

Name FAQ:

So, what *is* your name?: As of July 7th, 2007, Joshua Eli Goldston Peek.

And before that?: Joshua Eli Goldston.

Is that two last names: Nope, “Joshua” is my first name, “Eli” and “Goldston” are both middle names, and “Peek” is my last name.

How about Goldston-Peek or Goldston/Peek?: No, seriously, Josh Peek. With middle names if you aren’t into that whole brevity thing.

Can I call you Josh?: Sure thing!

Where did you get the new name?: I married Kathryn Mary Peek and took her last name. She, in turn, took on my last name as her middle name, and now goes by Kathryn Mary Goldston Peek (like me, 1 first, 2 middle and 1 last name).

Why did you take your wife’s name?: To pick up chicks.

Seriously.: Well, when I was little and asked my Mom why she took my Dad’s name she said “A family needs a name”. That really stuck with me. I feel very strongly about egalitarianism and I thought this was a nice thing to do.

That doesn’t sound too egalitarian to me!: Well, from a historical perspective it is making something very un-egalitarian slightly more egalitarian. We considered going the route of Ruth Murray-Clay and Andy Cotton-Clay, who hyphenated a new name onto their old names, and now have a daughter Nora Clay. Katie wasn’t as excited about this option. There are a few other reasons for doing it this way: Peek has been in America since the 1600s, Goldston was invented just a few generations back, when my dad’s family came over to England from Russia. Katie is one of two girls, I am one of two boys, so taking her name assures continuity of the Peek name. Also, I am much closer to the Bergers (my Mother’s side) than the Goldstons. Indeed, I can trace my family back to a very large number of folks I am still in contact with on my doubly-maternal great-grandmother’s side: the Vivantes, Viterbos and Ferros. So, in terms of my family tree, the name isn’t as important to me.

Your parents must have disowned you.: When I asked my father how he would feel about this he said he was fine with it. He took a little while to come around to the idea, but I think he is comfortable with it. Oddly, my mother was more against the idea, but she came around too. She was the one who suggested we add Goldston as a second middle name.

Do you mind if I still call you Goldston?: As long as you don’t mind me calling you by your middle name. :P

But you haven’t really changed your name, have you?: According to Social Security, California’s DMV, my passport and my wedding license, yes I have. For reals.

But you still publish under Goldston?: Nope. I go by J.E.G. Peek.

Why all the initials?: This is back to egalitarianism. It was shown that if a student (man or woman) is shown a paper by Joan T. McKay they will statistically give it a lower grade than the same paper attributed to John T. McKay. There is a principle in Judaism (which

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I practice) of not “putting a stumbling block before the blind”. So, I’ve removed the stumbling block so we can all be a little less sexist.

Changing your publication name is bad for your career!: Well, I knew I was going to make the change before we tied the knot, so I was able to publish everything that contributed to my thesis work (I study the interstellar medium) in the new name. Also, the good people at the Astrophysics Data System, where most astronomers find papers, will happily link two names together: if you search Goldston you find Peek, and vice-versa.

If a woman has a maiden name, what does a man have?: A bachelor name.

And if women are née, men are...: né. Very useful in Scrabble.