

# “VOS IZ” THE MEANING OF “WAF”?



by  
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Grab a #2 pencil and let's see how well you do on this one-question quiz:

WAF means

- a) We Are Family
- b) Wife Acceptance Factor
- c) We Are the Future
- d) Web Application Framework
- e) With All Faults
- f) Women Aren't Funny
- g) All of the above

The correct answer is g.

Barbara Ellen [The observer, “So women aren't funny? Well, Joan Rivers had the last laugh, guys,” Sept. 6, 2014]. said that “Women Aren't Funny is a recurring thing...Funny is effectively gender-free.”

Joan Rivers gave us different kinds of laughs: guffaw, boff, titter, giggle, yuk, snicker, and heehaw, a laughter which reduces us to our animal natures, leaving us howling, snorting, and roaring. In her book, “Bouncing Back,” she wrote, “With laughter and courage, you can survive anything and bounce back--and I mean anything.” She added:

In her 1974 book, “Having A Baby Can Be A Scream,” Rivers writes:

“Having a baby and becoming a mother should be a ball. Not a bawl. And yet throughout history women have passed down such tales of horror to each other (“I was in labor 108 days.” “My doctor left more stitches in me than an entire knit dress.” “They had to give me gas, plus a spinal, plus ether--and still felt everything!”) that almost every pregnant woman approaches the big event with fear and trepidation.

The last chapter, "Closing Monologue," says,

"Hello, Doctor. I'm sorry to disturb you on a Tuesday as I know this is your morning to make out your inflated Blue Shield reports, but I just had to talk to you... Yes, I'll be brief... You see, my darling baby is three now and off to nursery school ("kinder-tsimer") and so smart ("klug") that when my husband and I discuss anything in front of her, we have to purposefully misspell words. Plus the child is gorgeous ("sheyn") She has my eyes, my nose, my mouth, my hair. The only thing that worries me a bit is one day I might need them back.... I am getting to the point, Doc... You see, I have never looked or felt better, if I do say so myself ("zikh"). But I don't have to. Why only the other day, our garage mechanic ("mekhaniker") said, 'That's some chassis you've got there,' and he wasn't looking at my car. The stretch marks are practically all gone and with lots of workouts at my gym I've got my old figure back or what's even better ("beser"), I haven't got my old figure back, but a new and firmer one. And I've bought me a new wardrobe ("garderob") and six divine slack suits so I won't have to shave my legs all winter ("vinter") and next month my darling daughter ("tokhter") and I will sit for our portrait ("portret")... Wait, Doc, hold on.. just two minutes more... My husband ("man") has never adored me more than now that I've fulfilled my role as M'O'T'H'E'R. Why, he's put me on a pedestal and, even though I have to dust it, it's worth it... Anyhow, now that I'm a Ma, I've decided to go back to school and get my M.A. I was a philosophy ("filosofye") major in college. What good did philosophy do me these last couple of years with a screaming, wet ("nas") kid on my hands? All I could use it for was to prove to myself that the dirty ("shmutsik") diapers didn't really exist. Oh, and the joy of joys. I'm back to reading again. Serious ("ehrnst") reading. I mean. Not Spock. Spillane... Okay, okay, I know you're not interested in all this garbage ("opfal")..... So, why am I calling you if everything is so terrific? Well, you see, Doc, up until this morning I really was the happiest and fittest of women. But I woke up feeling perfectly horrible ("groylik"). Headache ("kopveytik"). Heartburn ("harts-brenenish"). Nausea. I felt absolutely bushed ("oysgematert"). And I blush to bring up such intimate symptoms, especially as I know your service is listening in, but my you-know-what is long, long overdue and..." (Note: The Yiddish words have been added to the monologue.)

Yes, women are funny.

"Listen to me, sweetheart." Galileo's mother probably told him, "You've got to stop saying that the earth revolves around the sun; it's embarrassing the family. Maybe astronomy just isn't your field. You know, your uncle has a shoe store in Florence."

Rivers' was often "trigger happy," which has taken on the meaning of "eager to point out the mistakes or shortcomings of others."

Ex. [she rips into Rihanna]: "I have not seen lips this green since Miss Piggy got out of the back seat of Kermit's car."

[on the 1986 marriage of Sarah Ferguson to Prince Andrew],  
"I was invited to the wedding...I am going to buy her a chin for a wedding gift."

"Elizabeth Taylor Hilton Wilding Todd Fisher Burton Burton Warner and Larry Fortensky. She had no choice but to marry Larry. She'd already married everyone else. What people don't realize is that Liz spent most of her fortune on monogramming."

[On Madonna and Kabbalah], "And I'm not going to wear a red string as an accessory unless it's made by Yves Saint Laurent."

[on Hillary Clinton], "I'm a comedian, not an elf. If Hillary Clinton wants to do a village, that's her business--I just hope for her sake she finds a village where mannish woman in pastel pantsuits are all the rage."

Source: "I Hate Everyone Starting With Me"

[on Eleanor Roosevelt], "You know that expression, 'Looks don't matter?' Eleanor took it to heart, and made homely women everywhere feel better about themselves. Eleanor was way ahead of her time. If she were alive today she'd have her own series on Animal Planet."

Source: "I Hate Everyone Starting With Me"

According to Robert Provine, "You're more likely to laugh ("lakhn") with friends ("khaverim") while watching a comedy than when you're watching the same show by yourself ("zikh").

At one point in Rivers' career, she wrote in a small blue "kaledzh" exam book she still had from Barnard College. She arranged the jokes into little routines.

"Tonight I am brought to you by the product all America is talking about...Brand X. Sal Mineo would have been here tonight, but he's at home in bed with a bad haircut. I don't have to be up here ...I've had other job offers, but I'd hate to sell

hats. On my first job I made eighty dollars...I sold my car to the bandleader.”

Harry Brent was the only person in her life willing to sit and build an act with Rivers--the only person who might conceivably get her a job--and a logo. Then Joan went into a marvelous routine:

Harry, darling, what happened...it was all so beautiful in the beginning...I had always dreamed of someone like you...tall and dark with a civil service job...and when you called that first time, it seemed so right...there was such rapport going between us, you understood me so well the way you said, ‘Hello, tramp’ ...and then remember, darling, how you used to come over to my house. You never spoke. You just sat at my feet and gazed up at me...then down at my feet, then up at me...and then, one day you spoke...you looked up at me and said, ‘Joan, wash your feet.’”

Note: “The Yiddish word meaning “to gaze” is “onkukn.”

Harry finally figured out how Rivers’ was going to start her act. He told her that she was going to come onstage and say, “Sorry I’m late, but I didn’t even have time to shave,” and then she would take shaving cream and put it on her face and shave it off. He was sure that this would get their attention...and destroy ‘em.’

Note: The Yiddish word meaning “to shave” is “razirn zikh.”

Source: “Enter Talking” by Joan Rivers with Richard Meryman

Goodbye, Joan. You’ve proven that WOMEN ARE FUNNY. You will always be mentioned among Jewish women comics like vaudeville’s Fanny Brice, Yiddish “aktrise”, Molly Picon, Belle Barth, Betty Walker, Pearl Williams and today’s stand-ups--Judy Gold, Wendy Leibman, and Susie Essman.