect does our name have upon us? Numerology claims that our soul path, our strengths and weaknesses, and other information can be determined by assigning certain numbers to our birth name, since every object has a vibration. Whenever I have played around with this, the numerology report seemed to describe me, but I wonder if most of the possible reports would also fit as we each have many sides to our personalities.

I realized that I have negative attitudes toward some names such as Hector, Elmer, Matilda, Mabel, Hortense, and Phoebe. I also reflected on how would we identify each other if we did not have a name? How much does our name shape our identity? If you were named after some relative or great person, what effect does that have upon you? For each of us, our attitude toward our name is dependent on many different factors.

I don't believe that what we are named is going to necessarily have a determining effect on our future. I believe that the most important aspect of our happiness and success in life is determined more by our self-confidence, which has been instilled in us by our parents or other significant people in our life, than by our given name.