

RAINBOW ROWELL

Detested name has its benefits

All my life, I've hated introductions. "My name is Rainbow. RAINBOW. R-A-I-N . . . yeah, just like in the sky."

The first time I tell people my name, they almost always assume they've misunderstood me. "What?" they say, feigning a sudden hearing loss, "I thought you said Rainbow."

Their next question is always, "Is that your real name?"

After I've produced my birth certificate and sworn affidavits from each of 10 nearest family members, three former employers and my second grade teacher, their next question without a doubt will be, "So were your parents, like, flower children?"

And, I say . . . well, I usually don't say anything but, I think, "Leave me alone. What's your name? Christi? Were your parents pencil-necked geeks?"

I don't know why it bothers me when people call my parents "old hippies." After all, they did name me after a Jimi Hendrix song.

I think, deep inside, I've never made peace with my weird name. I've never just said, "Yes, you may be a little strange, but you're my name and I'm proud of you. I love you."

I may not ever love my name, but I like it a lot better than I used to. From ages 5 to 16, I despised my name. I hated it. It was a badge of despair I was forced to carry with me each day of my life. My very own scarlet letter.

Yes, it started back in kindergarten. My fellow 5-year-old classmates were overjoyed to have me in their class. My name was instant entertainment. "Rain-Blow," they shouted, "Sunshine," "Rainbow Brite," "Cloudhead." Their cruelty knew no limits. Thanks to my last name, they could even alliterate: "Rambo Raoul, Rambo Raoul."



I dreamed of the day when the world of personalized pencils, stickers and placemats would suddenly open for me.

Substitute teachers were almost as bad. They'd fly through the class roster without a pause, through the As and the Gs and the Ms. And then they'd stop, looking a little confused, a little upset. They'd squint down at the paper, hoping my name would look more like Cathy or Jennifer if the light hit it just right.

After a long day of elementary school persecution, I'd collapse teary-eyed before my mother's feet, moaning, "How could you do this to me, your own daughter, your firstborn?"

She'd walk past me, assuring me that I could change my name as soon as I turned 18.

I became obsessed with changing my name to something normal. I made lists of possible future names. For years Sara topped the list, although I never decided if I preferred it with or without the 'h.'

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world of personalized pencils, stickers and placemats would suddenly open for me.

The teasing slowed after junior high, although I've been awakened more than once this semester at 2 a.m. to assure rogue telephone friends that I don't know where the pot of gold is.

And people still think my name is an excuse for rudeness. This summer, I correctly identified Paul Tsongas' voice for a call-in radio contest. When I told the DJ my name, he promptly asked me if my parents did drugs. I know that if I would have said Kim or Lisa, he would never have asked.

These days I almost like Rainbow. At least people remember my name. At least, they remember that it's weird, which is better than nothing, I guess.

Who cares if I can't find a mug with my name on it? I have my own brand of bread, canned goods and cheap cigarettes. And every great rock act has sung about rainbows: Led Zeppelin, the Rolling Stones and Kermit the Frog.

If I had a normal name, I might meet other people with it as well. That would really bother me. It would be like showing up at the prom and seeing 10 other people wearing my dress.

Unless I start hanging out with River Phoenix's little sister, I probably won't meet many Rainbows.

So I'll stick with my name. I don't get called Rambo much anymore and, besides, I have a much bigger problem to tackle: my last name, Rowell. How can I succeed in life with a surname that rhymes with bowel?

Until I solve that problem, I'll learn to take pride in Rainbow, and I'll avoid men with the last name Trout.

Rowell is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

ALAN PHELPS

No answer in the White House

White House officials announced the other day that Slick Willy Clinton wouldn't be able to be a TV barfly, although they left a few, untold possibilities open.

The producers of the NBC sitcom "Cheers" wanted the new president to pull up a stool beside ol' Norm and Cliffy for the godawfullylong-running series' final episode, set to air in May.

The snag was that Billy would have to jet out to the studios this week, and — wouldn't ya know it — scheduling some pesky meeting with what's-his-face Yeltsin got in the way.

Why can't we just ignore these bothersome tinhorn foreign leaders? Let 'em rot, I say. This is prime time we're talking about here. What TV top-rated shows has Mr. High-and-Mighty Yeltsin ever been asked to slam drinks in? Here's your answer, smarty-pants: none.

But while Clinton won't be able to stop in the bar personally, his press secretary, Dee Dee Myers, told reporters she thought "there may be ways" the president could still be a part of the show.

She didn't expand on exactly how. Perhaps some of Clinton's extra politician-brand hair will be used to cover bald Ted Danson's scalp.

But as a journalist, I don't like to make offhand remarks that may or may not be true, such as, "I have strong evidence Clinton is having an affair with Woody Harrelson."

No, I went straight to the Supreme Source/God of the Land: The White House Operator.

White House Operators are a little more tricky than your average garden-variety University Operator. There is a certain finesse to obtaining the information you want from a big-time operator. For instance, you must yell a lot and make a lot of baseless threats.

After that part of my conversation



I smelled a cover-up. But she put me on hold before I could ask a stinging follow-up question, such as "What?"

was over and I calmed down, she finally answered the phone.

I asked her what the mysterious way was that Meyers had in mind to allow Clinton to still be a part of "Cheers."

"I'm sorry, I cannot comment on that. Are you with the press?"

I smelled a cover-up. But she put me on hold before I could ask a stinging follow-up question, such as "What?"

Some time later, as the Daily Nebraskan's phone bill crept upward, a lady who called herself "Lee Ason" or something from some other dumb department told me she didn't "know anything about it."

She transferred me back to the main operator, who gave me the number for the communications department.

"Ring," the phone whispered in my ear. I whispered back. Eventually, someone answered, interrupting me.

The answer to my vexing question proved quite elusive. The red tape involved with the White House phone system is disturbing. It's even more

disturbing if you write the word "disturbing" in quotation marks: "disturbing."

Half a dozen people at various offices such as "communications," "press secretary," and "Josh Silverman" agreed that, basically, they don't know anything.

"Right now there's just rumors going around." "We don't have any information about that." "I have no idea." "I don't know, I haven't seen 'The Crying Game.'" "The answer is, 'We don't have the answer.'" "Let me ask my supervisor."

Why did the producers of Cheers ever think they might get this guy Clinton? It's such a hassle to find a straight answer in that White House bureaucracy beehive. "Cheers" isn't even that great of a show — at least, no "Battlestar Galactica" or anything.

I had to watch "Cheers" last week in beautiful Las Vegas during Spring Break. We stopped in Las Cheesestown for a couple of days to stay with a friend's sister. One evening we sat down to watch "The Simpsons," but all our host would allow on her TV was "Cheers."

This anecdote goes to show how backward Las Vegas really is; but then, a person can't expect much from the thrall capital of the high desert.

"Cheers" is like one of those cute little dogs you try so hard to leave out in the country.

"Go on, mutt," you say, but then they always find their way home with torn-up paws and cats for friends, even though the nuclear test range outside of Las Vegas is months away from Lincoln by dogtrot. Dogs watch too many Disney movies.

I don't suppose I really care if Clinton pats Norm on the back or has some lame conversation with Sammy.

Phelps is a junior news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan managing editor and a columnist.




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