

SJSU International House

presents: **Spring 2013 newsletter**



Sense of Humor



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Sarcasm, Wit, and Humor

By Leann Cherkasky Makhni, Director



Comic by Bob Mankoff

I grew up in the Midwest of the United States. In the community where I moved when I was 12 years old, sarcasm was a very commonly used form of communication. I remember feeling vulnerable when my 7th grade science teacher used sarcasm to make humorous comments to me; through a conversation with him I learned that he thought I understood his sense of humor as I always smiled when he "joked." Once we conversed and I felt more comfortable, he became my very favorite teacher and I started to learn to use sarcasm. In fact, I became very quick at it and spoke sarcastically more often than not.

As I moved away to college and then to the East Coast, I had to begin to tone down (minimize) my sarcasm as I learned that others did not always understand it and would sometimes take it seriously and find it hurtful. Working at International House, I became even more sensitive to the different culturally-influenced styles of humor that people have. When I started visiting India regularly and spent time with my husband's family in New Delhi, it quickly became apparent that a gentler, more straightforward humor was the norm. On the other hand, with my British friends, the dry wit was as piercing as anything I grew up with in the Midwest of the U.S. We had a particular year at I-House in which the British humor was thoroughly offensive to the Japanese, a culture in which it's most important that no one should feel singled out or embarrassed in front of others.

Recently, as I exchange messages about our newly recovered stairwells with dozens of I-House alumni from 25 countries around the world, our humor played out like this:

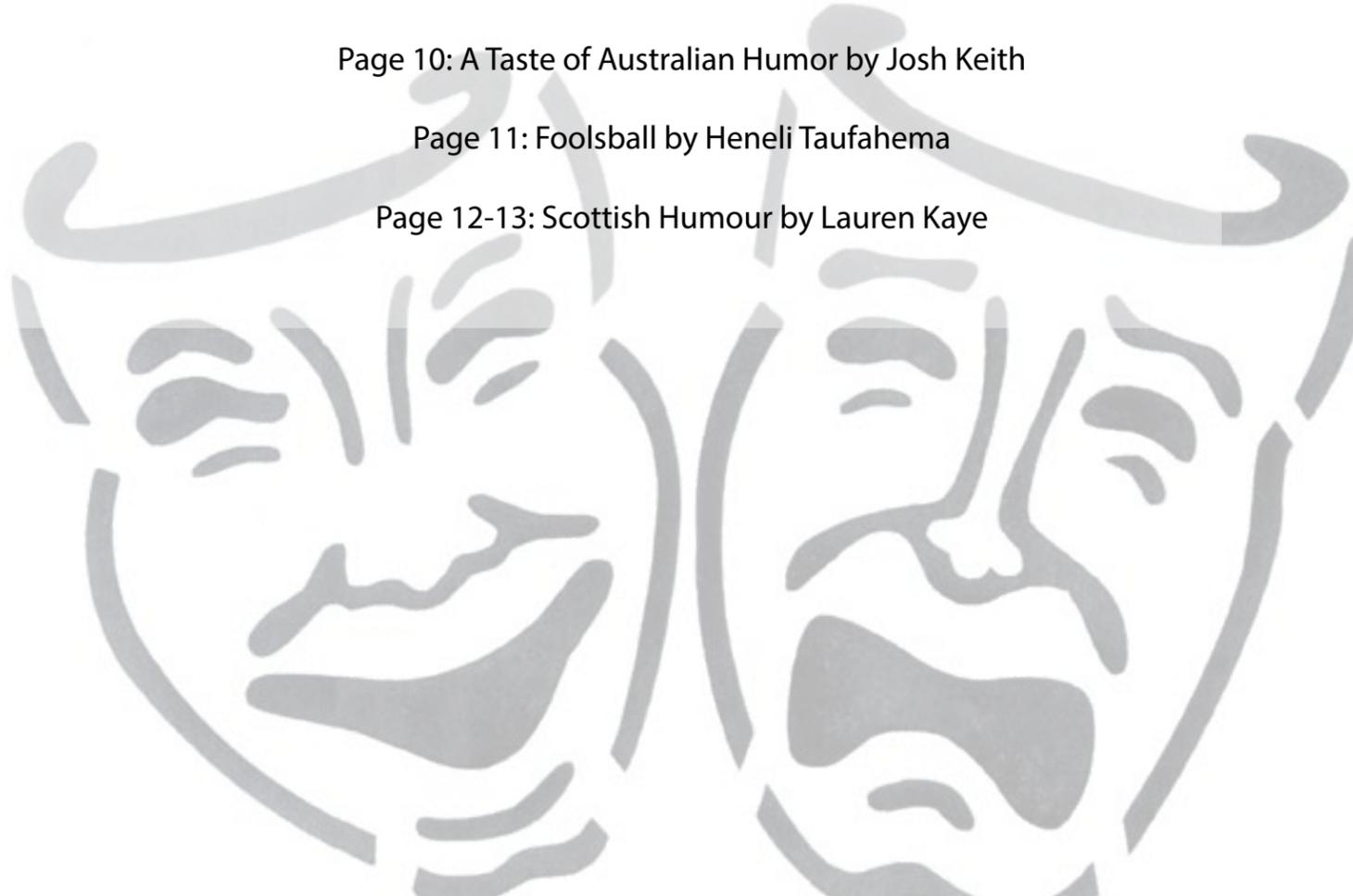
Alumni 1: *Will [the stairwells] be replaced by an elevator? [We] have been requesting it for years! LOL*

My response: *Yes, and a jacuzzi, a swimming pool, air-conditioning, a rooftop garden... LOL*

Alumni 2: *LOL @ Jacuzzi, Swimming Pool, Rooftop Garden... For a second, I almost feel-off-my-chair, thinking you are serious... Hahahah... Love your wit & humor*

Although I have a quick sense of humor, I generally do not value or appreciate people who can only be funny at the expense of other individuals. For me, I think that the greatest comedians, the funniest people in the world, are those who can make absolutely anything funny without it being directed at an individual. The comedian Robin Williams is, to me, one of the funniest men alive. He can take an inanimate object and make it hilariously funny. He can also present a serious topic and make a point, while lightening up the topic with his humor.

I've learned a lot reading the articles written for this newsletter. Humor is an integral part of each of our cultures. Once we start to understand the humor of a culture, we can feel that we are truly gaining insight into that culture.



Homesick for Humour

by: Kristen Pendleton and Vince Murphy



Kristen: What my husband Vince misses most about his hometown of Swindon, England is the wit and camaraderie shared by his friends back home. When I imagine him there, it is with a huge grin surrounded by the laughter of his mates. They might be in a pub sharing pints and a laugh, or in a living room watching the footie and "taking the mickey,"* or at a backyard cue "taking the piss"* on a rare sunny day. No matter the location, I picture them with heads back, eyes rolling, roaring with laughter at some memory of a ridiculous thing one of them did, a practical joke played, or a fresh comment offered at another's expense. Here in California, Vince can make himself a decent cup of tea and doesn't miss the weather or the food, but that British sense of humour is irreplaceable.

Vince finds solace with British expats here in San Jose, American friends who share his sense of humour, programs on BBC America, and in entertaining himself. He will say something quite clever and funny, that is too subtle for the American he is speaking with to pick up on, and without exhibiting any outward signs, will completely crack himself up.

In an interview for Head Resident, I asked a candidate, which group in the I-House do you feel least connected to, and the person said "the Brits." The candidate felt that they were always making fun of others. Their humor was "crass (definition: without refinement, delicacy, or sensitivity),...clever, pronounced and uninhibited. It comes off a tad too sharp for somebody who hasn't been exposed to it previously." I think that is an excellent definition.

Vince: Brit humour is also self-deprecating, and laughing at oneself is part of the package. There is an unwritten rule that if you are delivering a comment at another's expense, you must accept being on the receiving end too. If a British person is "taking the piss" out of another person, it is usually a sign that he or she is very comfortable with the recipient. If it happens to be directed your way, it is an unusual form of flattery that you are being included in the camaraderie, so be sure to return the compliment!

Kristen: After being married to Vince for over fifteen years, I have been "contaminated." I love humor *where someone is making fun of themselves or someone else. It is a guilty pleasure, certainly not "politically correct" as would be expected of me living in Northern California and working at a university. I love The Graham Norton Show when the host flips his guests out of the red chair for not being sufficiently entertaining, Jon Stewart rolling his eyes on the Daily Show over some new Conservative outrage, and Maggie Smith's acerbic one-liners on Downton Abby. I unintentionally make puns, which to my dismay are often double entendres.

Picture source: @ ayelie.deviantart.com/

My Humor

by Andrea Nguyen

What does an elephant use as a tampon?

You can never take life too seriously. "Smile though your heart is breaking," said the darling Charlie Chaplin. Laugh, and let yourself be healed.

I am an American and I feel I have a well-watered sense of humor. Here are some things I think are funny:

- The Golden Girls
- Startled puppies
- Saying "tee hee"
- Me, when drunk
- Booty bumping

When people push other people down the stairs

When people fall in general

"Dropping the kids off at the pool"

Witty retorts

That time I asked if they give student discounts at strip clubs. (They don't.)

Tina Fey, Kevin Hart, Miranda Hart, Gabriel Iglesias, Steven Moffat, Georgia Nicolson, Graham Norton, Russell Peters, and David Sedaris

That time Natasha wanted to DJ for an I-House dance and typed "club music" into the search engine.

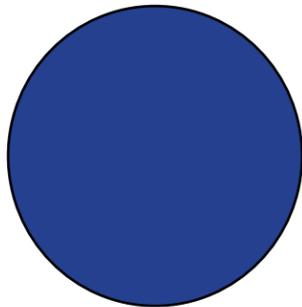
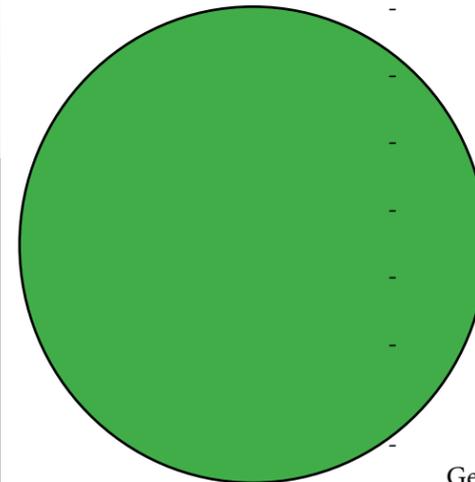
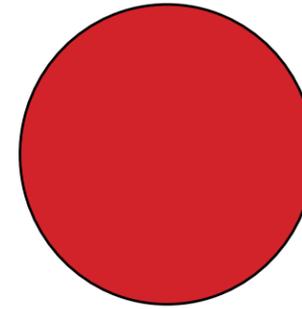
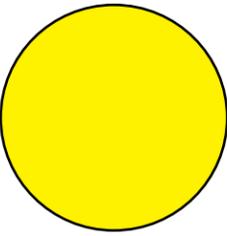
Moist plinths

Dried apricots

Sad Valentine's Day poems

Laughter holds us up. It makes eating dinner at I-House so much more enjoyable, and changes the residents from housemates to family members.

P.S. A sheep!



Portuguese Sayings!

by: Mariana Coelho

Portuguese: "Burro velho não aprende línguas"

Literal Translation: "Old donkey does not learn languages!"

Used when someone doesn't want to learn something new because they know the old version.

Portuguese: "Ser mais papista que o Papa"

Literal Translation: "To be more papist than the Pope."

Used to talk about someone who is extremely conservative.

Portuguese: "A mentira tem a perna curta."

Literal Translation: "The lie has a short leg."

Used when someone is caught telling lies.

Portuguese: "Estou teso que nem um carapau!"

Literal Translation: "I'm stiff like a mackerel!"

Used to say when you don't have money.

Portuguese: "Vai dar uma volta ao bilhar grande!"

Literal Translation: "Go make a lap around the big pool table!"

Used to tell another person to quit bugging and annoying you.

Portuguese: "Estas armado em carapau de corrida?"

Literal Translation: "Are you armed in racing mackerel?"

Used when somebody is acting overconfidently.

Portuguese: "Eu faço o que me der na telha!"

Literal Translation: "I do what gives me in the tile!"

Used to say: "I do whatever I want".

Portuguese: "Não fiz a ponta de um corno."

Literal Translation: "haven't done a tip of a horn."

Used when people spend a day doing nothing at all.

Portuguese: "Isso fica no cu do Judas"

Literal Translation: "That stays at Judas' ass!"

Used when a place is far away.



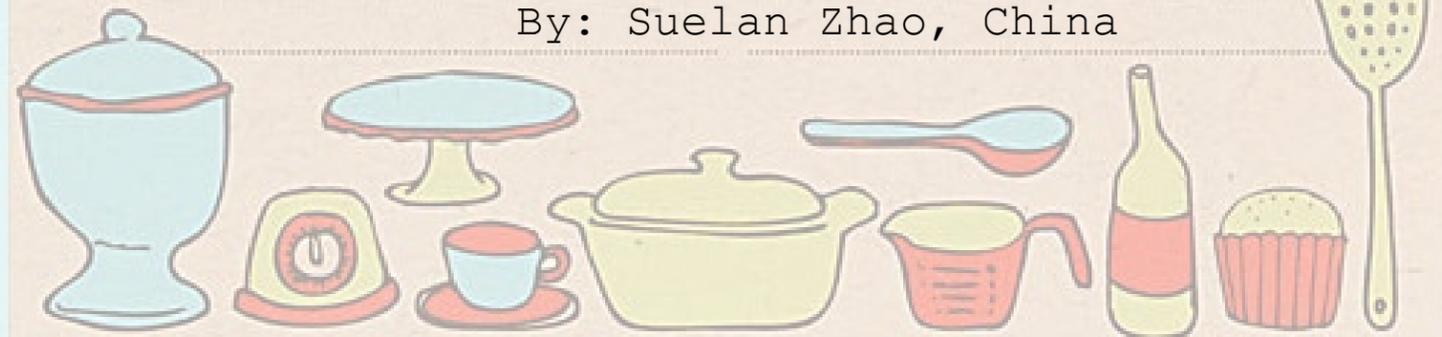
RECIPE

FROM

INGREDIENTS

Humor- a Great Recipe for Happiness

By: Suelan Zhao, China



Humor is one of the great recipes in our daily life. Humor can turn our ordinary dishes into awesome food. Without humor, our lives are like dry food without a beverage. I have different types of friends: Some who complain about life all the time; some who have a really strong self-opinion, and also some who have a kind heart to listen everything but I find myself hanging out with friends who have humorous personality. Those types of friends always make others laugh and make a better social environment. Those people are always fun to be around. If you don't have this character and you are going through a hard time in your life, then I strongly recommend you to find some friends who have a humorous personality because they will help your life taste better.

Humor is a magic medicine. In the movie Patch Adams, Robin Williams is a doctor who treats his patients with humor. Just like this, humor can treat group problems. If group members are lazy to solve

potential problems and stop communicating with each other, then things will get worse. But if there are some humorous people in the group, things will be different. People who have a humorous personality have the ability to solve or reduce some unnecessary conflicts.

We are living in a global society. The more languages you know, the more chances you will have. However, the most important factor is that the more humorous you are, the more possibility you will succeed. You also can experience that life is so beautiful with your humorous mind. It is not hard to be that kind of person; all you need to do is change your negativity to positivity, and throw a joke here and there.

Sense of Humor in Saudi Arabia

By Saad Alalmaee & Hani Alshamrani

In order to talk about sense of humor in the Arab world, it is essential to know some background about our history. There are a lot of problems in Saudi Arabia and the countries surrounding it. Common examples are: war, violence, revolution, and the economy. The usual stereotype of people is that Arabs have no sense of humor in their personalities, but in this article we will try to prove that stereotype wrong.

Arabs enjoy a great sense of humor in their lives. There are many books about it where characters were created for the sole purpose to make fun of them. In the past, one of the most famous characters was Joha, and a lot of jokes were created about him. For instance, Joha and his son were riding their donkey through the city, and people were staring at them saying: "Look! They are so bad, having two people riding a donkey!" So Joha decided to get off the donkey and let his son ride it by himself. Then people said: "Look! The son is so bad, not letting his dad ride the donkey!" So Joha decided to ride the donkey, and have his son walk. Then, people said: "Look! The dad is so bad, not letting his son ride the donkey!" Eventually, Joha and his son carried the donkey for the rest of the trip!



Image from www.clker.com

Another example of sense of humor in the Arab world is through their revolution. During a revolution in Egypt, people gathered in the center of Egypt and started dancing the "Harlem Shake". The military didn't know what to do since it was hard to tell if it was really a revolution or a joke. The signs carried by the people have messages that were serious with a hidden sense of humor in them. For example, a sign said: "We don't like you" and when the president left his position, people carried another sign saying: "We were just kidding, come back!"

In Saudi Arabia, people make fun of the government. For instance, one time, a 9 year old girl got AIDS from a blood transfusion, and the Minister of Health went to see her and gave her an IPAD. People started saying: "If you want a Blackberry, get cancer", "If you want to get a Galaxy phone, you should be blind". The interesting part is that the problem got famous because of the jokes and not because of the little girl with AIDS.

People living outside Saudi Arabia make fun of Saudi people by saying the following:

- They have 4 wives.
- They are camel junkies with oil money.
- They live in tents, but have nice cars in their garage.
- In the airport, everyone has baggage; Saudis have camels.

I think that the reason people have a sense of humor is to escape harsh reality and create jokes about their situation. If they have something to say, the only and best way to send their message is to send it as a "meaningful joke".

The Art of Chinese Humor--- Cross Talk

By Xincheng Yuan

Image from www.latimes.com

If you are lucky and get a chance to travel to China, and if you happen to feel bored and want to watch something funny, people may recommend you to watch some pieces of crosstalk. Crosstalk is written as "Xiang Sheng" in the Chinese language which originally meant "mocking the sound of another person or object" and has developed to a more elaborate type now. It has a history of about 200 years, which is nearly the same as the history of America, and is most popular in northern China where crosstalk originated.

In the Chinese crosstalk performance, there will be actors having a conversation and in the conversation they use funny words or dialects to make the audience laugh at the contents of their conversation. The audience laughs mainly because the words the actors say are ridiculous or contradictory. Crosstalk can be classified by the number of actors. There can be more than 3 people performing crosstalk at the same time or there can only be one person talking all the time, but in most cases there are two actors.

Usually one actor speaks more and another actor speaks less; the function of the other actor is to show his surprise to the main speaker's words, to show how ridiculous the main speaker's words are, and to let the audience feel a resonance to the main speaker's words. There is also a type of crosstalk called Shuang Huang, in which an actor sits on a chair and does lip syncing, pretending to speak, while another actor hides behind the chair and does the speaking.

The purpose of crosstalk was usually to satirize injustice or the terrible phenomena in society or to promote good behavior or a policy. But nowadays as our society has become better, cross talks are often just used to entertain the audience. A good crosstalk actor needs to have 4 basic skills that are: mocking, being glib when talking, amusing the audience, and singing operas, which is often involved when performing cross talks.

As one of the most traditional language arts in China, crosstalk has been glorious for years. I love this art and always listen to it when I feel upset. I performed it twice in our high school New Year celebration. Finally, let's end by looking at a funny beginning of one piece of crosstalk:

A: See what luck I had these days! So bad luck!
 B: Oh, really?
 A: I'm not kidding! You see, I had a so hard time that cold drinks plug my teeth.
 B: Oh gosh. You must had a so bad time.
 B: Exactly. And even eating ice cream can make my cheek be scalded.

 Is that funny?

Tsukkomi, ONE PIECE, and Japanese Humor

By Hiroki Morimoto

You idiot!

This phrase, which can sound a bit aggressive, is a key to understanding Japanese humor. I would like to introduce what Japanese humor is like from a viewpoint of what we call tsukkomi in Japanese, which literally means "thrust" in English.

In general, Japanese are considered to lack a sense of humor because they seldom make jokes. If you visit Japan, however, you can see many people laughing aloud while watching comedy shows, shaking their shoulders reading comics in a train, and blowing coffee toward their desktop screen at midnight. Indeed, we love laughing. But in some situations where many people from different cultures gather, like I-House, we cannot enjoy our favorite type of humor because of the lack of tsukkomi.

What is Tsukkomi?

Roughly speaking, tsukkomi is a clear sign that tells the audience "Now, you are supposed to laugh!" Because it should be very clear, it is often exaggerated by shouting or even smashing physically. The main goal of tsukkomi is to make funny points stand out, so tsukkomi itself doesn't have to be very funny.

I found a good example of tsukkomi from everyone's favorite manga, ONE PIECE. (Please read this way -right to left).



ONE PIECE © 1997 Eichiro Oda

Why do we need Tsukkomi?

The reason we need tsukkomi is deeply rooted in the values of Japanese people. We highly appreciate harmony among people. In other words, we tend to avoid being outstanding. It doesn't mean we don't like to stand out in public like performing at PCB. On the contrary, we would love to do that if EVERYONE else does. Such are the values in Japan; we have to be very careful when we laugh. It must not be ONLY you who is laughing. As you can see, tsukkomi plays an important role here. With tsukkomi, Japanese people are relieved to laugh at their content without being anxious about sticking out.

Why don't you do Tsukkomi?

It is understandable that you wonder why we don't do tsukkomi among ourselves. But it is simply impossible. As mentioned at the very beginning of this article, and as you can see in the manga, tsukkomi is often aggressive and destructive. (In the manga is pronounced "Bashi!", the sound which is made when someone flaps things very strongly.) And as you all know, we Japanese are very polite and modest and gentle and nice, so that we cannot do tsukkomi for fear that foreigners may take it for insult or hostility.

Unfortunately, the unique Japanese habit of humor, tsukkomi, is hardly seen in life in the U.S. But you can still learn about it (and learn it if you want) from the manga I donated in study room. Once we mutually understand the difference of our sense of humor, the day will surely come when we laugh together and have more funny life as if we are in One Piece.

Note:

This article is written from a biased perspective and full of stereotypes. Please don't take it seriously and just laugh at it. Thank you.

ONE PIECE © 1997 Eichiro Oda



Context: Luffy and Zoro were on a boat and were very hungry. Luffy saw a bird flying by and jumped trying to catch it. Instead, he was caught by the giant bird.



ONE PIECE © 1997 Eichiro Oda

A Taste of Australian Humor

By Josh Keith

As an Australian, it is hard to categorize a certain sense of humor in my home country as there are such a large variety of sub-cultures in so many different communities. The general Australian as viewed by many people overseas is perceived as being 'laidback', 'crude' and 'obnoxious' when it comes to comedy and humor. As a 22 year old university student surrounded by likewise people, the above statement is true to a certain degree. For boys aged 18 – 30 the typical sense of humor is usually accompanied by a roasting (no, not the turkey you may be thinking about) of a close friend, i.e. bad mouthing or making fun of, usually about past experiences and/or certain views that person has. This usually requires a lot of effort and background information needed to get certain 'dirt' on that person. Essentially this is done so a friend can use a quick acid-tongued approach whilst in conversation to embarrass or occasionally lighten up the mood.



For girls around a similar age group, it's a little tricky to comprehend because (and let's be honest here) most boys cannot understand a girl's sense of humor. From experience, the typical Australian girl will talk about past experiences in an enthusiastic voice and try to recollect a funny moment; this is usually followed by an indescribable laughter from the opposite sex as it may not be very funny or it might be so ridiculous that the only thing you can do is laugh.

Another form of a typical Australian sense of humor (in both men and women) is the 'laidback'/'uncaring' attitude towards oneself and in some circumstances towards life itself. This can be done in various ways; paying oneself out which means to make fun of oneself and using observational comedy in today's society, which in a way is very 'Seinfeld-esque'. In conclusion, I believe the differences between humors in Australia are similar to the United States. There are a few little subtleties which can be put down to different culture and slang, but most of the main elements including 'roasting' are apparent.

Some people call us giants of the gridiron, others call us douche bags too. We are also called jocks, airheads and sometimes just plain football players. We have a bunch of comedians and pranksters within our culture just like the rest of society. We laugh and play jokes on each other because this is how males naturally are. These jokes and pranks always occur at the expense of another and are normally done for laughs and entertainment, as well as to embarrass the other person. The person getting pranked or joked on is not being done to them so they take it personally. That is never the intention. Pranks and jokes vary from Yo Mama jokes in team meetings, which can also involve coaches who always come out at the winning end, to putting bengay (muscle relaxant cream) in a teammate's helmet so when he sweats it burns his bald head. Some people may deem this harsh or unsportsmanlike, but this is the way we laugh and entertain ourselves. These are the kinds of things that are funny to us and we enjoy especially at the expense of another. In football we have slumber parties too, but they are different because it is strictly business relating to the sport. Two weeks out of every summer we have what are called football camps and we refer to them as "hell week" because we train three times a day when summer time is at its hottest. We have to stay together as a team so we sleep together in our school gym in high school or hotel in college. You can imagine what might occur when you put fifty to one hundred boys in a confined area. There will be some kind of horsing around and many things to laugh about.

Foolsball

By Neli Taufahema

In high school, a teammate filled another teammate's sleeping bag with cow manure. My teammate climbed into his bed full of crap and he thought it was hilarious. Another prank occurred in high school when a teammate put dish soap in the water cooler during practice, and so we all ended up drinking soapy water and blowing bubbles the rest of the week. In college, a teammate thought it was funny to bring over his girlfriend to the hotel, and he knew no visitors were allowed after hours. Our team captains found out and decided to create a romantic environment in his rooms while he was out with his girlfriend. They also set up a hidden camera in his room, awkward, but it is funny and he was unaware that everyone would be watching, to see the fireworks. They came back to his room and they were surprised when they went in and found rose petals and lit candles everywhere. She thought he had done all of this, confused and surprised, he played along. As he was getting undressed he tripped over a lamp chord knocked over a candle and we had to evacuate the hotel. So he learned his lesson after that, but I think we all did that day because we had to pay by running a lot of sprints at practice the following week.

The football community, just like any sports or in general, has its share of laughs from jokes and pranks. Many times in team meetings and practices, our coaches will jokingly refer to us as ladies, not purposely being sexist, but for a good laugh. Mostly because we cannot run fast enough or lift

enough in the weight room, and sometimes they will say things like their daughter, wife or grandma can run faster and lift more than we do. It is funny, but it is also a motivational occurrence for us to strive to become better at what we do. Some people might criticize what we do for laughs as harsh or animal like, but that is how we entertain ourselves. We are big strong aggressive men and we do big strong aggressive funny things, especially because the sport we play involves playing like animals. Next time you see a football player and he is big and has a serious look on his face, just remember deep down he is a prankster and jokester. You can always expect a joke or a prank from him, and he will get his laugh and entertainment probably at your expense.



Image above from bleacherreport.com



Scottish Humour

By Lauren Kaye

Scottish humour is a funny one. We tend to not take ourselves too seriously, and you'll often find us laughing louder at our own jokes, more than anyone else in the room. And where else in the world will you find a man wearing a 'skirt' with no underwear on underneath?!

When there is a hurricane it is always given a name. For example, there was Hurricane Sandy last year, Hurricane Irene in 2011, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. They have a tendency to have very normal names, and are usually named after a female. One night, back in December 2011, Scotland had extremely bad weather. Yes, Scotland may be known for its terrible weather - it is literally only sunny like 10 days a year, and when it is, it's like 10 degrees with a little bit of sun, and all the boys whip off their tops as if it's the Bahamas' to show off their pure white pale skin and 'catch a tan' - but anyways, this particular night was worse than any other.



Image from www.survivalistboards.com

It was windier than ever before, and it was generally just miserable. There is an amusing video on YouTube of a young boy filming the wind in his street, and then all of a sudden you see a massive trampoline rolling down the road, and the boy shouts in his bold Scottish accent 'HAW HAW HAW OH MY GAWD, A TRAMPOLINE!' (Which obviously turned into a YouTube sensation, because let's face it, pretty much everything does nowadays). Anyways, being the childish and crude people we are, a Scot dubbed this horrible windy day 'Hurricane Bawbag' (to keep it PG, if you don't know what that means, Google it!). Within hours it was trending on Twitter worldwide; serious news shows were using the term; and even politicians were catching on and referring to it. My point to this story is that: Scottish people have a sense of humour in which they don't take themselves too seriously. People around the world were laughing at this ridiculous term, and meanwhile, the majority of Scots were loving it because making people laugh is what we do best.

A few years ago I was on the train one day. It was just a standard Saturday afternoon with people taking the train to go to wherever they needed to be. It was quiet with everybody minding their own business and nobody was really talking, until at one stop 3 older men came onto the train, obviously having had a few too many drinks. They put some music on and started singing 'Angel' by Robbie Williams really loudly. Obviously, everyone was giving them strange looks, and some were laughing too. But I kid you not, 1 minute later, people had started joining in, and by the end of the song, every single person on the train carriage was singing along together. It's moments like this that make me love Scotland. It's never happened anywhere else I've ever been and I love the Scots for it.

And then there is our famous soda, 'Irn Bru'. I heard a while back that Coca-Cola is the top selling soda in the UK, apart from in Scotland where it's Irn Bru. I don't know if that's true, but if it is, it really doesn't surprise me. The people in Scotland are literally drinking it everywhere. It is basically a bright orange drink (which I think is funny because they were probably trying to make fun of the stereotypical Ginger haired people in Scotland), however it does not taste of orange, and instead has this weird taste that I honestly can't really describe. But the best thing about Irn Bru is by far their marketing campaigns. They are controversial, honest, cheeky, hilarious, and they make fun of Scottish people, as well as others. One advertisement campaign featured loads of very eccentric characters in weird situations, for example a commercial on TV involved a young boy and his Grandpa, where his Grandpa removes his false teeth to spoil his grandson's interest in his can of Irn Bru. But my most favourite commercial by far has to be the one on TV that featured many high school students performing a song and dance, with the catchphrase at the end being "It's fizzy, it's ginger, it's phenomenal!" It was a parody of High School Musical and it was perfectly done and absolutely hilarious. I think every young teenager in Scotland knew someone that knew someone else that was in that commercial.

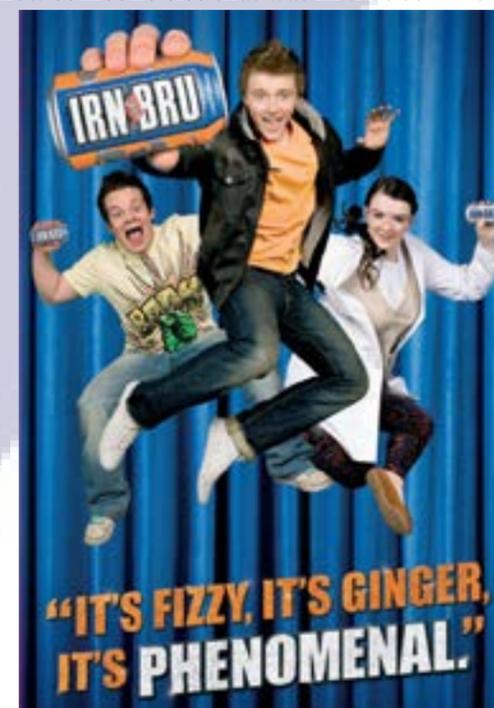


Image from www.leith.co.uk

Image from www.tumblr.com



We didn't have "Spring Break". We had the Easter Holidays.

I just want to finish up by speaking about a famous Scottish comedian named Kevin Bridges. He's amusing and entertaining, and he makes his living out of making fun of Scottish people. He has sell out shows in Scotland, full of Scots, listening to him make fun of Scots. If that doesn't say something about the Scottish sense of humor, then I don't know what will! A favorite joke of mine that he has done is when he compares the American 'WOOO SPRING BREAK' to the Scottish 'EASTER HOLIDAYS.' He mentions an American guy he made up called 'Chad Hogan' who throws a spring break party, and everyone is rockin' out to the awesome band in the living room, whilst all the beer is shared around the room. And then he compares this to a Scottish house party, more commonly known as an 'empty' back home, where people get angry at those who steal their beers, and someone steals a microwave claiming that "A think you'll find I brought this with me. And I do not care for the accusations! I mean, why would i steal a microwave?!" I obviously can't really justify the joke, but that's another one you should probably YouTube!

Coming to America made me realize how different the American and Scottish humour is. In fact, living in the International House showed me how versatile a sense of humour can be across many different cultures. Just like every country, Scotland has its imperfections, yet it also has features that it excels in, and in my opinion, the Scottish sense of humour is one of these.

Memories of
**SPRING
2013**



Memories of
**SPRING
2013**



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International House newsletter: Spring 2013



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HUMOR

is mankind's
greatest blessing

~ Mark Twain



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