Naming Names

A name is a very personal and precious possession. Except in my case. I hate my miserable moniker.

Just as a firefly is not a fly and the Harlem Globetrotters never played a game in Harlem for the first 40 years of their existence, I feel my name does not reflect who I am either.

Did you know that more mass murderers have been named Lee than any other name? Over eight percent of mass murderers are named Lee and that can't just be a coincidence. They were probably so upset at being called Lee their entire lives they took out their anger on innocent people.

Even worse, the few people that don't mistake me for a mass murderer because of my name think I'm a girl!

I am a victim of parents who were ancestor proud. My first and middle names actually belonged to ancient relatives of mine. The problem is that, just because a name was popular in the James Garfield administration, does not mean it's a good name for a more modern world.

I would have preferred my parents just drew my name out of a hat: Stetson and Resistol would have been much better names than mine.

In a rare display of honesty, I must admit my name is not actually Lee; it's a nickname and I'm not about to embarrass myself by revealing my real one. For reasons unknown to me, instead of giving me a manly nickname I could be proud of, they gave me one that is only slightly better than my real name. Making matters worse, my parents borrowed my middle name from the second-worst president in history.

Then there is my last name: Pitts. Why my parents didn't change their name is beyond me. This could not be a case of being ancestor proud, because the only famous Pitts I've been able to dig up was Charlie Pitts who ran with Jesse James and the Younger brothers and was killed by the largest posse in U.S. history.

On my mother's side, the only famous person I'm related to is the vicious gunslinger John Wesley Hardin. No wonder I'm an outlaw and an outcast from society.

My last name is the reason my wife and I never had any kids. The temptation for me would have been too great to call them Olive, Peach or Harry Arm. And if, like me, their P's sounded like T's they would have had to undergo a lifetime of being referred to as.... well, you get the picture.

Fortunately the name ends with me. My brother only had girls who quickly got married and changed their names and my smart sister was not about to include Pitts in any hyphenated title.

Hopefully, my tortured life can serve as an inspiration for parents to be more careful in naming their children. And their pets too, for that matter.

I don't want your dogs, cats, horses and cows to go through life suffering the same public humiliation that I've endured. It's bad enough that we make our children suffer, but many of you ought to be locked up for the names you have given your pets. I'll give you an example.

Several years ago we bought a replacement heifer at the county fair from a friend's son. It was our goal to support the youth of our community, and besides, the heifers were cheap that year and the one we bought sold near the end of the sale! (In later years when the price of heifers skyrocketed we found cheaper ways to support the youth of our community.)

When the Latino 4-H member handed us the halter to which the heifer was attached, he was most adamant that we know the heifer's name. It was Feo Nalga. We called her Feo for short. (Rhymes with Hay-oh.)

Despite her lack of production, Feo stayed in our herd for years because I liked her for some reason. Heaven only knows why.

Near the end of Feo's life I was thumbing through a Spanish-English Dictionary and decided to translate her name. It turns out that we had been calling this noble cow 'Butt Ugly' or 'Ugly Butt' her entire life.

No wonder I felt a special affinity for the poor creature.