

Naming a Personal Column

"Words are things . . ."

—BYRON

MORE THAN ONE COLUMNIST, one of these authors included, has fashioned a column heading around this Byron quotation. One column was "Words" in large hand-drawn letters, boxed, with the quotation above inserted in small italics.

To think of a clever heading is to wish to write a column. Conversely, many a column is aborted because the would-be writer has thought of no suitable heading. Of course one can call upon the public, which names everything from gasoline to movie actors. But there is satisfaction in choosing one's title after days of toying with ideas. Type and rule can be used in the heading, or commercial artists can supply hand-drawn art titles.

One could emulate the columnist who launched his department without a name. "Don't Name It"



Of course, one can call upon the public . . .

was the temporary heading. Several years later the same heading was still in use. This was no worse, perhaps — and no better, either — than the no-name cafes frequently seen on transcontinental highways.

Standing headings quickly win acceptance by readers, who then characteristically resist change. One of the several conductors of "Random Thoughts" columns was elected county surveyor and asked readers to vote on the old name versus "Surveying the Situation." The old title won, 1,040 votes to seven.

Column headings are seldom duplicated in the same region, but titles are seen in scores of papers which have no overlapping of circulation. Doubtless some of this duplication is accidental rather than imitative.

Titles initially attract readers by their newness and sometimes by their uniqueness. They also identify the writers, suggest the type or content, or associate content with places. Some suggest that the writers are modest to a fault. These titles include "Chatter," "Idle Talk," and similar vagaries. Yet some very sound prose is written under titles which seem to promise only trivia.

Requisites of a good column name include:

1. Brevity, so it will fit in one or two columns.
2. Exclusiveness, at least in a circulation area.
3. Aptness, in that the heading suits the content, the personality of the writer, the locale, etc.
4. Appropriateness. It is not enough to be merely clever and original. Columns must wear well.

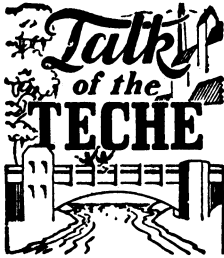
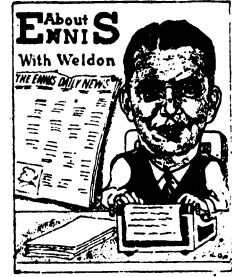
Some headings suggest a design. Examples are "Circling the Square," with a circle inside a rectangle; "Circling Around," "Milling Around," "Short Shavings," and many others not necessary to mention. Points of view are indicated by "From the Crow's Nest," "From the Top of the Windmill," and "Getting Out on a Limb."

COINCIDENCE

A couple of Nebraska columnists had the same idea in naming their columns. Jack Lough, editor of the Albion News, named his column 'The Loughdown.' Jack Lowe of the Sidney Telegraph then called his 'The Lowe Down.' Remarkable coincidence, eh! We suggest one of them change. Ideas we have to offer include: How Lowe Can You Get, Swing Lough, Lowe'n Ranger, Un-Lough-ded, Lowe Cowe, and Lough Man on the Totem Pole. —Bill Greenless, Garden City News. Oshkosh, Nebraska.

I like wrinkles in people's faces. Nearly always they were put there by work or by laughter, or both, and each necessary to genuine neighborliness. — Willcox (Ariz.) News.

IT SEEMS TO ME:



Deck's
DIDACTICS

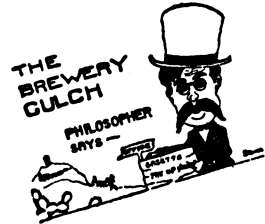
GETTING OUT



The Century Expressed
(Or 50 down & 50 to go)

These
Things
We
Note

Dear Readers:



Under headings like the above, 8,000 columnists write every week with verve and wit.

Columns also call attention to the writers' names or pen names. The "Tactless Texan" becomes Old Tack. "Annegrams" identifies the writer, Ann England. Others are "Aunt Lou's Scrapbook," "Bill-bored," "Claud's Comments," and "From A to Izzard." "The Woman in the Shoe" is appropriate; she has six children.

Place identification appears in "Bull Creek Philosopher," "About Ennis," "Dillon Doodlings," "Homer Hometown," and "Paducah Prattle." "Don Pedro Says" suggests a Latin environment.

Some of these names are indicative of little high concentration at midnight. Columns often have the casual nature of their headings. We see "Huntin' and Peckin,'" "Things 'n Stuff," "Of This, That, and the Other," and "Simple Stuff." We read "Toonerville Toots," "Pi-Lines," and "Sunshine and Shadows."

We also catch the thought of a busy but contemplative editor taking the time to write a letter to his people. We find "The Editor's Corner," "The Editor's Column," "The Editor's Desk," and many others. We see "Hastings Thinks," "So We Think," and just plain "Think." And there are "Deck's Didactics," "Brain Storms," and "It Seems to Me."

A literary tone is suggested by "Trail Dust," "The Spectator," "Sand Dunes," "Musings," and "A Style of My Own." Chamber of commerce influence in "Going Forward With Eastland." A built-in apology is provided by "Maybe We're Wrong," "You Might Doubt It," and "Slicing It Thin." Farm life situations are promised in "Mrs. Poke Bonnett." There are no inhibitions in "Rips and Tears." And the English language is typically reversible in "On the Record" and "Off the Record"; also in "On the Cuff" and "Off the Cuff."

Name-values and the intimate exchange of small

COLUMN NAMES

Some additional column titles seen recently:

"That's My Q."

"I Could Be Wrong."

"FYI—for Your Information."

". . . Son-of-a-Gun."

"WAGGING of a Loose Tongue
in an Empty Head."

"Type Ticks."

"Swabbing the Deck."

"Old Inky Sez."

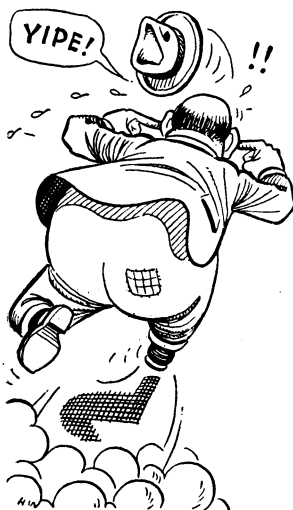
Inflation is an economic condition which enables two 5c cigars to go up in 25c worth of smoke.—Chilton (Wis.) Times-Journal.

This is the season when you can't tell whether the lady has a chigger bite or a crawly girdle.—St. John (Kans.) News.

talk are implied in "About People You Know," "Around the Coffee Table," "Between You and Me," "Dear Folks," and "Mostly About People." "The Gay Philosopher" is a bit gayer than most columns. There's complete candor in "Fact and Fancy—Let the Wise Man Make the Distinction." You have to read the columns to catch the spirit of "Getting Out on a Limb" and "Not Kidding." A few columns are "Offhand" and we find some readers "Following the Sheriff's Trail."

"Generally Speaking," however, a column title doesn't indicate accurately the content. Here are some unique titles chosen from a much greater number of availables:

Here are more titles . . .



Sideswipe and Scramble
Snooter Knows
Why?
Column One
Pot-Pourri
Eighter From Decatur
Girl of the Gumbo
Grumblings
Etaoin and Shrdlu
The Eagle's Eye
The Hell-Box
Hereford Bull
In the Dog House
PATter
Polk Street Professor
Rambling Roses and Flying Bricks
'awkins Talkin'

HYN?
Sass and Bull
Dirty Digs
The Brewery Gulch
A Shot of SCOTCH
Flicks and Flips
Static
Chips and Slivers
Caught in the Web
Around the Edges
Read 'Em and Weep
Reflections in a Star
Sek's Appeal
Tom and Pete—the Home Towners
12th Street Rag
The Grin Reaper
Shinglediggins
The Horse Fly

Even stranger titles come to hand. One is "Fool Column." Another, picturing a balding editor at his typewriter, shows a number of cartoonist's balloons filled with "Why?" But the most unusual of all ran for a time in the Lexington (Ky.) *Herald*:

BLUEGRASS AND HORSE FEATHERS

"The Bluegrass Isn't Blue and the Horse
Has No Feathers, but Half
You Know 'Ain't So'"