Caltech Tradition & Pranks
Mischief & Managed
Caltech student traditions
Caltech student pranks

Caltech student traditions and pranks

A brief overview

Mischief[1] Managed[2]

[1]Department of Student Traditions
California Institute of Technology

[2]Department of Student Pranks
California Institute of Technology

International Conference on University Pranks
April 1st, 2014

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Millikan pumpkin-drop experiment

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Every Halloween, Dabney House conducts the infamous "Millikan pumpkin-drop experiment" from the top of Millikan Library, the highest point on campus.

- A claim was once made that the shattering of a pumpkin frozen in liquid nitrogen and dropped from a sufficient height would produce a triboluminescent spark.

Millikan pumpkin-drop experiment

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Millikan pumpkin-drop experiment

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Every Halloween, Dabney House conducts the infamous "Millikan pumpkin-drop experiment" from the top of Millikan Library, the highest point on campus.

- A claim was once made that the shattering of a pumpkin frozen in liquid nitrogen and dropped from a sufficient height would produce a triboluminescent spark.
- This yearly event involves a crowd of observers, who try to spot the elusive spark.
- The title of the event is an oblique reference to the famous Millikan oil-drop experiment which measured e, the elemental unit of electrical charge.

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This is a brief introduction of Caltech pranks.

Definition

Prank: a practical joke or mischievous act

Axiom

Caltech pranks are a key part of the institute's history and identity.

Examples

See the next slide for a prank example.

Hollywood sign

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Figure: "Hollywood is still mad about that," says Autumn Looijen, author of *Legends of Caltech III: Techer In the Dark*. (Photo downloaded from: http://brennen.caltech.edu/autobiography/automaster2.htm)

In May 1987, undergraduates from Page and Ricketts houses combined forces (and several hundred dollars) to purchase enough black and white plastic, transformed the Hollywood sign to read "Caltech". (Reference: http://www.admissions.caltech.edu/pranks)