

1. Jessica the question was raised tonight as to why Egeon when speaking of his son and Dromio during the shipwreck as having retained their name and then previously they are referred to as not being distinguished but by names. Is it possible to get some more information on what this might be referencing?

There had she not been long, but she became
A joyful mother of two goodly sons;
And, which was strange, the one so like the other,
As could not be distinguish'd but by names.

This indicates that the two Antipholouses and the two Dromios once had different names. This echos Plautus' *Menaechmi*; the elder of whom was named Menaechmus, the younger was names Sosicles.

My youngest boy, and yet my eldest care,
At eighteen years became inquisitive
After his brother: and importuned me
That his attendant--so his case was like,
Reft of his brother, but retain'd his name--
Might bear him company in the quest of him:

After the shipwreck, Egeon is left with the *younger* twins. Since he presumes that the elder (Antipholous and Dromio) are dead, their names are “retain’d” – that is to say *given* to the younger boys as a way of memorializing the dead. This echoes the events in *The Menaechmi* when the younger twin (Sosicles) is re-named Meaechmus in honor of his presumed-dead twin, thus creating two Menaechmi. Shakespeare doesn't tell us the original names of the twins; all we know is that the elder of the four were named Antipholous and Dromio, and that the younger were re-named in their honor.

“When Egeon's son turned 18, Egeon granted him permission to seek the missing brother and mother. This son was "Reft of his brother, but retain'd his name" (I.i.128), which seems to imply that he had taken on the name of his lost brother, a strained explanation as to why we'll have two brothers named Antipholus -- a name that means "opposed in balance" (Asimov 174). Why there are twin servants named Dromio -- from the Greek word for "racecourse" (Asimov 173) -- is anybody's guess.” - Dr. Michael Delahoyde, Washington State University
[public.wsu.edu/~delahoyd/shakespeare/comedyerrors1.html]