

# Working Life

## WORKING LIFE CLASSICS

March is medley time. Here are a few of the regular features found in "Working Life"—and some rather irregular ones that just may become "Working Life" classics. You never know.

### Out of the Mouths of Babes

As *Training & Development* went to press, Mattel had decided to keep Teen Talk Barbies on store shelves—you know, the ones that say, "Math class is tough." Parents and kids can swap the math-fearing dolls they've already bought for other dolls that skirt the math issue.

But what about the children—mostly girls—who are left with the Barbies who find math daunting? Little girls need role models who motivate them to think math is fun and easy, says University of Illinois professor Helen Farmer. Farmer sees Barbie's negative message as a backward step that undercuts women's efforts to enter science and technological fields.

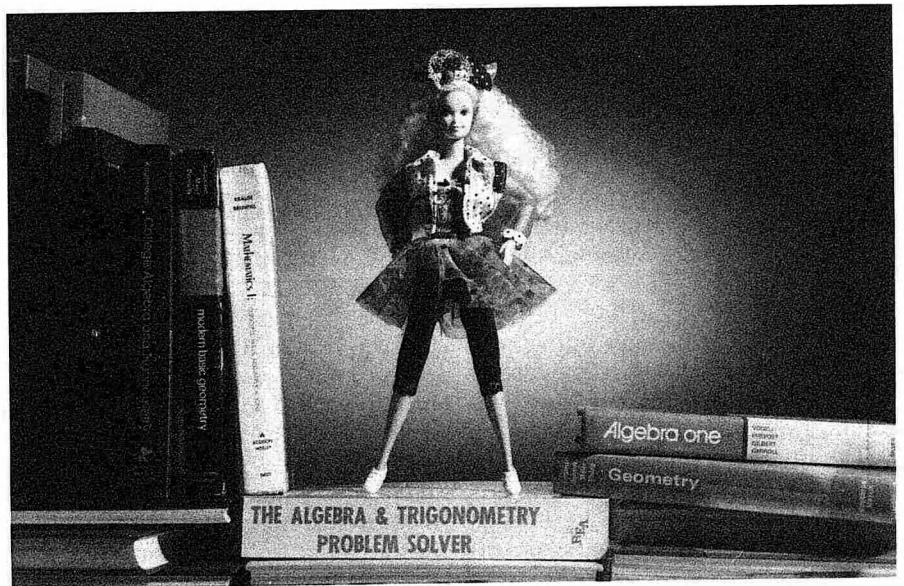
Mattel says it is ensuring that future Teen Talk Barbies say zilch about math.

No word from Ken.

### Top 10

Here's one David Letterman hasn't done. According to *Black Enterprise* magazine, the top 10 companies in the United States for recruiting, hiring, retaining, and promoting black people are the following:

- ▶ 10. Ford
- ▶ 9. Federal Express
- ▶ 8. Equitable Life
- ▶ 7. Du Pont
- ▶ 6. Corning
- ▶ 5. Coca-Cola
- ▶ 4. Chrysler
- ▶ 3. Avon Products
- ▶ 2. AT&T
- ▶ And no. 1. Ameritech.



Claude Yuzque

### Give an Inch, Take a Kilometer

First they try to push the nine-digit zip code on us. Now this.

Metric is inevitable. Federal employees are now required by law to use it; can the rest of the United States be far behind? Think of it this way: We'll be joining 95 percent of the rest of the world.

Blackhawk Metric Supply of South Beloit, Illinois, is trying to make it easier for you. For \$8, it will send you "All You Need To Know About the Metric System for Everyday Use." The color chart does the conversions for you and has a lot of neat pictures.

Blackhawk's telephone number is 815/389-2850.

### Workahellistics

Ever think about putting glue stick in your boss's tube of lip balm? That's just one of the 300 fantasies in *How To Get Even With Your Boss* (Gollehon Books).

Co-authors Roger and Barbara Soroch caution that their fiendish acts of revenge aren't meant to be

*Barbie speaks...boss-a-mania...and cards Hallmark never thought of.*

carried out. They suggest that workers only imagine committing nasty deeds against their bosses, as a way to let off steam. The authors also give recommendations that aren't dangerous, which people *can* use to deal with difficult work situations.

In the meantime, think about filing bankruptcy in your boss's name. But just *think* about it.

### If Fantasy Doesn't Work, Sue 'Em

Bosses who use brutal management tactics aren't getting away with such torture any longer. Workers subjected to the abuse are suing, according to *Business Week*.

One man recently won \$3.5 million in damages for emotional abuse by his boss, who shunted the man from an executive position to that of a janitor (at the man's executive salary) in order to intimidate him into resigning. As a result of that and other instances of bullying by his boss, the man suffered a nervous breakdown.

Twenty-nine states now uphold emotional abuse as a type of personal-injury claim. Abusive bosses incur high rates of employee absenteeism and low rates of employee productivity, according to the Bureau of National Affairs.

To give you an idea of the change in climate for employee rights, 10 years ago a department-store clerk lost a lawsuit in which she said she was forced to undergo a strip search in front of a customer who accused her of stealing. Just six years later, an investment-firm manager won the lawsuit she brought against her company for forcing her to pack up and move her office while recovering from major surgery.

### Tips for Trips

You're delivering an out-of-town training seminar. You go back to your hotel room one evening and decide to relax by watching a movie on the closed-cable service. "Dances With Wolves"? "Home Alone 2"? How about "Humor, Risk, and Change," starring trainer C.W. Metcalf?

Along with Hollywood movies, Spectradyne now offers training videos on a pay-for-view basis in more than 180 hotels. The other available selection is "Professional Presence." You

can see a double feature for \$8. More selections are planned.

What's next? The "Trainernator"? "Fried Green Trainers"? "Debbie Does Training"? Okay, we'll stop.

### Green Piece(s)

Nearly 70 percent of office workers say their organizations have recycling programs, according to the *Steelcase Worldwide Office Environment Index 1991*.

One paper saver is the boss who threw away her memo pad and instead told stories to her staff. Storytelling can be an effective way to explain to people what needs to be done without saying, "Do this," reports the (New Orleans, Louisiana) *Times-Picayune*.

### Getting Global

Japanese managers tend to think uniforms for all workers are a necessity, according to *Look Japan*, a Singapore-based, English-language magazine on business and life in Japan.

A recent survey of Japanese managers shows that nearly 70 percent of those polled believe female employees in particular are either satisfied with their work uniforms or don't give the outfits much thought. *Au contraire*.

The same survey indicates that three-quarters of the women workers don't like their uniforms one bit.

Looks as if the managers were uniformly wrong.

### Getting Global: Part 2

*Maybe it's the uniforms....* The economy of Japan is in for a period of turmoil and decline during the next few years, according to the World Future Society, a Bethesda, Maryland, organization that forecasts social and technological trends.

The publication predicts that in the foreseeable future, Japan will not hold a prominent position in the world trade market.

But Japanese workers might be dressing sharper. (Our prediction.)

### Calling (on the Carpet) Cards

Afraid to tell anyone that you've been sexually harassed?

A sexual-harassment certificate might help. The card contains the statement, "I've been sexually harassed as indicated." It then lists nine descrip-

tions of sexual harassment and a blank space for "other."

The flip side of the card contains spaces for the date or dates of any incidents and for the names and addresses of the harassed, the harasser, and a witness. You are supposed to complete three forms and give one each to the harasser and a supervisor and keep one for yourself.

The certificates come in business-card size and check-size, and come with a vinyl case. Quantity discounts are available.

For more information, call Prevention Certificates Inc. at 800/321-9688.

### What the Hay?

They said work skills had to be flexible in the nineties, and they meant it. Just read this job listing in the January 10, 1993, *Washington Post*:

"Writing instructor needed for busy writing program. Must be experienced in teaching and willing to perform light barn duties."

### Fone Fun

Ever dial a telephone number and get someone's fax machine by mistake? Yee-ouch! The awful screech can be put to good use.

Here's a reader's suggestion from the "please don't fix" department in *Fortune*: Give out your home fax number to people who shouldn't have your home phone number. Telemarketers will get the message.

We also like comedian Jerry Seinfeld's way of handling salespeople who call you at home. Just tell the hucksters you're busy, ask for their home phone numbers, and say you'll call them back about dinner time.

*Next month, best practices for your working life.*

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