Norwegian heritage attractive

DARRELL UTLEY

aka Barney from the bowling alley

Mrs. U and I have a mixed marriage. I have an English background and she has roots in Norway.

I consider myself to be an expert on Norwegian-watching! I have been surrounded by them at Christmas, birthday parties and family gatherings for 13 years.

I must choose my words carefully, because most lawyers won't touch a case that involves defending somebody who is charged with first-degree Norwegian-bashing. I am still on probation from a charge of Norwegian-bashing two years ago, when I used this column to examine the numerous baking and food items served by those of Norse descent over Christmas.

Norwegians are very proud of their heritage. On the other hand, my English background rouses very little passion in me. I would have trouble distinguishing between a Union Jack and a hunk of monterrey jack. Soccer hooliganism, the threat of IRA bombs and getting my luggage ransacked at Thiefrow airport aren't highlighted on any U.K. travel brochures. We're talking about a country where petrol sells for 12 bucks a gallon and full-term financing is available to any bloke who fills up the twin fuel tanks on his or her lorry.

Four years ago I made a feeble attempt to research my surname. While shopping at The Bay, I gave $10 to some guy, operating a booth, who fed my last name into a computer and a 900-word essay was printed out 15 seconds later.

The first Utleys were fair-skinned Saxons, who settled in England around AD 400. Utley's are proud and determined people. We tend to have no singing ability and have been known to butt in line when filling out an application for unemployment insurance benefits.

As a youngster I could care less about the family history of my surname. All I knew was that it was an easy name to make fun of. Some of the popular nicknames bestowed upon me were suckley, dutley, ugly and utley-dog. The most popular nickname that just so happened to be my least favorite was muttley. This lovely moniker was derived from a TV cartoon show during the '70s called Dastardly and Muttley.

We Englishmen tend to give our heritage, nary a second thought. This is not the case with Norwegians. They don't need much of a reason to rally 'round the flag.

Translated into English, the term Norwegian means: "The last one to find a seat on coffee row at Market Mall is a rotten Swede." In essence, a Swede is just a Norwegian with a sense of humor! Norwegians are non-confrontational, and given a choice, would rather "eat than fight." To a Norwegian, a life-support machine and a coffee maker are one and the same. Anybody who gets between a Norwegian and a full coffee pot would fare better poking a badger with a sharpened stick.

Maybe it's time for me to forsake my English heritage and become a born-again Norwegian. But I'll do it for me! I want to pickle my liver with coffee grounds? Yes! Somebody save me a spot on coffee row at Market Mall, Will I be happy? Is there more to life than free coffee refills and lamenting the dismal appearance of Saskatchewan rinks at the Brier? Time will tell!

Barney is heard Monday mornings on CJWW.