

Working Life

T W O - F E R

We're having a special this month. You get not one, but two, items for every "Working Life" category. Such a deal.

Getting Global

American businesspeople on overseas assignments may be wiped out—and not by terrorists.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, some expatriates returning to the United States find that while they've been working abroad, their U.S. credit histories have vanished—particularly if they had little credit history to begin with or weren't making mortgage payments back home.

After spending seven years working and living in Europe, one woman was turned down for a telephone calling card upon her reentry into the United States, despite having established an international credit history. It seems that many U.S. credit-reporting agencies purge information from their computers after seven years. But after only five years abroad, another woman was turned down for a major credit card by her long-time New York bank. Male expatriates are getting the same treatment.

Some companies now advise their expatriate employees to keep their U.S. credit cards active, to notify the presidents—not the customer-service representatives—of their banks when they repatriate, and to bring back documentation on their overseas credit histories.

Getting Global: Part Deux

Crash course.... So you've decided to ask your credit history and work in France after hearing about the *beau-coup* vacation time French workers get. (See "Working Life," September 1993.) But you haven't quite refined your French accent to perfection. Try getting into a car wreck.



A Massachusetts man began speaking with a French accent soon after being injured in a car accident, reports *Via FedEx*.

The neurological disorder—known as Foreign Accent Syndrome—usually strikes victims of a head trauma or stroke that causes damage to an area of the brain that controls the person's vocal chords.

Wee swaar zis ees troo.

True Tales From the Workplace

A hospital administrator in Waco, Texas, tells us that when the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms squad raided the Branch Davidians' compound, injured ATF agents weren't allowed to be operated on unless other ATF personnel were present in the operating room.

No one knows why.

More True Tales

A guy named Dan was driving to a job interview when he ran headlong into the car in front of him. He and the other driver exchanged their

Use it or lose it...wacky goings-on in Waco...mid-air wackiness...we're seeing double...and did we say, "Top 10"? We meant "Top Three."

insurance information and then went their separate ways.

Dan looked at the paper given to him and recognized the name of the man whose car he'd hit. The other driver was the prospective employer who was going to interview him that day.

Dan turned his car around and drove home.

(From the Washington Post.)

A Few Facts and Figures

Like, you want french fries with that?... One out of every 15 southern Californians started his or her working life at McDonald's.

Have a nice day.... Since 1980, at least 750 people are murdered each year at work, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Since 1986, 38 employees of the U.S. Postal Service have been killed on the job. And the number of managers killed yearly has doubled from 12 to 24.

A Few More Facts and Figures

@~#\$%&^....* On several recent commercial airline flights, the navigation displays suddenly went haywire. At least one of the frites was traced to a passenger's laptop computer, but experts can't explain how the electronic device could have caused the interference.

Paramount perks.... Just like us, movie stars get bonuses. Well, not exactly like us. For work well done in *The Firm*, the studio gave star Tom Cruise, the director, and the producer each a Mercedes 500SL convertible. We hope they at least got to pick the color.

Top 10 3

When we heard NBC might take action against David Letterman for bringing his Top 10 List to his new home on CBS, we...well, here's our list of the *top three* cities in 1991 (according to *American Demographics*) for the most convention visitors:

- ▶ 3. Chicago (842,500)
- ▶ 2. New Orleans (868,475)
- ▶ And number 1. Washington, D.C. (927,162).

Any resemblance of the previous "Working Life" category "David Letterman, Eat Your Heart Out" to the aforementioned's Top 10 List was unintentional and purely coincidental.

Top Three List: Part Two

- ▶ 3. Visiting the dentist
- ▶ 2. Having the car repaired
- ▶ And number 1. Engaging in sex.

Those are some of the things working people do in their off hours, in order of preference, according to *American Demographics*.

Blast From the Past

A 1971 ad in a magazine that shall remain nameless features a photo of a demure-looking woman and the headline, "A man's single most important asset isn't single."

The ad goes on to say, "She's very much married to him...a man's wife can be his most valuable asset, or an overwhelming liability."

JUST WATCH
RERUNS OF "FATHER
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OFFICE FOR A WHILE
ON SATURDAYS.

The ad promotes a videotape seminar about women's supportive roles in their husbands' careers. You know, a *training and development* film.

Enough said.

Blast From the Past: A Return Trip

We know that a lot of workaholic baby boomers toil away at their jobs on weekends—by choice or by compulsion. But did you know that many parents of baby boomers were *expected* to work on Saturdays?—at least until about 1 p.m.

It's true! Just watch reruns of "Father Knows Best." Jim Anderson always goes into the office for a while on Saturdays. Or ask people who are 40-something where their dads (mostly) were on Saturday mornings.

It wasn't to get ahead; it was just the thing to do.

P.S. If you're still thinking about moving to France, you should know

that Saturday-morning hours are still common in many countries.

Workaholics

Foursome but not all.... Traditionally, golf has been the most popular sport in which to socialize and schmooze with colleagues, clients, and bosses. But some businesspeople prefer to link up off the course, reports *Business Week*.

In Silicon Valley, several senior managers and the chief executive at Sun Microsystems break the ice by playing on a hockey team during off hours. At Microsoft, employees are known to participate together in car rallies, sailing, rock climbing, flag football, and paragliding. Wall Streeters tend to like squash.

Such activities present arenas in which employees can interact in new ways and on new levels with higher-ups, say observers. Apparently, sweat can be a great equalizer. But at least one worker warns that there are boundaries. He says that after he beat a superior in racquetball, the superior's attitude toward him changed. We assume not for the better.

Workaholics...istics

When Turner Design of New York City reengineered GTE's customer/sales center in Tampa, Florida, it sought to create "an attitude design." So Turner divided the telephone-communications area into two sections: a functional "business zone" and a more relaxed "service zone" for employee breaks.

While the business zone looks businesslike, the service zone is "fun and funky." It includes the Cafe News Bar, in which employees read newspapers and enjoy snacks from vending machines stocked with healthy foods. A phone-booth bank offers employees privacy for making personal calls. A physical-break area at houses such exercise equipment as a treadmill and a stationary bicycle.

We approve.

Next month, "Working Life" wraps up the year.

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