

Ferdie J. Deering

OCT 5 1982

Keeping Up With Company Names

THE current epidemic of business mergers is bringing to the public a spate of new company names to try to keep up with.

The times are gone when you could read business news casually and keep up fairly well with what various companies manufactured or sold. With subsidiaries being bought and sold by conglomerates almost as handily as they sell shares of stock we're always behind.

Bus lines own packing houses, tobacco firms are in the food business, flour mills run hamburger palaces, an express company is in the securities business, department stores are dealing in finance and insurance.

Whenever a merger occurs jockeying for superiority by teams of management may include debate over which name should be retained or if all should be strung out like corporation lawyers.

Frequently, the parties agree to have a "corporate facelift" with a new name, new product brands and a new symbol that may resemble a mysterious hieroglyphic. Reports indicate firms often spend up to

\$100 million on such changes, including letterheads, business cards, uniforms, signs and packaging.

The business of selecting new names could be called either an art or a science, with a good deal of luck needed, too.

An outfit called NameLab, Inc. in San Francisco is reported to have turned out 40 new names for firms or products at \$15,000 each. It is now at work on names for 1984 model Chrysler cars.

Smaller businesses frequently seem to come up with less stilted names than bigger outfits. A Florida public relations firm calls itself "Kwenda," which it says is a Swahili word meaning "Come on, let's go!" It probably packs a wallop for Swahili speakers.

We ran across a souvenir shop in Arkansas a few years ago called "The Tourist Trap" and saw a "Chip Joint Barber Shop" in Eufaula. We only read about "Reasonably Honest Dave's," an appliance dealer in Seattle.

Mistakes are made in names sometimes. A British paper maker

chose a brand name for recycled paper "Armageddon," which refers to the final battle between good and evil. It turned out they intended to use the word "Eschaton," which refers to the Second Coming.

It has been said that at one time or another practically every individual becomes dissatisfied with names assigned by their parents. Movie Producer Samuel Goldwyn was one. His name originally was Samuel Goldfish. He had it legally changed, adopting the first part of his name and the last syllable of two partners whose name was Selwyn. He omitted the syllables spelling "Sel-Fish."

Many individuals have their names changed legally, with an average of 25 per month doing so in Oklahoma County.

Quite a few people have considered having their names changed to numbers. A St. Paul man applied to have his name legally changed to 1069, but the Minnesota Supreme Court turned him down. In this world, you've got to be a person; not just a bunch of digits.