



In the Middle

Mentioning band leader Stan Kenton in the story a couple of weeks ago led to a discussion with my mother (via Skype, of course) on the names she and dad chose for their kids. What's the connection? Well, it seems that the man who is writing these little stories for you every week *could* have shared a name with that famous musician!

When I was born, my parents had been married just about a year and a half. Although they were living in London at the time because of my father's dance band work, my mother had gone 'back home' up to Halifax in Yorkshire to give birth, where she could get support from family and friends for the big event.

So my birth certificate was issued in Halifax, and it is there that I was named. The story gets a little muddy but I get the general impression that there were quite a few people offering 'suggestions'. Back in those days it was not unusual at all for grandparents to have quite a bit of say in such matters, and it was also common for a grandfather's name to be used for a new baby, even if it had already been used for nearby 'branches' of a family. So you tended to end up with families that had a lot of cousins with the same name, resulting in the use of such expressions as 'our Jack' or 'your Jack', to tell them apart. Another strong custom, rarely broken, was that names had to be taken from the bible.

It seems though, that my parents were somewhat resistant to many of these ideas. They were, after all, quite a 'modern' young couple, having broken with tradition to go off and live in the big city. They had their own ideas about what to name a baby. One of their suggestions was the name Jeremy Kenton Bull. Jeremy fit the requirement for a biblical connection, but Kenton was something different - the idea was of course to name me after the band leader, one of my father's heroes.

These days it is very common to hear about children being named after stars of pop culture, and I suppose schools are full of little girls called Madonna, for example, but it seems quite astonishing to me that such an idea was possible even back in those days. And *me*, named after a pop star! It seems incredible!

But somewhere in all the discussions, that suggestion was put aside, and I ended up with a very common biblical first name, combined with - not a grandfather's name - but my father's name in the middle. David Roy Bull.

We move ahead nearly three years, to my brother's birth. My parents have now been living 'away from home' for quite some time, and are much more independent. She doesn't return to Halifax for this birth, but stays in London, making my brother technically a Cockney. He too, gets a double name, and he too, ends up with a first name from a biblical source - Simon. My mother tells me though, that the inspiration for this was not specifically the bible (my parents are not at all religious) but was rather, a series of mystery novels very popular at the time. You may have heard of them; they featured a character known as 'The Saint', who's name was Simon Templar. At least my brother can be happy he didn't end up being named 'Saint'!

But it is with his middle name that we can see my parents breaking free of the family influences. This time, my father won, and was allowed to name his son after a musical hero. But by now, Stan Kenton had been replaced in his mind by the well-known jazz tenor saxophonist Dexter Gordon. So it is that my brother ended up as Simon Dexter Bull, and he did indeed, become a professional saxophone player!

A half-dozen or so years later, it was my sister's turn, and by then, the family was in Canada, far from traditional influences. But let's save that one for another day ...

As for me, I certainly can't quite see myself as a 'Jeremy'; it just doesn't feel right. But the Kenton part, I think I could have got used to that ... Dave 'Kenton' Bull. Maybe I would have ended up as a musician after all!

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