



Bilingual Fun!

I suppose every family has their own little jokes and episodes that outsiders wouldn't really think are funny, or perhaps even understand, and mine is no different. One such little joke - something we used to laugh about around 50 years ago - came back to me suddenly this morning, when one of the ladies here in the printing workshop (inadvertently) made the same little joke. The problem was that she had no clue why I broke out laughing at something she said, and she was at first fairly peeved at my seeming impoliteness.

My family name is Bull, and as you might guess, when I was a little guy back in school this was sometimes cause for some amusement among classmates. When little boys are the age where they begin to learn 'bad words' I frequently heard the phrase "That's a lot of bull!", and its slightly longer variation, which I will not repeat here!

Within our own family though, the joke was completely clean. I have a brother Simon, and the running joke was that if my parents had had a third boy (instead of my sister), this boy would have been named Terry.

David Bull. Simon Bull. Terry Bull.

Hah hah ... (Well it was funny when I was ten years old!)

So anyway, here I am living in Japan all these years later, with this joke pretty much completely forgotten in my past. Myself and the printer ladies are preparing a new project, and as part of the production of the prints, we are deciding how to place our names on the finished work. The ladies are printers, thus 'suri-shi', and their names will appear in the embossment as: "Suri: Tsushima," or "Suri: Ishikawa," for example.

The blocks for the prints will be carved by myself, and as the Japanese term for a woodcutter of this type is 'hori-shi', my name will thus appear as ... (wait for it!) ... "Hori: Buru."

And it was of course hearing Ishikawa-san say this out loud that triggered my laughter earlier today. I of course had to explain to them all why I found her comment so funny, but as is usually the case in such episodes, it didn't seem quite as funny in the explaining ...

There is some remote chance that this joke will have a potential impact on me in the future. I have no plans for this any time soon, but there is a thought that I *could* apply for Japanese citizenship at some point. If I did take that step, it would be necessary for me to work out a Japanese name written in *kanji*. Well, what should I do? It would perhaps make sense to select a name based on the work I am doing, say ... 'Hori'. And yet I would also like to retain my current name, Bull, as it is something I am very comfortable with; it's my 'identity', of course.

So ... given those ideas, there really is only one idea for a name, isn't there! But I have to be careful; if I did actually go ahead with this, my brother would probably die laughing when he next met me ...

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