Past Pranks at JBU

John Brown University has been known as great academic school; but the students and faculty at JBU also know how to have a little fun. Dr. Shirley Thomas-Forbes told the story of the “funniest” prank that was pulled while she worked at JBU: “[It] involved the women’s restroom on the third floor of the Cathedral. The bathroom had been installed sometime after the completion of the building. As a result, the one porcelain throne (no stall) sat in elevated splendor upon a raised section of the floor. To add to the strangeness of the setting, because of some fluke of the vent system, one was often entertained while making use of the facility by live music from students practicing on the pipe organ in the Cathedral. Under the best of circumstances one felt rather self-conscious. One morning, individual blushing women students began tearing out the bathroom, adjusting their clothing, shortly after they had entered. Some even screamed. However, no one would tell what had happened. A visual inspection revealed nothing amiss in the room. Finally, a female professor went in to use the bathroom. When she sat upon the commode a male voice from below said, “Would you please get up? I’m working down here, and you’re blocking the light.” Inspection revealed a pressure-activated recording. The rumor was that some of the engineering students did it. No one ever confessed, probably because another rumor was that the punishment would be to turn the perpetrators over to the women who had sat upon the throne that morning.”

Faculty members also enjoyed participating in pranks. This is nicely illustrated by Dr. Andrew Bowling of Biblical Studies who put a bottle of beer in the refrigerator of a public lounge on the second floor of the Cathedral. The bottle had a note attached that read, “Please do not drink this. I am saving it for my lunch. Thank you, Dr. Shirley Thomas,” who was an English professor at JBU.

In 1988 students decided to pull a prank on the unsuspecting cafeteria staff. On one fateful night all of the silverware was removed from the cafeteria and placed at the bottom of the pool in the Murry Sells Gym. Students had to eat with plastic silverware in the days following the prank. Over the years at JBU pranks have become a common feature to student life; whether it is the “misplaced” chapel podium, students trying to sell J. Alvin dorm, or an attempt to change the name of the university to Bob Burns University, pranks certainly make JBU a more lively place to study.

Milestones

December 9, 1950
California Dorm held its annual open dorm on this day. Men flocked to the dorm to see how the “other half” lives. Visitors to the dorms were divided into groups and taken on a tour throughout the dorm. Then everyone gathered in the lobby and prizes were presented to the ladies with the most attractive rooms.

December 14, 1969
Photographer, Miss Ruth Canaday came to JBU for the opening of an exhibit on campus featuring her pictures. The exhibit was located in the old science building, now the art building.

December 1, 1989
Students and teachers were auctioned off as ‘slaves’ to raise money for the Student Missionary Fellowship. Students and teachers who were ‘bought’ had to perform task, such as baking cookies or cleaning a dorm room, for their ‘masters’. The fundraiser brought in $370 for missionaries.
ECHOES OF THE PAST
Excerpt from the 2 of May 1958 Threefold Advocate

Dorm Life Is Great

It is true that there’s nothing like dorm life, and one of the aspects that stands out particularly, is the friendly (?), harmless (?), type of pranks that your roommate or buddies pull on you. The following is an account which illustrates the various tricks that can be conjured up with no trouble at all on the part if the prankster.

About 10:00pm Fred White, a college student, returns to the dorm. Opening the door, he slips his hand along the wall to find the light switch. Well, he finds it—smothered in that very popular Bristol-Meyer product, Rapid Shave. With a slightly perturbed expression on his face he throws his books on his roommates bed and decides to take a shower and wash his hair. In the shower, he pours some shampoo from the container on his head, and begins to work up a lather on his scalp. It is then that he notices something sticky and gummy running down into his eyes. “I’m not sure what it is, but something is wrong with this shampoo,” he screams. Yes, readers, you’re right it isn’t shampoo. Someone has so cleverly filled the shampoo container with liquid deodorant, and let’s face it—Mum Mist just doesn’t do much for the hair. To recover from this dilemma, Fred takes his bar of soap with the hope of sal-
vaging his hair by applying soap suds. It is then he notices the bar of soap has a clear, glossy surface and refuses to lather. Yes readers, you’re right. It has been covered with clear cuticle polish. Fred is now developing “the urge to kill,” when he is suddenly showered with a wastepaper basket full of ice water. Turning blue and almost overcome with frostbite, Fred gives up the idea of a shower and returns to his room. He realizes that this is going to be a very eventful night. He finds out he’s right—the hard way. Upon brushing his teeth he finds holes punched in his toothpaste tube, and that Halo shampoo has been carefully mixed with Listerine.

Thinking this could surely be all the little bobby traps lying in wait for him, Fred went to bed. Of course, he is cautious enough to check for shaving cream planted at the floor of the bed, of “short sheet.” At least he is safe. How could anything more happen? His roommate is not in yet, but Fred will be asleep by the time he comes, so it won’t bother him. It is at this time that his roommate, who is under the bed with a cold glass of water (to make his hand cold,) slips the cold hand up to Fred’s neck. Needless to say Fred at once realized that something was wrong and let out with a merciful shriek for help. Well, such is life! All this goes together to make dorm life what it is.

Students having fun on campus while diving and in the Panic Booth.