

Smelborp

by Brian Shrock

“Smelborp”? What in the world is “smelborp”?! If you don't know what that is, then just maybe, in the near-famous words of comedian Steve Martin, you simply, “not have way!”

You may have a problem with the term smelborp because you don't understand what it is. Consequently, you expect an explanation, and if I don't provide this expository function, you just might have a problem with me! You came for laughs and I'm causing problems! Are you not grateful?!

“Smelborp!”. We all have problems. They are inescapable. They start early yesterday and last until late tomorrow. Then they repeat themselves and bring friends! Humor is often born from problems. When you're faced with these critters, you have a choice: You can laugh at them, or they *will* laugh at *you*. Today, we're going to look at examples from personal and family life, and from the workplace, to explore the relationship between humor and problems and to see just *who* gets the last laugh.

“Smelborp!” I have noticed that people, in expressing the qualities they most desire in a partner, often place a sense of humor at or near the top of the list. We like to laugh; humor is good medicine and good for survival. But sometimes a good sense of humor is the result of substantial experience in dealing with problems. So when we ask for someone with a good sense of humor, we may be inadvertently asking for a person with a lot of problems! Or perhaps we're looking for someone who can laugh at the problems we cause them!

This is, for example, so the husband will take it well when he comes home to find the \$300 phone bill his wife generated from sharing with her friends about all the bargains she found on her \$1,000 shopping spree which she prudently charged to to her 21% MasterCard for the convenient low monthly payments!!!

Or so the wife who *doesn't* fish will take it well when she comes home to find her husband has bought her a bass boat for her anniversary and financed it by trading in the family car and taking out a home equity loan!

A good sense of humor can be necessary for survival. “Yes, your honor, that's why I killed him!”

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“Smelborp!” Assuming a couple survives each other long enough, they often have kids and once again *need* a sense of humor to deal with issues such as diaper duty. Years ago my younger son reached that *glorious* departure from diapers, hallelujah, but had not yet learned the art of using toilet paper. So when he had the potty time blues, he would follow Neil Diamond's advice and sing them out in a song. He would start softly and build to an effective crescendo, so that anywhere in the house, one was sure to hear his plea, “I need some help with my bottom, *I need some help with my bottom, I need some help with my bottom!!!*”

“Smelborp!” Family problems can indeed be amusing. The classic family vacation is like a petri dish for culturing these constant creatures. I remember when I was 12 or 13 my conservative Christian family was traveling in the family station wagon on a family vacation with a family sized bowl of M&Ms. I had recently overheard that green M&Ms made you, well, yeah. Being the vocabulary expert I was at the time, I knew this meant weird or strange or having horns. So when my mother asked for some M&Ms, I *thought* it would be amusing when I said, “I'll give you some green ones, they make you... huh!!”

Smelborp!!! Many of us must work for a living (and to pay for those vacations), We can find many problems in the workplace, but there, believe or not problems are good! In fact, we need them. After all, we are paid to solve problems, and our compensation is directly proportional to the difficulty of the problems we solve. Contrast the challenges of a brain surgeon to those of a shoe salesman and this becomes obvious. With no problems we would have no job and no income.

So the next time your boss comes to you and says, “Listen, we have some big problems here,” instead of becoming filled with dread, you can respond with a resounding “YES!”

And the next time you're faced with a problem you can't seem to solve, you can go to your boss and explain about pay for problems and difficulty proportionate compensation, and say, “Listen boss, you know better than I that there is more pay for tougher problems, so since I'm having trouble solving this one, obviously it needs more pay. Therefore I should get a raise!!”

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“Smelborp!” At work or at home, have you ever had problems with computers? As a professional in the field, I am here to confirm your fears about these malicious machines! Computers are simply high-tech *problem generation devices*. We keep increasing their speed and capacity *only* so they can present you with more and bigger problems. We keep expanding their disk storage so you can save these problems and enjoy them over and over again.

This all points to the little known but highly suspected fact that we computer geeks have a secret conspiracy. It's *true!* We actually design and build problems into these computers. And we write software so that every time you solve a problem, it generates 3 or 4 new ones, so you'll never run out! What's more, we write viruses on company computers that activate when our names are removed from the payroll! We do this partly for job security, but mostly for our own devious pleasure! MOOHAHAHA!!!

“Smelborp!” Indeed there are many more problems we could discuss, but we have the problem of limited time. And we still have this “smelborp' thing to contend with. What is Smelborp?

No, it is not a subliminal plot.

Nor is it that rancid, pungent odor that assaults your olfactories when you burp Tupperware full of spoiled food.

Smelborp, Ladies and Gentlemen, is simply the word PROBLEMS spelled backwards. It illustrates how we don't always recognize our problems, or the humor in them at first glance, but how looking BACK on problems can be very enlightening and amusing, giving US the last laugh!