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THE STRAIGHT DOPE

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A **Straight Dope Classic** from Cecil's storehouse of human knowledge

Why is Peggy the nickname for Margaret?

08-Jan-1993

Dear Cecil:

My grandmother was named Margaret. She, and every other Margaret I know, has the nickname "Peg" or "Peggy." None of them can tell me how the two are connected, or how one arose from the other. Can you? --Michael Hix, Redlands, California

Dear Michael:

Never underestimate human ingenuity. Margaret has spawned an amazing variety of names, some of which you wouldn't connect with the original in a million years. For example: Margot, Marguerita, Rita (!), Greta, Gretel, Gretchen, Marjorie (originally Margery), Margie, Maggie, Madge, May, Maisie, Daisy (!!), Maidie, Meg, and Mog. As for Peg, one historian writes, "the nicknames Mog and Meg later gave rise to the rhymed forms Pog(gy) and Peg(gy)." Can't say as I know a lot of Poggies, and can't say as I want to. But you see how Grandma Margaret wound up with Peg.

OOPS O' DAISY

Dear Cecil:

Regarding the question about how Peggy derived from Margaret, you showed some astonishment that Daisy derived from Margaret. It is, in fact, the origin of the name. La marguerite is French for daisy. Daisy historically (until this century) has been a common diminutive of Margaret, and in the fifteenth century Marguerite d'Anjou, wife of England's Henry VI, used the daisy as her personal symbol.

An anonymous poem:

*In search from A to Z they passed,
 And "Marguerita" chose at last;*



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*But thought it sound far more sweet
To call the baby "Marguerite."
When grandma saw the little pet,
She called her "darling Margaret."
Next uncle Jack and cousin Aggie
Sent cup and spoon to "little Maggie."
And grandpapa the right must beg
To call the lassie "bonnie Meg."
From "Marguerita" down to "Meg,"
And now she's simply "little Peg."*

--Eirene Varley, Austin, Texas

Cecil replies:

Poetry always chokes me up. Just so we understand each other, I wasn't personally astonished by the Margaret/Daisy connection--when you've been on this job as long as I have, you're not astonished by anything. But I'd venture to say the average citizen wouldn't suspect a link. Contrary to what is apparently wide belief, judging from the mail, Margaret doesn't derive from the French/Spanish/Yiddish word for daisy. Margaret and marguerite do have a common source, the Latin *margarita*, pearl.

--CECIL ADAMS

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