

All in the name of love

As Valentine's Day nears, pet names appear

By Traci Travis
The Battalion

Pet names such as "Koo Koo," "Pokey," "Goobie" and "Sweet Petutie" will decorate many lace-covered cards this Valentine's Day. But even the bare-butted Cupid must question these odd terms of affection.

Kathleen Ferrara, assistant professor of linguistics, said, "Pet names are bonding signals or private ways of communicating. It shows intimacy between two people." Kelly Vaughan has been calling his girlfriend Megan Zeitler "Bawbby" since the first night they met.

Zeitler, a sophomore business administration major, said whenever her boyfriend calls her "Bawbby" it makes her think back to when they first met.

"It's special because it's so random," Zeitler said. "I know it's just for me. It's not like 'Sweetie.'"

Names such as "Sweetie" and "Honey," however, are not as ordinary as they seem.

"Universally, the 'e' sound at the end of words such as 'Cutie' and 'Sweetie' reminds us of smallness," Ferrara said. "Smallness can then be related to dearness, thus making it a term of affection."

A study in "Human Communication Research," which involved 100 romantically involved couples, said that for both sexes, loving, commitment and closeness were associated with a number of reported idioms, or pet names, that showed affection.

According to the study, males are the inventors of idioms much more often than females. Ferrara agrees with this theory.

"Men are very territorial in nature," she said. "These love names may be given to women by their mates simply to show that the two have special ties and belong to each other."

Men and women differ in the way they express themselves, Ferrara said. Women tend to augment the size of their mates with names such as "Big Guy." On the other hand, men tend to size women down with their nicknames.

Kami Cessnun, a junior

sociology major, said her boyfriend calls her "Little Cutie."

"He calls me this because I'm so small," Cessnun said. "I usually tell him to shut up, but I really think it's funny."

There are exceptions to this male/female naming theory, however.

Brandi Stavinoha, a junior accounting major, sometimes calls her boyfriend "Little Papoose."

"'Little Papoose' is usually when he's not feeling well or looking for some attention," Stavinoha said. "It's definitely a term of endearment."

According to Ferrara, women tend to be more public with their terms than men. Women use terms of affection in order to build the ego of their mates.

Scott House, a junior recreation and parks major, prefers to be private with his pet names for girlfriend Kim Wilkie.

"I call her Kimmie usually," House said. "But when it comes to sending her cards and flowers, I like to use a different name, 'Blue Eyes.' It's more special that way."

Brittany Nadig, a junior

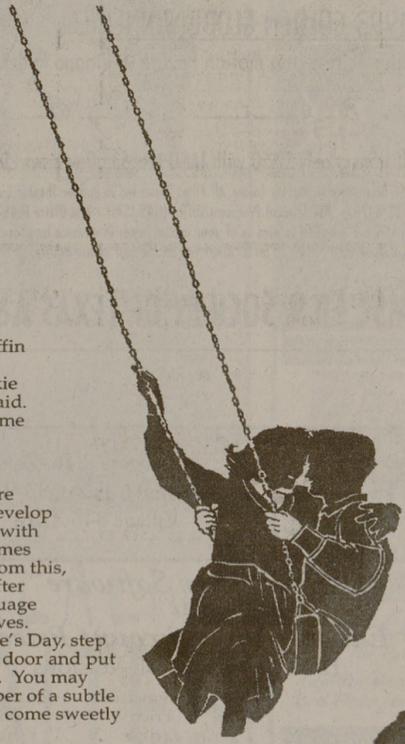
elementary education major, and her boyfriend Alan Horn seem to have no problem voicing their pet names in public.

This particular couple has a wide variety of unusual terms of endearment.

"I call him 'Muffin Head,' 'Pumpkin Noodle' and 'Pookie Dookie,'" Nadig said. "Alan likes to call me 'Britter,' 'Bee,' and 'Honeybun.'"

Ferrara said individuals who are intimate tend to develop private languages with each other. Pet names usually develop from this, but only a while after developing a language unique to themselves.

So this Valentine's Day, step outside your front door and put a hand to your ear. You may just hear the whisper of a subtle "Snicker Poo Poo" come sweetly drifting by.



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