

Changing and Reclaiming My Name

By Rudy Owens
*Formerly known as
M. Rudy Brueggemann*
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On Aug. 24, 2009, the Superior Court of Anchorage, Alaska ruled that my name officially changed from Martin Rudolf Brueggemann to Rudolf Scott-Douglas Owens. In short, Rudy Brueggemann became Rudy Owens in the eyes of the law and in the eyes of the myriad of



public, private, and other entities that track and log our records, credit, and names. The cost of this name change and the number of activities associated with it are eye opening, to say the least.

My name change is more of a re-christening. As an adoptee, I was first given a birth name on April 16, 1965, by my birth mother. I was named Scott Douglas Owens. (See [attached copy](#) of paperwork from the hospital where I was born in Detroit, Mich.; I have whited out some information intentionally.) My birth state of Michigan, by law, still refuses to release a copy of my original birth certificate, even though my birth mother has authorized the state and other agencies who were involved in my adoption to share records with me that are permitted by statute. This is the often illogical legal world of adoption records for those born in my era.

When I was placed for adoption after three weeks--I stayed with a wonderful foster family, who I have also met--my name was legally changed by my adoptive parents. And the name remained until recently. Back in 1989, when I was 24 years old, I found my birth family, both sides, and finally learned more about my birth mother's family. I immediately loved the Owens family name. Since that time I also have gotten to know more of my extended birth family, mostly on the Owens side (and my birth grandmother's side too), but even on my late birth father's side. I remain fascinated by the nature-nurture issue and by my own fascinating story as someone straddling multiple families, adoptive and biological.

For years I thought about changing my name but didn't. The hassle of dealing with the courts, the costs, bureaucracies, and financial entities turned me off. Then, in mid-May 2009, I realized the time had come. That's also a long story, but one major factor was being a primary responder to fatal car accident that killed a driver and passenger. The death of a good friend months earlier also weighed on my mind. I came to the realization that today could be the last and that only today mattered. It was time to stop putting off things and start doing things I had wanted to do, in this case for two decades. So, soon after the incident, I filed my paperwork with the Anchorage Superior Court to legally change my name.

It is with some relief to know that I likely will never have to spell my family name again, or have my family named spelled incorrectly. I am keeping my commonly used first name, Rudy, because I am "Rudy." It is how my friends and family have known me since I was 18. I think I may have some problems signing documents with a new last name, but otherwise, the change is now complete. Whether anything will have changed, I cannot truly say. I am literally revisiting the first pages of chapter one of my life, my birth, when my own life biography is somewhere in chapter eight. That is interesting to me. Maybe nothing will have changed. Maybe it was all meant to happen this way for a reason, and that will become clearer one day. Hard to say. Mostly, I am still the same "Rudy." I doubt anyone will truly notice a difference, except the three major credit bureaus who no doubt will penalize me for complicating their records.

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