

Hola, Meteorologica Specialista

It was January 3rd, an ordinary day in my life and I was getting slaughtered at a game of shuffleboard at the Castle, my favorite hangout in Manhattan Beach. As I was paying my bill to leave, my two Chicano buddies, Jose and Josb came in. Identical twins.

Their parents obviously had a sense of humor. Jose's name was pronounced "Hose-A" as usual, but everyone called Josb, "Hose-bee" even though the correct pronunciation was "Hose-bay." The temptation was, of course, to call Jose: "Can You See." but that would be too much. Jose and Josb were both sensitive. Josb did not think that his name was at all funny. Neither did Jose. The Hose Brothers did not have senses of humor. They were just great guys.

After multiple 'holas' I changed my mind about leaving. I love these guys. Above all else, I love the way they pronounce words. J's, H's and Y's are English language mysteries they have never mastered, much like Desi Arnaz. I always have to stop myself from asking where Lucy is.

We sat down to a few Dos Equis and talk. I had forgotten that their family came from the village of Dolores Hidalgo in the province of Guanajuato, Mexico. That's where the revolution of 1810 took place. This is the story of amazing bravery and eventual conquest of good versus evil that I have heard them tell on many occasions, but today all I wanted was a weather projection. I was going on vacation to San Miguel Allende for two weeks, only 20 miles away from their hometown.

They were crestfallen that I wasn't staying with one of their family. Before our first game of pool was completed, I was an honored guest in a cousin's home just off the Plaza Principal with a view directly over the valley,

"What's the weather going to be like," I asked eagerly?

The twins looked at each other very seriously. This was a look, I had discovered, that was reserved only for the most painfully stupid of gringo questions. Then Jose turned to me and said. "Jew must take very warm clothing. The weather today is yest like March. Tomorrow will snow, possibly. Next week will be warm, even scorching."

Josb chimed in, "Jew must take very jot weather clothing." Jose nodded.

“Are you guys nuts,” I blurted. “I’m only going for two weeks. I know it is in the mountains and it can be cool at night, but I can’t take my whole fucking wardrobe for spending just a few days. What the hell are you talking about?”

Josb took the lead. “If jew promise jew will not make fun of us, jew will get the story. Weather in Guanajuato is a very serious business.”

“Ok,” I said. “I promise. I’m all ears.”

“In winter, the climate is dry. Our beautiful hills are all jellow, like grain. Yanuary 30 tells jew that. In summer, it rains at night, all is verde. Yanuary 29 tells jew that.” He paused and looked again at his brother for approval. Jose smiled in agreement.

“Wait a second,” I said, interrupting. “What does January have to do with anything but January?”

They did ‘the look’ again. Jose answered. “Our native ancestors were very accurate predictors of weather. Yanuary 1 is Yanuary.”

“What an astonishing turn of events,” I said. “January is January in Mexico.”

“No, no,” Josb said. “Only Yanuary 1 and Yanuary 13 is Yanuary and only for certain in the district of Guanajuato.” Jose agreed. Animatedly he added, “And Yanuary is February only twice in Yanuary. Perhaps jew you could make a case that Yanuary is also in Yanuary 25 and 29, but we would not recommend it.”

I had promised. So, instead of yelling at them, I got up and went to the bar. “Sam, please bring a bottle of your best Tequila to our table” and returned, now fully composed.

“Let me understand you so far,” I said. “January is only January at certain times in January.”

I thought the brothers were going to consummate marriage with me right there on the floor of the Castle. They hugged me, kissed me and yelled at the top of their Hispanic, collective lungs, “Jes!!!”

“And,” I added, “February is February at least twice in January.”

Jose got up shouting some indecipherable Mexican stuff. He and Josb ran around the bar slapping people on the back, hugged Sam, the bartender who had made the unmistakable mistake of being in the general vicinity of our table with a full bottle of Tequila. These were undeniably two very happy Mexican young men.

I poured a stiff Tequila in my pint beer glass and watched the entire entourage of the bar dancing to some imaginary hat dance or something. Sam loved these guys too. They were a featured attraction every time they came. Josb went out the front door and ushered several innocent passersby inside to join the convivial atmosphere. Eventually the brothers came back panting and happy. We settled in to the next weather installment.

“On Yanuary 3,” Jose began again once his breathing came back to normal, “it can snow, rain, blow and be yot as Yell.”

“Hot as Hell,” I repeated now fully aware that I would never get an answer I could use on my trip, but fully fortified with one third of the Tequila bottle, was prepared to spend the rest of the night in splendid fraternal Mexican company.

“Si. Yot as Yell, like the desert.”

“Josb,” I pondered, choosing my next question very carefully, and pronouncing his name correctly, ‘Hose-bay’. “What is the weather like on January 17?”

“Easy,” he answered exuberantly. “The same as Yanuary 8th. Jot and dry.”

”And on January13th?”

“Like today,” he said. “Cold, wet and windy.”

“Please don’t take offense, guys, but have either of you heard of Abbot and Costello?”

“Jes,” Jose said. “Who’s on first.”

“Exactly,” I said. “Who’s on first, What’s on second and I Don’t Know is on third. This is funny to you guys?”

“Don’t jave a clue,” Josb answered.

“Ok, then. I don’t have the first idea what the hell you are talking about. Please explain to this slightly inebriated gringo. How can the weather in Guanajuato district be hot and dry one day and variable, cold, rainy two days later?”

I got the double look this time, actually two double takes like in a Max Senett movie. Jose took the lead.

“In ancient days, our ancestors were smart people. They could guess the weather all the time. They said that Yanuary predicted the rest of the jear.”

“The jear,” I asked?

“Si,” Josb chimed in. “Each jear has weather predicted by Yanuary. Yanuary 1 is like Yanuary is going to be all month. Yanuary 2 is like February weather. Yanuary 3 is like March and so on. Simple.”

“Ok, I guess I get that. How about Yanuary 13?” Suddenly I knew I was blitzed. The Tequila was of the very highest quality. Apparently. I realized that I was I was beginning to talk like my friends and I couldn’t stop. They didn’t seem to notice the difference.

“They go backwards,” Josb explained to me, eyebrows knitted as if talking to an imbecile. The 13th is December again. Yanuary 24th is Yanuary again. The 25th through the 28th is each quarter. The 29th is the first jalf of the jear. The 30th is the last jalf. On the 30th, all weather happens, rain, sun, wind, snow, fog, jumidity. Any questions? Is obvious.”

They looked at each other, high fived, stood up, yumped in the air smashing their chests together a la the NFL shouting ‘HOLA’, laughed their asses off and sat down, faces once again solemn. The Castle customers didn’t know what was going on, but Sam led the entire bar in yumping up and smashing chests with loud ‘holas.’ Sam always cried when the ‘Hose Brothers’ left. They were a gold mine.

“Jes,” I slurred, “but I have to take a leak. I’ll be back.” Once inside with the door firmly locked, I started to snicker. It built into a chortle. Before the last dribble landed in the bowl I was howling with laughter. Finally I figured I could return to the table without jumiliating myself.

Jose and Josb were very solemn when I sat back down. “Jew think this is bull,” Jose, the eldest by five minutes, informed me. “Wait and see, Yerk. And you can stay in the juppie jotel now.” They got up in unison and walked out of the Castle, jeads jeld jigh and proud. When I sobered up I knew I would have to apologize profusely. I had apparently really offended them. I felt awful. Yest awful.

In San Miguel Allende I stayed in the yuppie hotel, but I remembered the name of their cousin and looked him up. When he heard my sad story he looked at me like I was a defiler of the Holy Sepulcher. “You laughed at the ancient weather story,” he asked without any trace of the twin’s amusing mispronunciations? The look on his face said it all. We were drinking an amazing concoction of Tequila and something else, I dared not ask what. By now I knew what happens to my English pronunciation when I have too much Tequila, though it appears only with Tequila of the best quality.

“Jes.” I focused carefully. The lingual curse was coming upon me. “Yes. I didn’t think it could be real. I mean, it sounds crazy.”

Miguel, their cousin, looked at me for a long moment before responding.

“How do you think the Poor Richard’s Almanac was compiled,” he said? “Wives tales, history and experience. Are Americans no longer capable of myth and belief? Do you not dream any more?”

The next morning I left San Miguel resolving three things. To be very careful of the amount of excellent Tequila I consumed. To somehow make amends to my Hose brothers. To suspend disbelief most of the time. HOLA!