

A Note on Names for Cars

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IN *FOLKLORE AMERICANO* journal of the Comité Interamericano de Folklore (Lima, Peru), there appeared in 1957 an interesting collection by J. M. B. Farfán of more than 1600 names given to motor vehicles.¹ The list was compiled in Lima, Arequipa, and Cuzco between 1952 and 1957. Most of the names came from trucks, which, according to the collector, nearly always are named in Peru; other names were from buses and taxis. Infrequently a name was found on a private automobile. Farfán classified his list into twenty-three categories² and observed that the names tended to follow the times and thus to reveal popular attitudes towards contemporary events. He expressed hope that his work might stimulate studies of vehicle names by sociologists, ethnologists, folklorists or psychologists.

The headings for the categories follow, along with a few sample names and the total number of items in each class.

1. Astronomical, Weather and Other Natural Phenomena (*El Astro*, *El Torbellino* 'Whirlwind,' *El Vulcano*; 52)

2. Nations of the World, Foreign Names and Terms (*Buffalo Bill*, *Wisconsin*, *Mein Kamtf* [sic]; 112)

3. Local Place and Personal Names (*Pastor de los Andes*, *Idolo del Distrito Chituna*, *Señor de Mayo*; 215)

4. Peruvian History and other Peruvian References (*Amor Peruano*, *Inca Roca*, *Peruanito*; 30)

5. Quechuan Indian Terms (*El Chasqui* 'The Messenger,' *Calato* 'Naked'; 12)

6. Terms of Encouragement and Luck (*El Invencible*, *La Pluma de Ingenio* 'The Pen of Ingenuity,' *Mi Vida Es Viajar* 'Travelling is my Life'; 175)

¹ J. M. B. Farfán, "Onomastica de Vehículos," *Folklore Americano*, V (1957), 140-154.

² As can be seen from their titles and some sample names, the categories are not mutually exclusive.

7. Terms of Craftiness, Wit, Impudence and Roguishness (*El Abandonado, El Terror de la Pampa, Demonio de las Pistas* 'Devil of the Race Tracks'; 157)
8. Names of Film Stars, Singers and Heroes (*Dan Patch, Pop Eye, Don Alan Ladd*; 191)
9. Titles of Songs and Literary Works (*Danubio Azul, Adiós Pampa Mia*; 11)
10. Capricious Names (*El Solitario, El Coleta* 'Cabbage Head'; 46)
11. Religious Names (*Mi Jesús, Padre Nuestro, Dios Es Grande*; 82)
12. Names of Saints, Male (*San Ignacio de Loyola, San Sebastián*; 49)
13. Names of Saints, Female (*Santa María, Sta. Juanita*; 46)
14. Men's Names (*Domingo, José Antonio, Tristán*; 74)
15. Women's Names (*Carmelita, Hortencia, Rosalinda*; 57)
16. Professions and Occupations (*El Agente 77, Caminero* 'The Hiker,' *El Minero*; 32)
17. Names of Good Will (*Mi Buen Amigo, El Humanitario*; 47)
18. Precious Things (*El Diamante, Mi Tesoro*; 6)
19. Botanical Names (*La Flor del Valle, Tomatito*; 25)
20. Zoological Names (*Aguila Verde* 'Green Eagle,' *Caballo Rojo* 'Red Horse'; 28)
21. Salutes, Greetings (*Feliz Día, Ola Cholito* 'Hi, Keed!'; 10)
22. Romantic and Sentimental Remarks (*Mi Amor es Tuyo* 'My Love Is Yours,' *Rosita — Cariño Mio* 'Rosita — My Darling,' *Sinceramente Tuyo*; 176)
23. Maxims (*Espérame con Paciencia* 'Wait for Me Patiently,' *Siempre Adelante* 'Ever Onward'; 37)

These samples hint at the variety and richness of the Peruvian list and raise the questions of how well known the naming of vehicles may be in other countries and what common themes are popular. Acquaintances of mine have reported vehicle naming elsewhere in South America, Central America and in Spain, but without being able to remember specific examples. A news release from Accra, Ghana, however, dated April 12, 1961, lists the following names from buses (locally called "Mammy Wagons"): *Follow Me Number Two, People Will Talk of You, Sister Girl, Remember Me My God, Look How God Do* and *Oh Be Quiet*.³

³ From *The Courier-Journal* of Louisville, Kentucky, April 13, 1961.

In the United States the teen-ager's jalopy covered with painted slogans ("Don't laugh lady, your daughter may be inside") was a common sight some two or three decades ago, but is seldom encountered now. I saw similar slogans painted on students' cars in Oslo, Norway, in the spring of 1957; one very old car, for instance, was labeled *Rullende Mirakel* 'A Rolling Miracle.' American drivers of older automobiles sometimes have affectionate private names for them; one friend of mine calls his car *Betsy*, and another refers to his as *Brewster*. Traditionally it has been the American truck driver who is given to painting a personal name directly on his vehicle. In 1952 Arthur Minton published an impressive list of truck names, commenting that they "suggest feelings of pride and pleasure — even of affection — towards the vehicle."⁴ I have recently observed these truck names in the Midwest: *Ole Betsy III*, *Miss Maggie*, *Gravel Gertie*, *Little Joe*, *Here Comes the Rebel*, *Little Dago*, *Miss Jane Kay* and *Sir Bounce-a-lot*.

The American soldier's tendency to name his vehicle is well known. A series of notes on jeep and truck names has appeared in *American Speech*.⁵ An article on wartime folklore at Dugway Proving Grounds on the Salt Lake Desert reported that about half of the base rolling stock was labeled *Snafu*; popular names for other vehicles there were borrowed from famous explorers or other historical characters.⁶

Spanish car names in the United States have been reported to me from Tucson, Arizona, where, in 1953, my informant saw *El Padrote Verde* 'The Green Pimp' painted on a green convertible; and from Los Angeles where the names *El Debil Blanco* (sic) and *El Gato* were seen. In Baltimore, Maryland, the custom of naming family station wagons has caught on; the names reported are *Land Ho!*, *Bedside Manor*, *Bet-ja*, *The Harem II*, *Susan's Mink*, *Yggdrasil*, *At Last II*, and *Harvey's Harem and Hero*.⁷

⁴ Arthur Minton, "Joe's Here," *American Speech*, XXVII (1952), 32–35.

⁵ M. Hausknecht, "A Note on 'Joe's Here,'" *American Speech*, XXVIII (1953), 145–146; Robert Sonkin, "Bleeding Betty's Brakes, or, The Army Names a Jeep," *American Speech*, XXIX (1954), 257–262; Martin A. Watkins, "Metempsychosis and the Army Jeep," *American Speech*, XXXI (1956), 137–138.

⁶ Ronald L. Ives, "Dugway Tales," *Western Folklore*, VI (1947), 53–58; see also *Western Folklore*, VI (1947) 189 for a note on a battleship's nickname.

⁷ "The Tongue-Waggin' Wagons," *Ford Times*, LIII (March, 1961), 48–49.

Recently the painting of names in English directly on automobiles has become a teen-age fad.⁸ Early in 1960 when I became aware of this practice, I began to jot down names as I spotted them. I collected, as the Peruvian scholar did, usually "on the fly when the car was discovered in motion." The names I saw originally were in Indiana and southern Michigan, but through travel and wide correspondence I have found the trend to be national. The duplication of a few names over a broad area suggests that the fad has some commercial circulation now, perhaps as decals, but most names still seem to be hand painted, often in ornate script, on both rear fins of the cars in lettering two to three inches high. Most of these cars are not jalopies, but instead are well-shined recent models. Here, in alphabetical order, is my present collection of teen-age car names:

All Shook Up	Boeing 707	Expensive One
Angry Angel	Bulls-eye	The Flintstones
Apple Cart	The Butcher	The Frog
Baby Blue	Casper	Fuzz Teaser
Bad Boy	Cheetah	Fuzzy's Firewagon
Beach Comber	Cherry Bomb	The Gent
Beelzebub	Chevy-eater	Gin Slinger
Betty	Chicken Most	Gitterbug (sic)
Black Bird	China Doll	Glenda
Black Beetle	Chip's Chariot	Golden Fleece
Black Bug	Commanche	Good Timing
Black Diamond	Constipated, Can't	Great Imposter
Black Hawk	Pass a Thing	Half Fast
Black Widow	Coral Coach	Happy Go Lucky
Blue Angel (2)	Cradle of Love	The Happy Wanderer
Blue Blazer	Dago Red	Have Car Will Travel
Blue Blazes	Devil's Disciple	The Hawk
Blue Boy	Dilly's Dolly	Honey Bee
Blue Heaven	Doggy Frog	Hot Cats
Blue Lady	Draggin' Lady	Impatient Impala
Blue Mist	Dragon Fly	Judge Not
Blue Mood	Dragon Spawn	Just a Dream
The Blushing Rose	Dragon Wagon	Kathy's Clown
Bob's Sled	Drummer Boy	The Kooch

⁸ Kelsie Harder has called to my attention one popular article on this fad: "Name Craze," *Custom Rodder*, VI (1960), 24-27.

Lead Sled	The Outlaw	Sleeve Cookie
Lil Angel	Peanuts	Slo-Mo-Shun
Lil Kingpin	Pee Wee	Slow Death
Lil Slo Poke	Peggy	Slow Poke
The Limping Lady	Pepe Le Pew	Snow Cone
Little Bo Jeep	Perk	So Rare
Little Jo	Perky's Impala	Spartan
Little One (2)	Pink Chiffon	Stagger Lee II
Little Punch	Pink Dream	The Stinker
Little Stud	Playboy's Penthouse	The Sundowner
Little Tiger	Playhouse Nightly (2)	Swamp Buggy
Little White Dove	Playmate	Sweet Buggy
The Lonely One	Poncho	Tahiti I
Lonesome	Portrait in Black	Teen Angel (2)
Lonesome Blue Boy	The Puddle Jumper	Tempest
Mad Hatter	Punch-n-Pancho	Temptation
Magnificent Six	The Rat	Think Wise
Mavis	The Rebel	Thou Shalt Not Kill
Mein Kampf	Red Devil	Tiger (2)
Midnite Special	Red Rooster	Time Bomb
The Mighty Rump	Red Rover	Tin Lizzy
Miss Carriage (2)	Road Runner	Too Many Rules
Miss Suzie	Rum Runner	Touchable
Misty	Runaway	Tragedy
Moe and Me	Running Bare	Travellin' Man
Moon Beam	Runnin' Scared	The Ugly Duckling
More Bomb	Runnin' Wild (2)	The Unforgiven
Morli	Sambo	Untouchable
Mo-Ta-Tion	Satan's Angel	Untouchables
My Dog	Screamin' Demon	The Weeper
Nature Boy	7 Come 11	Why Not
Night Crawler	7th Heaven	Wild Child
Night Raider	Shooting Star	The Wild One
Old Yeller	Shy Away	Wild Woodpecker
Ole Rip	Six Pack	Willy the Wolf
The One for Fun	6 Pack to Go	Wine-O
One in a Million	Sleepless	Yellow Jacket

Several themes are already apparent in the car-naming craze — feminine names, colors, animal names, song titles, and references to television, movies and comic strips. Some car names seem to allude to the given name, hobby or occupation of the owner; others ad-

vertise a feature of the car itself. Punning and alliteration are frequent. It is to the credit of the creator of the teen-age comic strip "The Jackson Twins" that he has successfully caught the car-naming trend in a recent episode. The twins acquired a Model-T and named it *T for Two*, thus using two themes of the fad, a song title and a pun. The name, however, was not painted on their car.

A few American car names are close parallels of Peruvian names. Among the latter we find *Paloma Blanca* (cf. *Little White Dove*), *El Tigre* (cf. *Tiger* and *Little Tiger*), *El Astro* (cf. *Shooting Star*), *El Solitario* (cf. *Lonesome* and others), and in both lists *Mein Kampf*. Most interesting in both lists is the frequent note of defiance, rakishness or downright suggestiveness. *Fuzz Teaser* ("Fuzz" is "policeman," a carry-over from armed-service slang), *Cradle of Love*, *Sleepless*, *Playmate* (referring to *Playboy's* nude pinups), *Miss Carriage*, *Playhouse Nightly*, *Bad Boy*, *Gin Slinger*, *Night Raider*, *Running Bare* and many other names carry this connotation. Two American names even contain off-color puns. On the Peruvian list we find *Loco por Faldas* 'Mad About Skirts,' *Terror de la Mujer* 'Feminine Fright' and others in category seven. Such names as these will probably be found wherever the custom is known; just as people may become more aggressive than usual when behind the wheel of a vehicle, similarly they compensate for inferiority feelings by painting names on their cars to advertise themselves as they would like to be. Perhaps containing the essence of teen-age revolt inherent in so many car names is the slogan from a Los Angeles car, *Too Many Rules*.

Further study of car naming will require accumulating a large collection of texts before the fad disappears. Readers of *Names* are urged to publish name lists from their own areas or to send me the names which they see.

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