the humidity so high that nothing dried.

...try to cool off each day, the
tent because the water from the cold taps
perature. Amid swarms of flies curiously
we had to amass firewood for the barbecue pit near our
cabins as to cook dinner quickly before sunset. And then the peacocks
came running, attracted by the aromas. On other occasions, the sight of the
peacocks would surely have been a delight, their colorful plumage providing
aesthetic pleasure. To our dismay, however, we found that the birds defecate
freely and plentifully as they wander about, and their bounty is less birdlike
and more akin to dog poop. The rickety tables we had set up in front of our
cabin to enjoy the tropical outdoors and spare our air conditioners from over-
work were soon surrounded by mounds of odiferous manure. As those regal,
nonchalant birds continued their evening strolls around us we furiously tried
to sweep away their mess while yelling and throwing tropical tree debris at
them to hold them at bay. I vividly recall the sweat, the stench, the unbearable
anticipation of long nights of tossing and turning in our cramped quarters
with sweat-soaked sheets, and the despair of hot showers taken late at night
in the wistful hope of a slight cooling before bedtime.

It was while walking back from the showers one night that my son, look-
ing at the recreation vehicles and tents where steam and smoke rose thickly
from the barbecues, said, "Well, here we go back to the Taj Mahal of Outback
Heaven." Just like Derek Maitland’s father’s response to his son’s agony, this
zany comment that encompassed the agony of all the campers at the park and
expressed commiseration with my palpable misery, bred a wonderful feeling
of closeness with my son, to whom I’ll always be grateful. In that one remark,
humor coupled with social support rescued us from the despair that so often
accompanies the experience of absurdity in our lives. I like to think that this
little joke not only made that moment more bearable but also enhanced the
pleasure of our time together, leaving us feeling healthier and happier than
we otherwise would have felt.

APPENDIX A

THE COPING HUMOR SCALE (CHS)

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by circling the
appropriate number.

1. I often lose my sense of humor when I am having problems.

   1 2 3 4
   (strongly) (mildly) (mildly) (strongly)
   (disagree) (disagree) (agree) (agree)

2. I have often found that my problems have been greatly reduced when I try to find some-
   thing funny in them.

   2 3 4
   2 3 4

3. I usually look for something comical to say when I am in tense situations.

4. I must admit my life would probably be a lot easier if I had more of a sense of humor.

   2 3 4
   2 3 4

5. I have often felt that if I am in a situation where I have to either cry or laugh, it’s better
to laugh.

   3 4

6. I can usually find something to laugh or joke about even in trying situations.

   2 3 4

7. It has been my experience that humor is often a very effective way of coping with prob-
   lems.

   3 4