

A Rose is a Rose

With a little time on my hands, I've been thinking about naming my Model A. There are so many Model A's who have that special bond with their cars; they have decided to commemorate it with a name. I just can't figure out how or what to name mine.

I didn't grow up around a treasured Model A. I had no Miss Annabelle in my family. You know the one. The kindly old librarian, who never caught a man, never had kids, but had a pristine Model A she bought new and only drove to church or bingo. When she passed, you were her third cousin's sister's only child. You once told Miss Annabelle her hair looked nice - yada, yada and so the story goes. Next thing you know - boom! You've got a nice, low mileage, very original Model A. So, since you were so fond of Miss Annabelle (you did compliment her hair, after all), you decide to keep her memory alive by naming the car after her. Yeah, that didn't happen to me either.

I come from a family of small town farmers. I don't know if they ever even had a Model A. I have never been able to find a piece of unmolested metal large enough to identify as Ford - let alone a Model A. Any vehicle my folks owned would have been subjected to the seven series of death by farmer. You know; when it quits, you make it into something else and run that until it quits. Then you repurpose the remaining parts into something that doesn't require a motor - and so on, until you eventually have a plow made out of broken axels. You can't develop a bond with a car as it slowly transitions from family sedan, to truck, to hay wagon, to portable cattle chute, to chicken coop, to plow. How can you possibly name something like that? It's kind of like naming a pig that you know you're going to share the dinner table with, some day.

I've heard the Model A referred to as "Henry's Lady" but I'm not even sure mine even is a lady. It certainly doesn't act lady-like at times. How can you really tell, anyway?

I've put a lot of thought into the subject, and tried a lot of names (I mean a lot), but never hit on something that just stuck. Most of the time, my inspiration would come while driving my A. It may be born of frustration for the trip never completed; a commemoration of the destination never reached, if you will. Perhaps a ruined family trip to Sonoma Beach or an unsuccessful attempt to visit dear old Mother Fletcher. One may even periodically conjure up a name, which brings into question whether or not the car's parents were truly married at the time of its birth.

A sudden, unexpected lane change when driving may invoke the name Vera, while a set of inadequately adjusted brakes may bring about the moniker Free Ride. Occasionally a cluster of transitional names will come to me in rapid-fire succession describing a sequence of rapidly deteriorating circumstances. In one stretch of a mile, or so, I've considered: Zippy, Smelly, Sparky, Smokey, Flash and Flame - only to finally have to settle on Toasty.

I've done the full restoration thing, and I know that somewhere in between the names Rusty and Aphrodite, one should be able to find a name that truly fits. In between procurement and fully restored, there are several instances where the lack of peak performance can lead to names which may be perfectly fitting at the time, but not necessarily suitable for a long term brand. I have seen, or experienced the sudden locking of gears in the rear end, a thick cloud of smoke following a barely running pile of parts, stuff falling off the vehicle while driving, failing main bearings, overflowing radiators, seized wheel bearings, broken fan blades, as well as many other calamities. And, while Skidder, 007, Bomber, Thumper, Old Faithful, Blackhawk Down, Tow Bait and Slash may all be fine names in their own right, they're just not right for me or my car.

I even asked my wife for assistance once. She said "for the purposes of the divorce, it should be named Susan's". Not much help there. So, I guess I am left to keep seeking - to find that which may not exist: the perfect name for my car. I've come close, once. After a long successful trip, I parked the A safely back in the garage, and softly called out "I love you, sweet-heart." Susan thought I was talking to her so, from now on, that's my story, and I'm stickin' to it.