

## **Strongly Encouragable**

by Laird Darren Gallagher

*'Well dear, there is this function on, and while it's not mandatory, I probably should go'* - Sound familiar? How many times has your partner come home from work and said things like this that make you go 'umm...why would they do that?' Well here is the scoop. You can't really order somebody to have fun - that only happens in cheesy military movies\*

It really is one of those dodgy situations though isn't it when the boss says, *'...And there will be a Trivia night this Friday, while it is not mandatory, you are all strongly encouraged to attend'*. So as the member, even if you really don't want to go, you have this underlying certainty that your lack of attendance will somehow come back to bite you later on. So again you delay your wedding plans and chug along to whatever the event is.

If so many are attending events under...well...duress really, this could be why we have such un-funny or un-enthusiastic participants at things. Similarly so, such a situation fosters low level banter between members at many of our Mess dinners across the country as opposed to high-spirited, champagne comedy\*\*. For those partners that have not yet experienced the 'Mess Dining-In' night, I'll give you a quick snap shot. Basically, it is just a formal dinner. At the end of the dinner, members will engage in some informal banter (or a kangaroo court of sorts) which is controlled by the Vice-chairman of the evening (Mr Vice). Members will stand and regale the crowd with a funny tale about someone else in the room etc. and if done well, can be great.

Now lets take our hero; He doesn't want to go to the dining-in, though being pretty much under the spell of *strong encouragement*, will find himself there. He knows he will end up in a situation where he is sitting between people that he either doesn't know or like, and will be lured into standing up and engage

in some banter. Well, I tell you now, what's interesting about this is that one's ability to be funny is a bit like one's ability to say...juggle. It's not easy for some, can take practice for others, and is simply un-achievable to people like myself who just can't do it. Prior to attending a recent 'optional' event - when first considering 'banter', I looked it up in the dictionary just to see what it actually was.

*Banter: Humorous ridicule; good humoured personal remarks*

Not being one to (generally) think I know everything, I took the liberty of looking up 'Humour' too, as that's what banter referred to, just to be sure that I knew what was required.

*Humour: Comicality (less intellectual than wit)*

Oh, so banter is supposed to be pitched at such a low level, that even your average dfm field reporter will understand it? But even with this pressure of actually having to be funny somewhat removed, it can still be a bit of a make or break social situation - a situation let's not forget, that our hero doesn't even want to be in. So what changed then from 'the good old days'? If it isn't '*like it was back when I was a (fill in misc. rank details here)*', then surely the answer is to regenerate these events. Let's pave the way with something new. Rather than being forced to go to something that might be perceived as 'not fun' - why not go to it with the intention of making it great?

With politics and policy ever changing the way we are allowed to '*play*', it can really be hard to know what will and will not offend someone. So what is the constant in life? What is the common ground upon which we can generationally bridge a gap to reinvigorate our dying mess life? After careful consideration, I'd say it has to be toilet humour. ('*Good grief! I can't print this*' thinks my editor as this article takes a swing in a downward direction). In the future, when the human race is all wearing silver jump suits and space style boots, living in white buildings with doors that go '*swoosh*' and eating tablet style food like they do in *Soylent Green*, I'll wager right now that we will be

making jokes about how a certain variety make you flatulent. Deny it if you must, but it's a harsh reality, toilet humour, like cockroaches and Tupperware is here to stay.

But alas, it cannot be our saviour here as this aspect of humour cannot be interfaced with current mess culture. Perhaps our *Entertainment Committees* are at fault? As most of them are directed to perform such a role, could it then be argued that ones ability to be entertaining is similar to one's ability to be funny? Unfortunately, our function organisers are often left thankless after their time and effort spent arranging things that people will ultimately 'pick at' in the end.

The message here is this: **Get Involved**. Most of you would know that I have touched on the concept of Social Capital previously. I have regarded it in terms of charitable organisations, but Social Capital can be achieved by simply attending something, and doing your best to make it fun. Our messes are a pretty groovy thing, and while my Toilet Humour policy\*\*\* may never make it into actual practice, one could argue that at least I'm plopping in my two cents in view of making it better. For those of you that are currently involved in any type of event committee, I give you the old *'tip of the hat gov'* and say well done. For those of you that happily attend pretty much anything in view of having a good time, I say great and stay involved. For those that fall into other categories of critical disposition, I urge you to join another team and implement improvements that may help to satisfy not only yourself but others.

I'd like to finish on a toilet joke, but having just written this, I'd say there has been enough crap for one day.

Yours Thronefully

Laird Darren *'Find the silent G'* Gallagher.

*\*STARSHIP TROOPERS 'Here is the beer and entertainment. Have fun, that's an order' Lt. Radcheck, Roughnecks Mobile Infantry*

*\*\*Thank you Rob Sitch, I bask in your comical royalty.*

*\*\*\*Policy currently being vetted by Mr Angus Pantstain & Associates.*