

Let's Name Those Pups

"It was a dark and stormy night at sea and the captain said to the cabin boy ... 'Let's name those pups.'"

I bought a dog named 7 of 9 from John Barron - she looked at least as good to me as Jeri Ryan (or else I've been in the dog lot too long) so I let her keep the name. When I bred her, she had three pups, Picard, Kira, and (since I could only keep 2 of the pups) 6 of 1. Marti always said it was a darn good thing there were not 4 pups...

I bred Kira and stayed with the Star Trek theme - Dax, Keiko, Dukat, Worf, Rom, Sisco, and Quark joined my life. Well in my other life I'm a physicist and used to ponder the fundamental building blocks of the universe - so Quark is either my Ferengi dog or my Quantum Mechanical dog depending on my mood.

This begs the question; if I breed Quark which way do I go... In the 40's some physicists believed that the particles we knew like protons and neutrons were made up of smaller particles they now call quarks. These particles spin, and since they thought there were only two of them they called them up and down for the direction the spin pointed.

Time went on and they found more proton and neutron type particles, and as they got heavier they decayed into simpler particles faster and faster. Until one particle decayed much slower than the others - they said "That's strange" and the strange quark was named to give this strange behavior. They found that a particle could have strangeness of 0, 1, 2, or 3 (up to three quarks in a particle).

Life went on with heavier particles living shorter times, except for the strange particles, until they found another that lived even longer than the strange ones. It must live a charmed life, and so the charm quark was named to give the charmed particles this special nature.

Everybody was happy with the 4 quarks until a theorist's model predicted 6 quarks. The search was on - bigger accelerators would be needed to provide the extra energy to see them. Billions of dollars would be spent. And for what was everybody searching - "Truth and Beauty" was the obvious answer. But some more worldly physicists suggested that the search was really for "Fame and Glory" - the debate raged hot and heavy over the names for the new quarks, but Truth, Beauty, and the American Way won out.

However the particle that has just one of the new quarks, like one strange quark, is said to be bare, or for the strange quark have "bare strangeness". Bare Charm didn't bother folks too much, but when the poor graduate student got a plum assignment on the forefront of science and wrote home to tell his mother he was searching for "bare Beauty" his mother just didn't understand.

So the censor board (or equivalently boring people) recommended that the t and b quarks be renamed top and bottom. I've been out of that field for 20 years and don't know who won, but if you see me going down the trail with Quarks pups in lead and I holler "Strange, Beauty haw!" at least you'll know where I'm coming from. Unless you are a Patrick McManus fan, then a dog named Strange has a whole different connotation, but that's another story.

Eric

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