

What's so important about a name??? - by Marv Lang

My father immigrated to the USA from Trondheim, Norway in 1923. His name at that time was Arne Konrad Selmersen Langørgen. While the Norwegian passport gave his name as Arne Konrad Langørgen, he began using the name of Arne Conrad Lang when "working construction" during the building boom of the 1920's in Chicago, Illinois. In 1929 he took out US citizenship and those precious papers actually read Conrad Langørgen on them. In fact in November 1931, he married my mother and the marriage certificate reads Conrad Langørgen. However, to his friends, acquaintances and employers he was simply Conrad Lang. In other words, he used an alias!

I was born 1 July 1939 in Chicago and given the name Conrad Marvin Lang. By 1943 my father was employed by Zenith Radio Corp as an operating engineer. Dad oversaw temperature and humidity control throughout Zenith's manufacturing facilities located on the northwest side of Chicago. And at this time, the USA was in the throes of WWII. By virtue of his job, Dad had a high level of security clearance and had access to top secret areas of the plant since Zenith had many military contracts.

I distinctly remember the Sunday afternoon in 1943 when two large men, dressed in long black coats and black hats came to our home's front door. "You Conrad Lang?" asked one of the men. "Yes," replied my dad. The other man exclaimed, "There is no record of a Conrad Lang coming from Norway to the USA in 1923; you must be a Nazi spy!" And with that, they took my dad away to the Krugen Police Station on Fullerton Avenue. I cried; my mother cried. What were we to do?

The next day, mom and I took the street car to Chicago Title & Trust ... a large bank building in downtown Chicago. It was here that dad's citizenship papers were kept. By Monday afternoon dad was no longer being grilled by police. But, dad immediately took the necessary steps to have his name legally changed to Arne Conrad Lang.

Now the rest of the story goes like this: In 1961, my soon to be bride (Louise) first heard this story about Langørgen vs. Lang. With the knowledge of the various dates involved she asked me, what was my legal last name? I engaged a lawyer who gave me the obvious answer ... "Whatever is on your birth certificate, that's your name!" As I've already said, it was Conrad Marvin Lang. However, the lawyer noted that he did do a bit of investigating in order to justify his bill. He found that my father did, indeed, legally change his name to Lang in 1943 but had not changed my mother's ... only his, not hers. She was still legally Mrs. Langørgen. So, just prior to Louise becoming a Mrs. Lang, my mother had her name changed to Mrs. Lang after nearly 30 years of marriage. There really are a lot of stories in names and the changes thereof and this is only one.