

2010 Name of the Year

CLEVELAND EVANS

Bellevue University, USA

The sixth annual Name of the Year vote was held at the American Name Society meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on January 7, 2011.

For 2010 we had twenty total nominees, the most ever. Sixteen nominations were made by email before the meeting, and four were nominated from the floor during the Name of the Year voting.

There were only two nominations for Fictional Name of the Year. The nominator of Mother Slaughter, the name of a character from Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*, proposed it because the name was "ironic on several levels." For example, her headstone was "so cracked and worn and weathered that all it said now was LAUGH." The other nominee was "Quinn and Finn," the names of a teenage dating couple on the popular television program "Glee." They were nominated because of their rhyming, and because the characters have sparked a recent increase in the use of those names for babies in the United States. After a short discussion focusing on the much wider public impact of "Quinn and Finn," the pair was unanimously voted Fictional Name of the Year.

There were eight nominations for Personal Name of the Year. Bristol was nominated because the fame of Bristol Palin has led to an increase in the use of this name in spite of the fact that it does not fit in with other popular baby names today, and because it is a good example of a place name turned into a given name. Buster Posey, the name of the catcher for the San Francisco Giants baseball team, was nominated by someone who commented, "I just love the way his name combines butch and femme — just like San Francisco itself." The Situation and Snooki, nicknames of two of the stars of the reality television series "Jersey Shore," were nominated as a pair. Lady Gaga, the stage name of popular singer Stefani Germanotta, was nominated because of how its oddity and memorability have contributed to her success. Paul the Octopus, name of a cephalopod in a German aquarium who correctly predicted the outcomes of several World Cup soccer matches, was also nominated by email.

There were three nominations for Personal Name of the Year from the floor at the voting. Barefoot Bandit, the nickname of Colton Harris-Moore, a teenager from Washington state who gained notoriety after committing many burglaries and thefts of small aircraft and automobiles, was nominated because of his success at gaining notice on Facebook. Dora was nominated because the nominator said his grandchildren loved the name because of Dora the Explorer, and Gunner was nominated as a recent example of a rising baby name.

Initial voting on the above eight nominees failed to yield a winner with over 50 percent, so a run-off was held between Bristol and Lady Gaga, the two top names

in the first vote. After some discussion on the advisability of ANS giving more publicity to Sarah Palin, Lady Gaga won as Personal Name of the Year.

There were four nominees for Place Name of the Year, all received by email. Eyjafjallajökull, the Icelandic volcano whose eruptions in April and May disrupted air travel over Europe, was nominated because of how the difficulty of pronouncing the name itself became a main part of the news about it in North America. Cité Soleil, the name of a slum in Haiti, was nominated because of how it “became a metaphor for Haiti’s lamentable post-earthquake recovery and later for the cholera epidemic.” Copiapó, the name of the town where thirty-three Chilean miners were trapped for more than six weeks, became a contrasting metaphor for hope and survival. Finally, Deepwater Horizon, the name of the offshore oil drilling rig which exploded and sank in the Gulf of Mexico in April 2010, was nominated because of its prominence in the news. Eyjafjallajökull won the contest with two-thirds of the vote.

Nominees for Trade Name of the Year received in advance included WikiLeaks. One of its four nominators said it “became famous for its publication of Iraq war logs and diplomatic cablegrams. The name is interesting because the site is not a true wiki (user-editable website).” Tea Party, nominated by three persons, was said to be “interesting because of its historical associations which have helped to energize this political movement.” BP was suggested by someone who added “Do I really need to explain? (see Deepwater Horizon),” and Old Spice was nominated because of its revival as a brand name due to clever video advertisements. In addition, Facebook was nominated from the floor at the meeting because of how this trade name has recently become a verb. The results were that Tea Party won with 50 percent of the total vote.

The four winners in the categories were the only nominees for overall Name of the Year for 2010. A lively discussion focused on whether or not it was a good idea to proclaim Tea Party as Name of the Year for fear that ANS would be seen to be endorsing a particular political movement. Many thought that Eyjafjallajökull was the best choice because of how the name itself became a news story.

In the end, Eyjafjallajökull was proclaimed Name of the Year for 2010 with 63 percent of the votes cast by attendees at the annual meeting. This means that the overall Name of the Year has been a place name two years in a row, since Salish Sea was the 2009 winner.

For 2011, the American Name Society will again vote on Names of the Year in the four categories of Fictional Names, Place Names, Personal Names, and Trade Names before choosing an overall winner. Send nominations to Dr. Cleveland Evans, either by email at cleveland.evans@bellevue.edu, or by postal mail to him at Psychology Department, Bellevue University, 1000 Galvin Road South, Bellevue, NE 68005-3098, USA. Please include a rationale for your nomination, which can be included on the list of nominees presented at our annual meeting in January 2012.