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SUMMER FIRE RESISTANT  
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SHREK

Pilots and their



***He's big and green and married a princess.***

He's **Shrek**, of course. But not the ogre who lives in the swamp with a smart-talking donkey.

# CALL SIGNS

Shrek is the "call sign" for a USAA member who is a fighter pilot stationed at a U.S. Marine Corps Air Station in San Diego. He likes the name better than the call sign he had before, "**Sulli**," because that was just a shortened version of his real name. In the Yiddish language, "shrek" has something to do with striking fear in the hearts of your enemies.

What are call signs? A lot like IM screen names, pilot call signs are nicknames often picked up during training, early in a pilot's career. But finding the perfect call sign might take awhile, awaiting a defining moment, usually embarrassing in some way. Pilots use the call signs when talking to one another in the air and on the ground.

Pilots rarely choose their own call signs. Instead, they are given to them by other pilots they know. Some will get call signs that they hate. Pilots who complain a lot about things are sure to get an embarrassing call sign. A pilot who is too proud of himself and tries to get a cool call sign like "**Ice**" is more likely to be named "**Slush**."

For most, a call sign becomes a semi-official name, all but replacing a pilot's first name among his peers. It will show up on his flight jacket, coffee mug, and maybe on the side of a plane. Some, such as World War II pilot Gregory "**Pappy**" Boyington, have it on their tombstones.

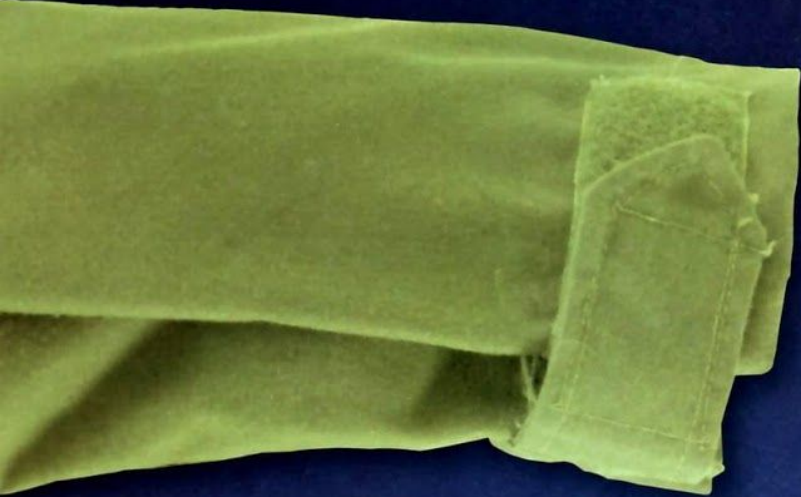
Pilots aren't the only ones with call signs. You'll also hear them among amateur radio operators, radio and TV stations, and commercial aircraft.



***But military aviation is famous for them.***




# PILOTS AND THEIR



**Gail Halvorsen got several nicknames for his actions after World War II. During the blockade of Berlin in 1948-49, Halvorsen started parachuting packages of chewing gum and chocolates to Berlin children. The kids called him "The Candy Bomber" and "Der Schokoladen Flieger" (the chocolate pilot). And because of the signal he used to alert the kids he was coming: "Uncle Wiggly-Wings."**

(Read more about it in the book, "Mercedes and the Chocolate Pilot: A True Story of the Berlin Airlift and the Candy That Dropped from the Sky," by Margot Theis Raven.)



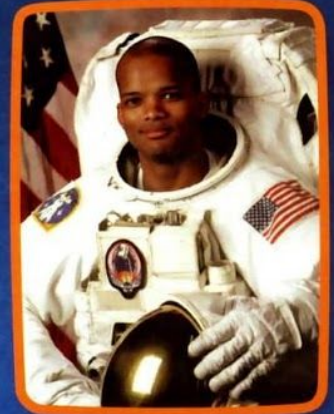
World War I German ace Manfred von Richthofen was dubbed the "**Red Baron**" because of his bright red plane.

In the 1930s, long-distance flight pioneer Charles Lindbergh was called "**Lucky Lindy**" (a name he didn't particularly like).

Later in the decade, Douglas Corrigan flew from New York to Ireland — instead of California as he'd planned — earning him the nickname "**Wrong Way.**"

## Beamer

Most call signs "evolve from something that happened to you, something you did, or your name," says Robert Curbeam, a former U.S. Navy pilot who has flown two NASA shuttle missions.



Curbeam has been known as "**Beamer**" since his first summer at the U.S. Naval Academy in 1980. Today, he says, "there are people at NASA who don't know my real name. They know me as Beamer."

Another pilot on the Space Shuttle, Commander Karen Collins, earned the call sign "**Mom**" while in the U.S. Air Force. Collins is the mother of two children.

## Zulu

Call signs aren't always just for fun. Call signs also are useful when a pilot doesn't want to identify himself by name, such as when



Capt. Scott O'Grady awaited rescue for six days after being shot down in Bosnia in 1995. (O'Grady's call sign is "**Zulu**" because he once missed a quiz question about Greenwich Mean Time, also called Zulu Time.)

# Call Signs

## Boo Boo

A Marine captain named "**Boo Boo**" is said to look like Yogi Bear's cartoon sidekick.

A captain whose real last name is Champagne is called "**Bubbles.**"

Many redheaded pilots are called "**Carrot**" or "**Red.**"

A guy who seems to eat nothing but Oreos might be "**Double Stuff.**"

Sports Illustrated writer Rick Reilly, after throwing up several times on a flight, was dubbed "**Two Bags.**"

## Bunny

"A call sign can be any popular name or character: **Chewy, Yoda, Bunny, Moon, Toast,**" says "Beamer" Curbeam. "I don't think there's any limit to the imagination of the creations. Whatever comes to mind, whatever situation comes up, they will come up with a call sign."

## Jonesy

Plays on last names are among the most common call signs. Take one syllable and add "y": Jones becomes **Jonesy**. Or take the name and shorten it: Many pilots named Crowley or Cromartie become "**Crow**"; Gonzalez is "**Gonzo**"; Stewart is "**Stew.**" Or shorten it and add "er": "**Spooner**" for Witherspoon.

## Ghost

At least one pilot named Casper is called "**Ghost.**"

Lt. Col. David A. Cotton is "**Picker.**"

Anyone named Floyd is a candidate for "**Pink,**" after the rock band Pink Floyd.

There's also Maj. J. Kevin "**Tootsie**" Roll, Capt. Walter "**Numb**" Scull and Brig. Gen. William "**Kanga**" Rew.

## Pilots don't choose their own call signs.

The names aren't always flattering. A pilot with a poor sense of direction might be called "**Magellan.**" A newcomer is called "**Newbie.**" One serviceman who is good at getting supplies in the Middle East is called **DAHIGI**, for "**Don't Ask How I Got It.**" Al "**Foxmike**" Oseguera, a retired Marine Corps pilot, recalls "**Stump**" Kennedy, a pilot who pulled out late on a flight, so he took a lot of tree limbs with him on the wings. And there was one they called "**Bagel**" because he liked to eat.

## At USAA

Some former aviation officers (pilots) who now work at USAA recalled their old call signs, like Rich Strickler (**Cowboy**) and Bob Wiedower (**Weeds**).

Others served in the Air Force and Army, and had many different call signs during their careers according to the units they served in.

Here are some of our favorites:

Bill Hodde: **Wild Bill**

John Bonner: **Spooky**

Ron Racinowski: **Matador**

Bob Davis: **Toro**

