

DICK ??????

By: Gus Dick Andros

Since 1949 the letters I received from my mother or aunts were addressed to Dick Andros, but when I opened the letters they always read "Dear Gus." I guess I should have been happy that they respected me enough to let the postman think that Dick was my real name.

I am still battling many who call me Richard, which is not my name. I get checks made out to Richard Andros. No matter how many times I tell people my name is Dick, they will say, "I am sorry, but Dick is not a name. It is a sobriquet for Richard."

"I am sorry but my birth certificate says Dick and Dick is my name," I reply angrily.

"If you say so, but Dick is not a name."

I think they may be right, but still I prefer Dick. You might wonder how a Greek boy like me got the name Dick and a family that refuses to acknowledge it. It is a story that is hard to believe, but I am the reason that "Dick" appears on my birth certificate.

The Greek Church names the male members of the family and there was a controversy over my name from the beginning. The Church wanted to name me Christos, but my Mother wanted me to be named after my father, Gus. Mother held out and I was named, Gus Jr. It took so long to get this matter cleared up that my birth certificate simply read "Baby Andros." It is also a Greek tradition for the male child to take his father's first name as his middle name. That would mean in my case I would be Gus Gus. Even my family thought that would be too much, so they did not give me a middle name.

At all family gatherings I was Gus Jr. to distinguish me from my father, but even after his death many of the family still called me Gus Jr.

No one ever bothered to notify the county clerk that Baby Andros now had a name, and for many years there was never a problem. When World War II started and the draft was imposed, all men of a certain age had to register. I had my social security number, but I needed a birth certificate to register. I went to the county clerk's office with information of my birth; parents, date, and location. They had no trouble finding the certificate, but it read "Baby Andros." To place my name on the certificate I didn't need any identification.

The clerk asked, "What's your name? We have found the document."

"Gus Dick Andros," I replied without thinking. I had seen Dick Powell in a movie the night before, and I liked the sound of his name. I have never been sorry, but I will say that mother was furious.

"I will never call you that," she screamed at me.

"What did you want me to put down, Gus Gus?"

"Why do you need a middle name anyway?"

"Everybody else has one, Plato and Dee have a middle name and I want one. Daddy's middle name was Demetrius, so now I have the same initials as him." This seemed to quiet mother, but she never called me Dick. She really didn't need to, because I was happy being called Gus or Gus Jr.

When I was in the army everyone called me "**Andros**," but my captain would shout "**Andy**" when he wanted my attention. I didn't like that, but I wasn't going to tell him that I would prefer to be called "Sergeant."

In San Francisco, I worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad, and personnel sent for my school transcript. My brother Dee's initials were D.G. Andros and mine were G.D. Andros the school sent his records. His transcript was a discrepancy with what I had told them, because I was a better student than my brother. After I realized the mistake, I got personnel to rewrite the schools and they sent the correct transcript.

Gus Andros was on the programs for the San Francisco Ballet, and many of the dancers still think of me as Gus. It was Walt Disney who forced me to become Dick. His *Cinderella* was playing in all the movie houses. There was a fat little mouse that was cute and charming called "Gus Gus," and suddenly I was no longer Gus but "Gus Gus."

I was moving to New York City about this time, where no one knew my name, and without thinking, I introduced myself as Dick. This was not a problem with the GI Bill, because Dick was on my discharge as my middle name.

I told mother and my aunts that I was to be called Dick from that time on, and they politely smiled with, "If that is what you want, Gus."

My nieces and nephews call me Uncle Dick and I think my brothers like that better than Uncle Gus which would remind them of our father. My cousins either call me Dick or Cuz, but my mother, Aunt Oma, and Aunt Vivian always called me Gus. My Greek relatives call me Kostas (Greek for Gus). Actually I don't give a damn what you call me as long as it is with love.