

## Who's on First?

When Myrna and I were married on October 18, 1953, I had been home from the Korean War for about three months and separated from the Army for just 28 days. For the previous three years, I had been immersed in a culture that dealt with the world in a slightly different language than the one that was more common in civilian communication. A familiarity with these realities may make it easier for you to understand the brief interchange that took place between myself and the officiating clergyman at the rehearsal the night before the wedding.

The Reverend Mr. Gaede had been the pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Preston, Minnesota for decades. However, in the year prior to our wedding, he had retired and had moved to a small town some 40 miles away. He had been Myrna's pastor ever since her childhood and she was delighted when he accepted her invitation to return for the day and officiate at our wedding. He was also a classic old German Lutheran pastor and our wedding could be expected to be little different from those he had been conducting over almost half a century of ministry.

Yet, all of this was of little concern to me, because the groom typically remains well outside the circle of those who are key planners of such occasions and he is typically best advised to quietly go where he is told to go and do what he is told to do. However, as I was trying my best to follow these admonitions, my participation in the proceedings temporarily assumed a much more visible role. During the wedding rehearsal, the Reverend and I had a truly memorable conversation. It proceeded like this:

"Your name is Richard. Correct?"

"Roger."

"Oh," he remarked quizzically. "Your name is Roger."

"No, sir. My name is Richard."

"Oh," he repeated, groping for some clarification. "Your name is Richard Roger."

"No, sir. My name is Richard."

"Oh," he said again after a long pause. "It's not Roger."

"No, sir. It's Richard."

"Oh," he finally concluded with a shrug and proceeded with the rehearsal.

Fortunately, he didn't ask me to explain who Roger was or where he fit into the picture. I have often wondered, however, whether he left the ceremony still pondering that question.