

On receiving an award in recognition of my contributions from NTPRS Books, July 17, 2017, San Antonio. S. Krashen

This is kind of a lifetime achievement award. I think Lifetime Achievement awards are for people who are going to die soon, and the organization wants to say something nice about them while they still have a chance. This means that this award is unnecessary. NTPRS has treated me very well and its members have said lots of very nice things about me over the years. Also, I am not about to die. In fact, my doctor told me that I have the heart of a 25 year old man. (Actually, I do and I keep it in a jar in my office).

Those who receive these kinds of honors are responsible for saying something profound, for the ages I will therefore review what are clearly the most memorable parts of my presentations: the jokes. – studies show that this is mostly what people remember from public presentations and academic lectures. And as some of you may know, our colleague Pete Swanson has shown that teachers' sense of humor relates to student achievement in foreign language classes.

I took a course on the reformation when I was an undergraduate. The professor made only one joke. In fact it was the only joke I heard in college during a lecture. He said, some have concluded that the reformation was the work on the devil, but this has been very hard to pin down. That's the only thing I remember from that course.

So here they are: I would appreciate it if you would mark down if you have heard any of these jokes for me before. My

prediction is that about half of them will be familiar to you. They are all one-liners and two-liners.

I have organized the jokes into categories, and it is appropriate that I begin with the obvious one, age: I am getting old - (1) my social security number is 457. (2) I am now 76 years old, but I read at the 85 year old level. (3) I told my grandson that when I was a little boy, we lived in the country; He said, "grampa when you were a little boy everybody lived in the country." (4) I must look really old. I went to a funeral for a member of family, the director looked at me and said, don't bother going home.

Then there are jokes about speakers. I have collected ways of introducing speakers. My favorite (5) "I don't want to bore you with long speeches, so here is someone who will." And of course (6) "X needs no introduction, he needs (a better theory, a life, to go on a diet)."

Speakers like to warm up by talking about what happened on the way to the hotel or wherever the speech is: (7) "I was walking down the street and this guy ran up to me yelling 'call me a doctor,' call me a doctor!" Of course I said 'What's wrong?' He said, 'Nothing, I just finished my dissertation.'" (8) Another guy came up to me and asked "Excuse me is there a policeman around?" I said no, and he pulled out a gun and said "Stick em up". (9) Walking on I came to a older man who lying in the street - he was just hit by a car. People had already called the paramedics, so I walked up to him and took off my jacket, put it under his head, and asked him "Are you comfortable?" His answer: I make a nice living."

Then of course there are the hotel jokes. I have three of them ready when I check out and they ask me if everything was ok. :

(10). "There was one problem: I couldn't sleep last night, this woman was knocking on my door all night." (Then I pause while they look concerned and puzzled.) "Finally I got up and let her out." (11) A related version, appropriate for linguists: "A scantily dressed woman knocked on my door at 3 am, she clearly had the wrong room, and announced, 'I'm here to give you super-sex.' I was so sleepy I said 'I'll take the soup.'" (12) This one was my mother's favorite: "I called my wife last night and told her I'm tired on traveling by myself, I'd like to go someplace with her, someplace I've never been before. She said 'How about the kitchen.'"

And of course when you give a talk in the morning you talk about coffee. (13) Steven Wright said "Every morning I get up and make instant coffee and I drink it so I have the energy to make real coffee." (14) Sometimes I get coffee at a coffee shop, and there is always a line, and I think about Dave Barry's observation: "It is inhumane in my opinion, to force people who have a genuine medical need for coffee to wait in line behind people who apparently view it as some kind of recreational activity." (15) "I make coffee that is so strong that it wakes up the neighbors." The need for coffee is very real in some of us: (16) David Letterman: "... if it weren't for the coffee, I'd have no identifiable personality whatsoever." (17) Johann Sebastian Bach: "Without my morning coffee I'm just like a dried up piece of roast goat." (18) Nonca Hoffman: "Don't ever let anyone tell you that fairy tales aren't real. I drink a potion made from magic beans every day and it brings me back to life." and my favorite: (19) Martha Beck: "Almost all my middle-aged and elderly acquaintances, including me, feel about 25, unless we haven't had our coffee, in which case we feel 107." -- and the classic (20) "You can't buy happiness but you can buy coffee and that's pretty close."

During the presentation: Speakers need quick lines for dealing with unpleasant hecklers. The best one is this: (21) A known trouble maker raises his hand. What you say is "Yes, you may now go to the bathroom." (22) I sometimes include a short German demonstration in my talks. Occasionally a German speaker will then ask a complicated question in German, either showing off or testing my German. I responded by saying, in German, "It is amazing you have acquired so much German from my short presentation My method is better than I thought."

When it's lunch time the speaker may want to recommend a few restaurants. I mention that I went to Denny's recently. (23) The signs say "your food was coming right up." (24) When I asked where the men's room was the waitress told me it was the first door on the left, "It says Gentlement but you can go right in." (25) I asked the cook how they prepare their chickens. The answer: "We tell them right upfront there's not going to make it."

I don't recommend McDonalds (26) the wine list is really bad, and (27) the service is terrible. I sat at a table and the waiter never came by.

Closely related to restaurant jokes are bar jokes: Here are two classics : (28) a neutron walks in a bar and orders a beer. The neutron asks the bartender what the charge is. The bartender says "for you, no charge." (29) Two atoms were sitting at the bar. One said, "I think I've lost an electron." The other asked: "Are you sure?" The first answered, "Yes, I'm positive." (30) A nun walks into a bar, and a drunk suddenly staggers right up and punches her, knocking the nun out cold. As the bouncers drag the drunk away, the drunk shouts at the nun, "Not so tough NOW, are ya, Batman?!"

Speakers like to talk about travel, how it was getting to the conference site: (31) I mention that when I was getting on the plane, I had three bags to check. I told the agent that one should go to Denver, one to San Antonio and one to Chicago. The agent said he couldn't do that, so I said, "Why not, you did it last week." (32) There was a long line at the airport, and an angry passenger demanded to go to the front of the line – when the agent told him he had to wait his turn, the passenger yelled "Don't you know who I am?" The agent then got on the public address system and announced "We have a man here who doesn't know who he is can somebody help him." Of course the best travel joke of all time comes from Mark Twain (33) in *Innocents Abroad*: "In Paris they simply stared when I spoke to them in French; I never did succeed in making those idiots understand their language."

We also like to joke about our work. (34) Steven Wright said that he is writing a book. He's already done with the page numbers.

Finally, it is appropriate when giving talks like this to give young people some advice.

(35) Don't let your foot fall asleep during the day, because then it's going to be awake all night.

(36) Mark Twain's terrific observation: All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence; then success is sure.

(37) And remember, there are three kinds of people in the world: those who understand math and those who don't.

Sources

"...in a jar in my office." Stephen King, "I have the heart of the 12 year old boy ..."

Remember the jokes: Baldassari, M. J., & Kelley, M. (2012). Make 'em laugh? The mnemonic effect of humor in a speech. *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research*, 17, 2-9.

Humor and language acquisition: Swanson, P. 2013. Spanish teachers' sense of humor and performance and student performance on the National Spanish Exams. *Foreign Language Annals* 46 (2): 146-156.

Attribution of jokes

(3) (4) Moms Mabley (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) Henny Youngman
(13) Steven Wright (14) Dave Barry (16) David Letterman
(17) Johann Sebastian Bach (18) Nonca Hoffman (19) Martha Beck
(21) Henny Youngman (23) (24)(25) Gary Mule Deer
(31) Henny Youngman (33) Mark Twain (34) (35) Steven Wright

