

What's in a name? Plenty

It isn't just the old gray mare that ain't what she used to be. Nothing much is what it used to be. Take the phrase "sound as a dollar." What does that say to you in 1981?

Used to be when you asked for someone's John Hancock, it meant a signature you could trust, a harking back to the foundation of the country, to the Constitution and those revered gentlemen who signed it.

In those days, craftsmen such as silversmith Paul Revere signed their names or hallmarks only on their finest creations. And what price can we tag onto a signed Rembrandt or Da Vinci?

Today, even the finest print by artist Marc Chagall may be only partially his artistry and largely finished by some nameless workman who pulls the prints off the stones and does who knows what else in the procedure.

Today, the trend is for signatures and endorsements on everything from perfume to status automobiles.

Sometimes I wonder if a sheet and pillowcases by Halston are really better than one simply by Cannon or Springmaid. Or is it just the price that's higher?

SEEMS TO ME that prestige has become a marketable commodity. Win a Coty Award in the fashion industry, and that makes you an expert on exotic scents.

Anonymity seems out of date these days. Just look around you. Designers' names are on people's bottoms, decorating their jeans, on their fancy perfume bottles, on handbags.

One doesn't buy an ice cream cone, one asks where the nearest Hagendaz Scoop place is located. Luggage isn't luggage until it's Gucci. If you say "McDonald's," people know you mean a hamburger, not a Scottish gentleman by that name.

And the latest wrinkle is, get this, designer chocolates.

You'd think Bill Blass, whose name already is on couture clothing for men and women, on sheets and towels and on cars would be satisfied. Not so.

The BB initials will be etched onto my favorite chocolates, those sinfully rich, sensuously satisfying Godiva Chocolatier creations, so hard to resist.

Fortunately, most of the time even if I can afford the calories I can't afford the chocolates. But I love to look at them, little flowers, spirals — each a perfect piece of chocolate artistry.

LET'S FACE IT — with the Blass name on them, the price will never be right, just rising. And already they're tagged at \$14 a pound. I haven't figured out yet how much that is per chocolate.

They'll probably be a status gift for Sweetest Day, Easter and Christmas. "Have a Bill Blass," someone will offer, and I'll be trying to figure out which one is the caramel.

Some days I'd rather have a Hershey bar without almonds than even the fanciest Godiva creation wrapped in gold. I can rely on the taste and texture and use a Vera-designed crying towel to regret the calories.

Bill Blass was one of the first designers I ever interviewed. He's affable, personable and has designed some classy clothes.

But can I trust my chocolate craving to Bill? On designer chocolates, I'll take vanilla.



Shirlee Iden



Bob-Lo, I used to know you when

Reading the morning paper after I get up in the early afternoon is my custom. Where else would I discover such a wealth and diversity of important information. Like the other day I read where the owners of Bob-Lo declared they were solvent enough to promise another season of boats paddling down the Detroit River to Bob-Lo island.

My initial reaction of indifference was replaced by a feeling of genuine affection for the scene of some of my most poignant moments.

Even now I can recall mom and grandma taking us tykes aboard the mammoth ship bound for pleasure island. I stared for hours at the engine room, was aware of the uniformed sailors manning the ship, considered it glorious to be out in the cool air of the river on the way to a cartel of carnival rides, food booths and never-ending fun and enjoyment.

My sister and I raced from one end of the boat to the other, dodged from one deck to the next, ran in and out of the daisies and past the adults drinking beer or sitting on folding chairs watching the river go by.

And then came the island, the exciting docking, down the ramp to endless hours of rides and games and mom and grandma to dish out the nickels, dimes and quarters when they were needed.

THE ENJOYMENT of the moment and the day was supreme. I never gave a thought that a time would come when I wouldn't care about going to Bob-Lo. I never thought, either, the day would come when grandma would die. But it did. I didn't understand death at all.

My first real date was on a midnight cruise to Bob-Lo. I was 14 at the time and driving, not legally, but driving, nevertheless, an almost new Chevy convertible that my dad allowed me to use. Did you ever see eight kids in a Chevy convertible on the way to the Bob-Lo boat all talking and laughing at the same time while the radio played Fats Domino loud enough to be heard in Cincinnati?

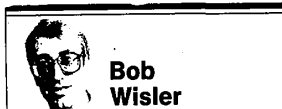
We came back up the river in the cool night air and I put my arm around Nancy Adams and her nearness set my heart pumping double time. I thought there was nobody who was as pretty as she in the moonlight and I wondered what love was like and if I was in love with her. I knew nothing about love then, as you probably realize.

Years later I thought I was at least slightly in love with a young lady who preferred the company of one of the owners of the Bob-Lo boats and Bob-Lo island. I recall sitting in the bar part of the boat listening to her tale of woe. The love of her life wasn't reciprocating the way he should. No sympathy here. It was the first of many times that I learned that money talks and owns boats. Everything else walks — several lengths behind.

YEARS LATER again, I took a Sunday ride on the Bob-Lo boat, at Cotter's insistence. Cotter, a reporter and frequent companion, was inspired by the radio commercial — Bloop, "it's 10 o'clock and another Bob-Lo boat is leaving the foot of Woodward." What a perfect way, he said, to cure the Sunday hangover which followed our latest Saturday night assault on the cabarets of downtown Detroit.

We enjoyed the fresh air and the spray of the water and on the way back the bar opened and it became packed with beer-sipping fun lovers who were oblivious to their noisy children racing from one end of the boat to the other. We met smiling young divorcees getting together to take their kids out and we danced and cabareted until the boat docked.

Years later an aunt decided the Bob-Lo boat was the best place to have a family gathering. My cousin from California was there with his two young kids, my sister was there with her three young kids, my mother and aunt were there. I went with my then-girl friend. I had a great time, talking with everyone and getting



Bob Wisler

acquainted with my cousin. It was then and still is the only time that I have ever seen him.

My girl friend got along famously with the relatives and on the boat-ride back she talked about us getting married. It was a real family day.

LATER The girl and I split, after it had long been apparent that neither of us was really serious about marriage or each other, maybe not about life itself.

I introduced her to a friend. They soon were going together, I breathed easier. They married, they separated, she moved to New York, he moved to New York, they got divorced. They never felt comfortable in my presence; theirs didn't bother me.

It's been several years since I heard anything about either of them. It's only at times like this that I recall them at all — the one-time love of my life and a one-time friend. It is strange, but it's as if they were characters in a book I read once and not really part of my life at all.

Lamaze class

Call it a learning experience

Nobody has babies anymore. That's because they're too busy having a "birthing experience."

At least that's the word for it used exclusively by the instructors in the Lamaze childbirth classes my wife Louise and I are taking.

Let's explore this strange term by splitting it in two parts.

First, "birthing." Forget Webster. I define it as a redundant, trendy verb meaning to have a baby. The word sounds like a sport popular in California. Tired of wind surfing, try birthing.

How does a pregnant woman or expectant father conjugate this verb? "I will birth in October." "Oh, I am birthing." "I have already birthed."

Just don't birth in public. It's considered uncouth.

ETIMOLOGISTS discover the origin of words. Through such research, I believe they would find that the first person to use the word "birthing" was Butterfly McQueen in the movie "Gone With the Wind." Little did she know at the time that countless Lamaze instructors would follow her example when she uttered the immortal words, "But Miz Scarlett, I don't know nothin' 'bout birthin' no babies."

On to the appendage, "experience." This unnecessary word was first attached to verbs by menu writers. The same people who gave us cheese weenies and hammy sammies gave us the complete (also spelled "compleat") dining experience at Big Boy restaurants.

The word "experience" ranks right up there with the hyphenated "wise" in the world of redundant speaking — redundancy-wise. The word "experience" can elevate the everyday to the unique. Why just read this column when you could have a reading experience?

But I digress. Back to the baby and the Lamaze classes. The corny talk aside, the classes are worthwhile. Jeer, I caught myself. I almost said it's a worthwhile experience. The next thing you know I'll

So it goes with other characters in this pilgrimage. I never knew what happened to Nancy Adams after the tenth grade. The girl who was in love with one of the Bob-Lo owners moved to New York, fell in love with someone else, married someone else, had a son. A mutual friend told me recently that her husband died last year.

I can't really recall what my cousin from California looked like that day, or his kids. His aunt, my aunt, still going strong at 80, tells me about them from time to time. My mother lives nearby, two of my sister's kids are going to college.

Cotter died six years ago — was it that long ago already? — on a Sunday afternoon. He went up in an airplane for his first and last parachute jump. The chute didn't open and for some unexplained reason he didn't get the emergency chute open. I learned later that he had been with friends and someone insisted that parachute jumping was a great way to get rid of Saturday night's hangover.

I tell myself that after all these years I understand about life, death, love and time. The truth is that I understand only that Bob-Lo excursions don't last forever, that time impinges on us all, that people may come and go, but our dealings with them are the only things really important. I understand love only a little better than the night I went on the moonlight cruise with Nancy Adams. I do not understand death at all.

Somehow I take comfort in the promise that the Bob-Lo boats will be running again next year.



Craig Piechura

slip and start blabbering about the Quality of Life, another bit of socio-babble that is taking the country by storm.

Still, we're learning a lot about childbirth in the Lamaze classes. And where else besides the Tender Trap can a guy spend an evening watching a roomful of women practice their pelvic thrusts? Before you get too jealous, guys, think of how many women look sexy in a smock.

IN THE CLASSES you quickly learn that there is no such thing as labor pain. You see you don't call pain "pain." You call it "discomfort." Call me stubborn but I still say a pain by other name is still a pain, no matter what you tell your brain.

This column should carry an editor's note explaining that its author isn't trying to belittle the thrill of childbirth or diminish the inherent excitement of witnessing and helping a woman deliver a baby. But deliver me from words like birthing experience.

One more thing. If I see Winnie the Pooh decals or appliques on another piece of baby clothing or baby furniture I may go into insulin shock. The coroner's report will conclude that it was a case of allergic reaction to terminal cuteness.

But there I go again — that's a different story. I've gotta go write a few thank-you-notes on cards carrying pictures of little ducks holding umbrellas.

Saving used oil will help us all

Here's a offer you won't be able to resist. It's a chance to improve the environment. At the same time you will simultaneously improve your country's balance of payments, reduce its dependence on OPEC nations and oil companies, give a boost to small business and improve the job market.

All you have to do is take your used crankcase oil to a service station. It will then start it on its way toward recycling.

It has been estimated that each year in Michigan 20 million gallons of oil removed from cars, motorcycles, lawnmowers, and snowmobiles by people who change their own oil are dumped into sewer system or on the ground.

In this area it often makes its way to the Rouge River on whose troubled waters more than enough oil has already been poured. Or it dribbled into the ground, it is only added to our water table, which is already having to deal with unwanted guests like toxic wastes.

As for balance of payments and oil companies, recycling can only help. The more oil that is reused the less we have to buy.

In addition, a number of small business have grown up around the recycling of oil. Trucks are purchased to take it from one point to another. People are hired to drive them and work in the recycling facilities.

Look for the signs at local service stations that say "Recycle Used Oil Here." Don't forget that auto centers run by Sears, Penney's and K-Mart are also participating in the program.

I think most people prefer not to dump their oil, and were just waiting for a place to take it.

As I said, this is a chance you can't resist.



Sherry Kahan