

It's Only A Name

This is the story of my name journey from Naomi Lois Tyson to Sunshine Lutey.

I was a p.k. – now you may not know what that means so let me explain. Being a p.k. means you are in the spotlight and everyone watches to make certain you are doing all the right things all the time. So no matter where our family lived (and we moved just about every three years within the state of Wisconsin), we lived under the microscope. What does p.k. mean? It means preacher's kid.

Lloyd, my husband, was also a p.k. – And so it happened that two rebels found each other. On June 29th, 1962, I started the day as Naomi Lois Tyson. In the afternoon, my dad and Lloyd's dad said some magical words and suddenly I was Naomi Lois Lutey; yes, our dads officially married us.

In 1963, we moved to California where our two children were born. I had never liked my name; and my husband suggested, if you don't like it, do something about it and I did. The mother's name on the birth certificate of our oldest (Darrell) is Naomi Lois Lutey; but thirteen months later, on our daughter's (Denise) birth certificate, the mother's name is Terri Lynn Lutey. This is because I officially made an amendment to my birth certificate in between the two events.

Years later, when I began singing again, Lloyd suggested that I choose a stage name. Took me a few years, but I did --- Around Easter, 2001, a sweet couple, ages 96 and 86, asked me to help with one of their shows. My part was to wear a pretty dress and hat and "parade in" while they performed "The Easter Parade." I wore a pretty yellow dress with lace inserts, with gold accessories -- hat, belt, and shoes. Afterwards, I went to perform at a local assisted living facility, where I often played the grand piano and sang.

It was a gray and rainy day in April, 2001 – in fact, after I parked, I crossed the parking lot barefoot, carrying my fancy shoes. Just before I began singing, I announced, "It's pretty gray outside so I'm here in my yellow dress to bring you some sunshine; in fact, my name is Sunshine . . . and we're going to start with "You Are My Sunshine." "

I wasn't planning on a name announcement – but it just seemed right. In fact, I liked it so well that I've been "Sunshine" ever since. I thought about making it legal. The change in 1965 cost \$30, but now the cost is over \$500. Since everyone knows me as Sunshine I'll just continue being Sunshine without the legal change and without the big cost.