

Call Me Anything But... (311 words)

I'm not especially offended when someone mispronounces or misspells my name. But I am in awe over the creativity applied to this very simple task. Telemarketers are especially adroit at taking a relatively straightforward name and giving it an elaborate twist.

Why is "DeVere" such a difficult name to sound out? A simple application of phonics ought to do it. Or one could take a cue from the many closely related common English words, such as "revere" or "severe".

It has been given an Italian or Dutch heritage with "De-VAIR-ee" or "DeVries." I enjoy these rather exotic touches, but they are certainly much more difficult than the actual mundane pronunciation. Often it's "Dever", rhyming with "ever." It even came up as "Devil" on one occasion. I don't believe that was an editorial comment.

Another apparently puzzling set of letters is "Durham." You should hear what can be done with that: Dur-HAM, Dunnum, Du-RAHM. Again, don't we have a clue from the many states that have cities called Durham, and even a castle somewhere in England?

Speaking of England, just think what a challenge that nation offers to telemarketers and reporters. Or is it more apparent to them than to me that "Cholmondeley" is pronounced "Chumley" and "Pontefract-Deacon" is articulated as "Pomfrey-Doon"?

I have some appreciation for the pitfalls inherent in common names such as "Smyth", which could just as well rhyme with "knife" as with "kith."

My examples seem so much more straightforward. They are not glyphs. They are not even unreasonable strings of letters in odd combinations to trip up the tongue. They are not Welsh with lots of L's and few vowels. They are not Hawaiian with a preponderance of vowels and few consonants. These names do not employ the gimmick used by the artist formerly (and again) known as Prince.

It's a good thing I'm not especially offended.

