

CONTRARY COGNOMINA

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For as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name and folly is with him --1 Samuel 25:25

Many of our surnames have origins in the nomenclature of trades and professions. Once upon a time Smiths were smiths, Butchers were butchers and Carpenters were carpenters. Holgate, for example, derives from the common noun *tollgate*. Back in the eleventh century my ancestors were rewarded for collecting tolls and swelling the royal coffers with a Norman castle in Shropshire. Nowadays a profession-based patronym does not oblige its owner to continue in the cognominal business. Just as well—I have no desire to work as a toll collector on the motorway or an assessor in the Tax Office.

However, there are some whose family names are entirely appropriate for their chosen profession, like Tiger Woods (golfer), Layne Beachley (world surfing champion), Henry Armstrong (Hall of Fame boxer), Gary Player (South African golfer), Fanny Ardent (fervent French actress), Anna Smashnova (Russian tennis player), and Roger Moore (as James Bond the Lothario).

On the other hand the history of civilisation is littered with inappropriate surnames belonging to high-profile celebs who chose to ignore Nabal's Law—which states that name should echo fame—and thus missed their logologically correct vocation. (Nabal was a wealthy sheep owner from Carmel near Ziph, foolish enough to deny David hospitality, so God smote him and David married his widow Abigail. A nabal is a fool in Hebrew, and also a long straight bass horn in Korean music—poor old Nabal missed his vocation too. And *nabal* transposes to *banal*—that may be why the Great Anagrammer decided to take him out!)

It was to honor these unfortunate folks that the inaugural TMTV (They Missed Their Vocation) Awards were recently held in Jobstown, New Jersey. The presenters were Miss Nomer, a dippy hippie from Mississippi, and Pat Ronym, a barmy barman from the Bahamas. Sadly none of the awardees turned up for the ceremony and issued lame excuses like being dead or too busy with their careers. We publish the Top One Hundred list in the various categories to honour those contrary individuals and their contrary cognomina.

Literature

SAUL BELLOW, spruiker (barker)
ROBERT BROWNING, indoor tanning consultant
SAMUEL BUTLER, manservant
NOEL COWARD, war deserter
HART CRANE, derrick operator
HENRY FIELDING, cricketer
CHRISTOPHER FRY, fish and chip shop owner
OLIVER GOLDSMITH, jeweller
HEINRICH HEINE, proctologist
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW, actor in adult movies
NORMAN MAILER, postman
SAMUEL PEPYS, voyeur

EDGAR ALLEN POE, chamber-pot manufacturer
 ALEXANDER POPE, Pope Alexander VIII
 EZRA POUND, proprietor of a lost dogs home
 JOHN CROWE RANSOM, kidnapper
 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, medieval foot soldier
 DAME EDITH SITWELL, artist's model
 FRANK G SLAUGHTER, abattoir worker
 STEPHEN SPENDER, investment banker
 JONATHAN SWIFT, sprinter
 ANTHONY TROLLOPE, streetwalker

History and Politics

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, orthopaedic surgeon
 JULIUS CAESAR, obstetrician
 JIMMY CARTER, cocaine trader
 HERBERT HOOVER, vacuum cleaner salesman
 LYNDON JOHNSON, actor in adult movies
 HENRY KISSINGER, romantic lead in musical comedies
 RICHARD NIXON, male stripper
 POL POT, politician with a dope habit
 JAN SMUTS, adult bookshop proprietor
 JACK STRAW, competitor at pick-up-sticks (where players clutch at straws)
 WOODROW WILSON, actor in adult movies, also known as Woody Willy

Business

BILL GATES, fencing contractor
 STEVE JOBS, odd jobs man
 JOHN D ROCKEFELLER, stone mason
 DONALD TRUMP, professional bridge player

Science and Inventions

ALFRED BUTTS, proctologist
 THOMAS CRAPPER, country and rap singer
 KARL POPPER, amyl nitrate addict
 B F SKINNER, fur trader

Music

LOUIS ARMSTRONG, prizefighter
 CHUCK BERRY, fruit picker
 FATBOY SLIM, weight-loss consultant
 FRANZ LIZST, archivist
 GUSTAV MAHLER, painter
 ROBERT SCHUMANN, cobbler
 PICK WITHERS, equerry

Fine Art

JOHN CONSTABLE, policeman
 DAVID HOCKING, pawnbroker
 JOSEPH TURNER, lathe operator
 JAMES WHISTLER, flautist

Religion

JIMMY and TAMMY BAKER, pastry cooks
 WILLIAM BOOTH, pay phone installation contractor
 CHARLES FILLMORE, bowser (gas pump) attendant
 CHARLES WEBSTER LEADBEATER, plumber
 JAIME CARDINAL SIN, cardinal sinner
 DESMOND TUTU, ballet dancer

Film and Television

JENNY AGUTTER, roof plumber
 CHEVY CHASE, hot-rod driver
 TOM CRUISE, cruise ship operator
 JAMES DEAN, Anglican clergyman
 OLIVIA DEHAVILLAND, bomber pilot
 MINNIE DRIVER, touring car racer
 GRETA GARBO, garbage collector
 TOM HANKS, hairdresser
 GENE HACKMAN, cab driver
 ALFRED HITCHCOCK, vasectomy surgeon
 DENNIS HOPPER, hop-skip-and-jump competitor
 JEREMY IRONS, laundryman
 MARGOT KIDDER, standup comic
 JAY LENO, weaver
 DAVID LETTERMAN, tournament Scrabble player
 DAVID LYNCH, hangman
 TOM MIX, deejay
 MICHELLE PFEIFFER, flautist
 BILL PULLMAN, railway passenger car attendant
 ROY ROGERS, actor in adult movies
 GEOFFREY RUSH, crack addict
 MOIRA SHEARER, sheep shearer
 TOM SIZEMORE, salesman of extra-large menswear
 WESLEY SNIPES, marksman
 AARON SPELLING, proofreader
 TERENCE STAMP, philatelist
 RIP TORN, upholsterer
 DEBRA WINGER, soccer player

Tennis and Cricket

BJORN BORG, fictional character in *Star Trek*
 PAT CASH, bank teller
 MARGARET COURT, tennis court surface supplier
 PAT RAFTER, roofing contractor
 MARTY MULLIGAN, golfer
 BETTY STOVE, cooking consultant
 ROSCOE TANNER, leather manufacturer

DON BRADMAN, boss of the Small Nail-maker's Union
 WESLEY HALL, Methodist preacher
 MICHAEL HOLDING, stock and bond trader
 VICTOR TRUMPER, champion bridge player