

REPORT

Name of the Year 2016

CLEVELAND EVANS

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The eleventh annual Name of the Year vote was held at the American Name Society (ANS) meeting in Austin, Texas, on January 6, 2017. For 2016 we had 27 total nominees, four less than for 2015. Twenty-five nominations were made by email before the meeting, and two were nominated from the floor.

There were seven original nominations for Trade Name of the Year. Several were not commercial names, but names of entities in the news that did not fit well into the other categories. In addition, Brexit, originally nominated in the Place Name category, was moved to the Trade Name category by the voters at the meeting. Grexit was actually the first nomination received by mail in 2016. The nominator pointed out that this blend of “Greece” and “exit,” coined in 2015 to describe the possibility of Greece leaving the European Union, has been the model for the more recent terms Frexit (France + exit), Nexit (Netherlands + exit), Auxit (Austria + exit), and of course Brexit (Britain + exit.) Brexit, the name for the June referendum where 52% of voters in the UK did vote to leave the European Union, was nominated separately. The nominator pointed out that Donald Trump called himself “Mr Brexit” because of his winning the US Presidential election in defiance of many polls, just as Brexit won unexpectedly in Britain. Since the election the term “Calexit” has been used by those advocating that California secede from the US.

Other Trade Name nominees included Uber, the American worldwide online transportation network company; Chewbacca Mom, the name of an internet viral video made by Texan Candace Payne while she was wearing a Chewbacca mask, causing that item to sell out at many retailers; Pokémon Go, the newly released mobile version of that game which requires players to move through real-world surroundings while trying to “catch” Pokémon, and was criticized for causing accidents and privacy violations; Samsung, the South Korean company whose smartphones developed a habit of catching fire in 2016, causing them to be banned from airplanes; and Red Lobster, the restaurant chain famously mentioned in Beyoncé’s 2016 Super Bowl performance. There was also a joint nomination for Ichthyic and Pinkroot, codenames for the 1968 spy mission by the USS Pueblo, because two articles by an ANS member about them appeared in academic journals in 2016.

During the discussion before the vote it was pointed out that Uber became widely used as a verb in 2016. This contributed to Uber tying with Brexit to win as Trade Names of the Year, the first time there has been a tie in any Name of the Year category.

After Brexit was moved to the Trade Name category, there were four nominees for Place Name of the Year received by email. The first was Pulse, the name of the gay bar

and nightclub in Orlando, Florida, which on June 12, 2016 was the site of the deadliest mass shooting by a single perpetrator in US history. Another building nominated in the category was Ghost Ship, the warehouse turned into an artists' collective in Oakland, California, where on December 2, 2016 a fire killed 36 partygoers — the deadliest fire in California since those after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Aleppo, the name of Syria's largest city, which endured four years of combat and bombing during the Syrian civil war, was nominated both because of the wide coverage of the tragedy in the media and because Libertarian Presidential candidate Gary Johnson, when asked a question about the city in September, replied "What is Aleppo?" — for which he was widely derided. Chicago was nominated because that city's Cubs baseball team won the World Series for the first time in 108 years in 2016. Finally, Benghazi was nominated from the floor at the meeting. This Libyan city, site of a 2012 attack which killed four Americans including Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, became a rallying cry for those opposed to Hillary Clinton during the election campaign. Aleppo won the vote for Place Name easily, with Pulse being its closest competition.

Ten nominations for Personal Name of the Year were received by email. These included Bubba the Love Sponge Clem, the professional name of Todd Alan Clem, the host of a radio show in Tampa, Florida. Another nominee was Scary Lucy, the nickname for an unattractive statue of comedian Lucille Ball in a public park in Celoron, New York. A better likeness was placed in the park in April 2016, although the original is still on view. Three nominees were connected with the 2016 Summer Olympics. Simone was nominated because of two different athletes: Simone Manuel, the first African-American woman to win an individual swimming event; and Simone Biles, who won one bronze and four gold medals, becoming the most-decorated American gymnast ever. Steele Johnson, an American diver who was the co-winner (with David Boudia) of the men's 10 m synchronized diving event, got a nod, as did Boomer, the name of the infant son of swimmer Michael Phelps (born in May 2016), who has more Instagram followers than his father, perhaps partly due to his unusual name. Four nominees were connected with the Presidential campaign. The first, Ken Bone, was a voter who asked a question in an October Presidential debate and became a brief internet sensation. Trump, the surname of winning candidate Donald Trump, was nominated, as was John Miller, a pseudonym assumed by Trump while he was pretending to be his own publicist in the 1990s. Two different nominations were received for Drumpf, the Trump family's ancestral family name. In February 2016, satirical television host John Oliver urged viewers to refer to Trump as "Drumpf." HBO, Oliver's employer, created DonaldJDrumpf.com, which continues to sell "Drumpf" merchandise. One of the nominators said Drumpf "underscored the ludicrousness of this election year as well as the power of naming and name-calling." Two different nominations were also received for Harambe, the name of a gorilla at the Cincinnati Zoo shot and killed in May when he grabbed a three-year-old boy who fell into his enclosure. Finally, Carrie Fisher, the name of the actress who became famous playing Princess Leia in the "Star Wars" film franchise and who died on December 27, 2016, was nominated from the floor. Drumpf won the vote for Personal Name of the year.

Three nominees for Fictional Name were received by email before the meeting. Boaty McBoatface, which won an internet poll in March to name a new British research vessel, was nominated because it seemed to spawn many imitations during the year, such as

Parsey McParseface, the name of Google's language-parsing tool; Horsey McHorseface, the name of an Australian racehorse; and Namey McNameface, proposed as the name of Google's Android version (which actually was later named Nougat). Hodor, the name of a character in George R. R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" novels and the HBO series "Game of Thrones" based on them, was nominated because the origin of his name was revealed in a May 2016 television episode. Hodor, a large man with limited wits, had a name that came from the only word he ever says, "Hodor." It was revealed the character was driven mad by a vision of his future death, where he is "holding the door" against evil beings trying to attack Bran, the main character who Hodor has been guarding for years. The final nominee was Hamilton, title of the hit Broadway musical featuring rap music. It won 11 Tony awards in 2016, and also was in the news because of a November 18 performance attended by Vice President Elect Pence, where cast members told him: "We truly hope this show has inspired you to uphold our American values." Hamilton easily won as Fictional Name of the Year.

The five winners in the overall categories automatically became nominees for overall Name of the Year. There were no other nominations from the floor. Aleppo won as overall Name of the Year by three votes over Drumpf.

For 2017, 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. Please send nominations to Dr Cleveland Evans, either by email at cevans@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 will be included on the list of nominees presented at our annual meeting during January 2018.