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13 September 2020

Name confusion

How do Smiths cope

Having the surname Wiederhold, and living most of my life in English-speaking countries, has meant that I've always had to spell my name and hear it mispronounced. You'd think that people would know the English rule 'I before E except after C'. However, having this surname, you would not expect to be confused with someone else, after all, other than my family, I've never met anyone with this name. Even in Germany it's not a common name.

However, this has happened a few times, so I thought I would share these anecdotes on the Wiederhold Facebook group.

We emigrated to South Africa in 1969 and my Father worked in Braamfontein, part of Johannesburg. At that time, another Wiederhold family also lived in Johannesburg, and the father of this family used the same branch of a bank in Braamfontein as my father did. The bank once mixed up their salaries which seems extraordinary given that only their surnames are the same, and makes me wonder how often that happens to Bakers and Smiths called John.

A friend of mine at primary school became a friend with the other Wiederhold at secondary school. I never met that Wiederhold, but when at a hospital for X-rays the receptionist called up my surname and thought I was him. She seemed surprised that two people of roughly the same age should have the same surname.

I visited a power station in Germany and had to provide my passport to Security for access. Even though I handed over a Dutch passport, the Security guard spoke German to me. When I explained that I could not speak German she seemed surprised as she thought I was Dr Wiederhold's son. Apparently he is a General Practitioner in the village.

While I was at university I took Gio Wiederhold's book Database Design from the library and kept it beyond its due date. I received a post-card reading 'Wiederhold, please return Wiederhold'. It's a pity I lost that in my various house moves since then.

One of my sons and I believe that our combinations of first and surname are unique, but my wife and other son have found other Wiederholds with their first names. A few years ago a Wiederhold with my oldest son's first name even studied in Bristol which is not far from where we live.

If you would like a book with your surname on the cover, I have self-published a novel set in South Africa at the end of apartheid. 'Getting Hold of a Gun is Easy' is on Amazon or can be bought from www.lulu.com/spotlight/AlwinW