

In Search of a Name

In our August issue, we considered the merits and the drawbacks of DYNAX as a possible marketing name for one of the principal products of a large industrial corporation, operating internationally, and identified in the public mind with fuels. Let us now analyze another potential marketing name: QUESTA.

Here is a name profoundly different from the material, concrete, mundane DYNAX. QUESTA is abstract, romantic, poetical. It is based on the word "quest" and suggests that word very strongly and very immediately. A quest is a search, but it is seldom a search for something ordinary, such as a lost hairpin or an error in a set of accounting entries that fail to balance. QUEST is regarded as a somewhat archaic word today, used only in poetry or in elevated prose. It suggests days of chivalry and romantic adventure. A quest is likely to be a search for adventure, or for the Holy Grail, or even for life's meaning.

To illustrate the use of QUEST, we turn to Franklin Henry Giddings, the American sociologist and educator, who once wrote that "The mind will not be satisfied in its quest of truth until it comprehends the world." President Eisenhower once spoke of "our united quest of a just and lasting peace." QUEST reminds us of that philosophical Russian, P. D. Ouspensky, who concluded his classic *Tertium Organum* with the thought that "the meaning of life is in eternal search."

Oil and gasoline represent the fulfillment of a material need. QUEST implies a search or pursuit of something that is always elusive and often unattainable.

The proposed name begins with the most unusual letter Q. It has always seemed to us that there is something different, something enigmatic, about the letter Q. Just how we came to feel that way must remain a matter of conjecture. Possibly, we were impressed by the fact that Q is a descendant of a vanished Greek letter, KOPPA; by the use of Q as a symbol for the Second Source of the gospels Matthew and Luke, a hypothetical source also known as the "Reden-quelle"; and by the "Q" signals, a series of abbreviated radio questions and answers (such as the palindromic QUQ). The "Q" signals, innocent as they might appear to others, have struck us as cryptic communications from outer space, sent by a race of intelligent beings on a distant planet, in a probably vain attempt to establish contact with the benighted creatures here on Earth.

Whatever the genesis of our feelings about Q may be, we hope that we have succeeded in imparting to you a measure of the wonder and the mystery we

associate with that letter; feelings quickly transferred to the name QUESTA that the letter commences.

Now that we have oriented ourselves in relation to the unusually inspirational or uplifting psychological impact of the name QUESTA, we are ready to attempt a reasonably conventional analysis of QUESTA as a possible marketing name. However, it is worth emphasizing at the outset that QUESTA does *not* convey specific images of science, size, progress, energy, or benevolence. All it does is to generate an overall feeling of euphoria. It makes one feel good to think about it. This, perhaps, is all that is needed to make the name commercially desirable.

Let's proceed to the specifics, and evaluate QUESTA.

- (1) It is not too short, using the maximum number of letters, six, tolerated by the industrial giant. Also, one of those six letters is an objectionable "S."
- (2) A preliminary survey does not uncover any company or product already using QUESTA as a name, though a number of quite similar names turn up readily.
- (3) The name does not have any obvious connection with the idea of energy. However, we are pleased to discover that Edward J. QUESTA, a banker born in Reno, Nevada, in 1898, was formerly a member of the Atomic ENERGY Utilization Commission.
- (4) Except rather vaguely, our name does not suggest science. Fortunately, diligent inquiry brings to light the fact that Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton, the Antarctic explorer, on his final SCIENTIFIC expedition south, used the QUEST as his flagship. In fact, he actually died on board that ship, of an attack of angina pectoris. Saved again!
- (5) The name QUESTA does have an international flavor, being ultimately derived from the Latin verb QUAERERE ("to seek, to inquire"), through an assumed past participle existing in popular Latin, QUESTA (!), passing into Old French as QUESTE and from there into modern French as QUETE and into English as QUEST. Corresponding forms are found in several other Romance languages: the Italian CHIESTA, the Spanish CUESTA, and the Provençal QUISTA or QUESTA. The international flavor of QUESTA as regards other languages must be based on the premise that QUESTA looks like a Latin word, and Latin is a language recognized by the educated in all nations.
- (6) QUESTA and the idea of size are pretty far apart. Of course, the English word QUEST formerly meant "a dozen, a group of twelve," but 12 is a rather small number, nowadays. No amount of word magic will create associations where none exists.
- (7) To connect the proposed name with benevolence, we turn to another meaning of the English word QUEST: in the Roman Catholic Church, it is the collection of alms or donations, especially for religious uses. QUEST was formerly synonymous with "bequest," but one of the most recent recorded uses of the word in that sense was in the year 1478. Do you get the feeling that we're grasping at straws?

- (8) The name can be made to stand out with a high degree of distinctiveness by using it in an initials-acrostic related to fuels—something on the order of *Quite Unusual Energy Source Triggers Automobiles!* For that matter, it can be made the lead-off item in a perfect word square:

Q U E S T A
 U N S E A T
 E S P R I T
 S E R E N E
 T A I N T S
 A T T E S T

However, our client is not likely to appreciate this particular virtue of the name.

- (9) Progress is yet another idea difficult to link up with the name QUESTA. Phonetically, QUESTA might suggest CRESTA, the name of a famous sled run on the outskirts of St. Moritz, Switzerland. Speeding down the CRESTA on a sled will certainly give you an exhilarating sensation of PROGRESS. Unfortunately, the surrounding scene of ice and snow collides with the notion of ENERGY.

Before leaving English to explore the associations that the name QUESTA might transmit in foreign languages, we note, with considerable interest, that QUESTA is the name of a community in Taos County, in northern New Mexico. It is a small farming and mining community, originally known as "San Antonio del Rio Colorado." The name was changed to QUESTA in 1883, when the community acquired a post office. Why the name of this locality should be eminently suitable as a marketing name for fuel products is not easy to discern.

Similarly interesting is the English word CUESTA, phonetically equivalent to QUESTA. A CUESTA is a sloping plain, especially one with the upper end at the crest of a cliff. A second meaning, more technical, makes CUESTA a landform commonly found in regions of gently tilted sedimentary rocks. Fortunately, not too many persons know about that.

Examining other languages, we do find QUESTA as a word in a number of languages. In Spanish, it is "money collected by begging"; in Italian, "this, this one"; in Portuguese, "complaint, grievance, protest"; in Provençal, "a search or quest"; and in Latin, "have lamented, have bewailed." French comes very close with QUESTAL ("servile") and with QUESTE ("inquisition"), and Romansh or Ladin with QUISTA ("this"). You will note that a number of quite negative associations have already crept in—we're making progress!

A broader sweep of foreign languages brings in more interesting words: the Afrikaans KWASTERIG ("irritable, bad-tempered"); the Albanian KUIS ("to grunt like a pig"); the Cornish CUSSYA ("to curse") and KYSYA ("to destroy"); the Czech CYSTA ("a cyst"); the Dutch KWAST ("a fool, a conceited puppy"); the French CUISANTE ("causing a quick, pungent pain") and CUISTRE ("a vulgar fellow, a clownish pedant"); the Gaelic CUIST ("Shut up!"); the German QUISTE ("lost"); the Icelandic KVEISA ("colic, gripes"); the Indonesian

KUSTA ("leprosy"); the Irish CEASTANACH ("a tormenter"); the Italian QUESTUA ("house-to-house begging"); the Japanese KUSASU ("to slander or vilify"); the Latin QUASSATIO ("an affliction"); the L tvan Ciest ("to suffer"); the Lithuanian KVAISE ("idiot, fool"); the Manx CUSTEY ("cursed, accused"); the Norwegian KVESTE ("wound, hurt"); the Polish KWASY ("peevishness"); the Portuguese QUESTAO ("torture, rack"); the Romanian CVAS ("sour beer"); the Russian KISTEN ("a bludgeon"); the Slovene CISTKA ("purge") and KVASITI ("to drivel"); the Spanish CUITA ("grief, affliction"), QUESTION ("riot, quarrel"), and QUISTE ("a tumor with fluid content"); the Swedish KVISSLA ("a pimple or pustule"); the Turkish CESET ("a corpse") and KUSTURMAK ("to let vomit"); the Vietnamese QUATHE ("to die") and QUETAY ("crippled, maimed"); the Welsh CATEIA ("to cut or mangle") and CWST ("toil, drudgery"); and the Zulu QWASHA ("of agitation or uneasiness").

Of particular concern are words related to the generative or excretory functions. A thorough search discloses the following words: the Cornish CASTER ("the penis of an animal"); the Dutch QUEESTEN ("bundling"); the Finnish KUSTA ("to urinate"); the Greek KUISKO ("to impregnate, to conceive"); the Slovene KVANTA ("smut; an obscene pun"); the Turkish CIS ("urine"); and the Welsh CASTYR ("the penis of a horse").

The Dutch QUEESTEN reminds us that English also has a synonym for "bundling"—QUEESTING, describing a custom that prevailed in New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania in the early days. It designated the practice of a man and a woman occupying the same bed without undressing. This was part of courtship, made necessary by the fact that it became extremely cold in the late evening. The custom was found in remote localities of New York as recently as 1804, and in Pennsylvania as recently as 1845.

The most peculiar meanings to intrude themselves on our attention? The French CUISSETTE ("half an arm's reach of wool"); the German QUASSEL ("talk nonsense"); the Proven al QUESTE ("the right to hearth money"); the Russian KVASI ("tanner's ooze"); the Spanish QUISQUICERIA ("a ridiculous nicety"); and the Vietnamese QUETTRAU ("reddened saliva").

Inspired by the negative associations we have found for the name QUESTA in other languages, we return to take a second, more critical look at possible associations in English. What, for instance, would prevent someone from relating QUESTA to the COSA NOSTRA crime syndicate?

We consider the implications of the word QUEST. It is a word often used to describe a search that ended in *failure*. In *Idylls of the King*, Tennyson aptly describes such a failure, referring to the Holy Grail: "There sat Arthur on the dais-throne, and those that had gone upon the QUEST, wasted and worn, stood before their king." Ben Hecht used the word even more dramatically to refer to a search for answers ending in failure: "The despair of things that die with their eyes open and QUESTing." Appropriately, Jimenez de QUESADA was a soldier and adventurer who came to America in 1579, in behalf of Spanish claims . . . A search that failed . . .

Then, of course, there is the immoral side of QUESTA. We may connect it, by way of rhyme, with JOCASTA, in classical mythology the mother of Oedipus.

She married him and had several children by him. Or, we can rhyme QUESTA with CALISTA, the haughty heroine of Rowe's *Fair Penitent*, who stabs herself after her seduction by Lothario becomes known. Or, we may link QUESTA with Adela QUESTED, a priggish young woman in E. M. Forster's novel, *A Passage to India*; she goes to India and becomes involved in a scandal that ruins her prospective marriage there.

Miscellaneous associations include that with QUEST ("to croak, as do frogs"); with QUEASY ("sick at the stomach"); with CATASTA ("a stage or scaffold on which slaves were sold or criminals tortured"); and with the QUESTING BEAST, a monster in Arthurian legend, also called "Glatisaunt," that made a noise called QUESTING, like thirty couple of hounds giving cry.

After weighing all of these associations carefully, the proposed name QUESTA no longer seems so attractive, and we turn to other candidates.

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THE GREAT CHALLENGE

One of the basic texts on the subject of cryptograms is Helen Fouché Gaines's *Cryptanalysis: A Study of Ciphers and Their Solutions* (Dover Publications, New York, 1956).

Given on page 217 of that text is the following cipher, with the comment that no one has ever been able to solve it:

VQBU P PVSPG GFPNU EDOKD XHEWT IYCLK XRZAP VUFSA WEMUX
GPNIV QJMNJ JNIZY KBPNF RRHTB WWNUQ JAJGJ FHADQ LQMFL
XRGGW UGWVZ GKFBC MPXKE KQCQQ LBODO QJVEL.

Readers of WORD WAYS! Are you going to let this challenge lie there, taunting you for the rest of your lives? Or are you going to get busy and solve that pesky little crypt? The first reader to submit the correct solution to this cipher to us qualifies for the Nicodemus J. Grumbow award! This is *your* opportunity to capture that universally coveted but rarely glimpsed prize—don't let it escape you!

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THE POETS' CORNER

On Page 22 of our February, 1968, issue, we presented a list of 51 English words and names, all of them pronounced in one syllable, that rhyme perfectly with the letter A.

A reader in Tampa, Florida, M. E. Scheib, has pointed out 6 common words omitted from our list: BRAE, LEI, NEIGH, SLEIGH, TREY, and WEIGH. We congratulate Mr. Scheib on his observational acumen. Is the list now complete?