

Working Life

by Haidee Allerton

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TRUE TALES FROM THE WORKPLACE

Jette has left the building.... Editor Martha Jette lost her job of 10 years at an Ontario newspaper when she ran a story about a local singer, supporting his claim that he is the reincarnation of Jesse Garon Presley, Elvis's stillborn twin.

"Who can ignore a miracle?" asked Jette.

THE "WHAT WAS I THINKING?" DEPT.

"A fisherman asks a magic mermaid to make him five times smarter. So, she turns him into a woman."

Before you're tempted to write to us, you should know that the joke was told by Ruth Pierce, a senior official of the Social Security Administration during a diversity (really) conference in Miami. Many in the mostly female audience laughed. But an SSA employee, John Boyer, protested. He is head of the informal group GMEN (Government Men for Equality Now). Pierce acknowledged her gaffe and apologized.

The SSA has a predominantly female workforce and predominantly male management.

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH

Here's how to ace an interview, from *Glamour's* Job & Money column.

► **Build rapport.** Before you trot out your credentials, try to engage the interviewer in a few moments of small talk. It will help you relax, and you may learn something about the interviewer's likes and dislikes that will help you during the rest of the interview.

► **Discover the employer's needs.** You should already know something about the potential employer, but use the interview to learn more specifics. Bring a notepad with open-ended questions to ask.



► **Become the solution.** Go in with the attitude that you're not there to find work but to identify problems and solve them.

► **Use "sight sellers."** Don't just describe your accomplishments; show them. Bring along awards, photos of products you've developed, or other tangible evidence of your abilities.

► **Close the deal.** If you think the interview went well but the employer is dragging its feet, try the urgency close. Call the HR department and say that you're interested in the job but that you're interviewing with another firm that appears ready to make an offer.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

According to a report in the *Wall Street Journal*, men who have had a certain part of their anatomy enlarged surgically experience more confidence in business.

Hey, it was in the *Wall Street Journal*.

A FIRST

Neal Lattimore, Hillary Clinton's press secretary, is the first male to serve in that capacity to a first lady.

WINGING IT

The KaosPilots is not your ordinary business school. The Danish institution—established in 1991 and backed by such companies as Apple, LEGO, and SAS—offers a three-year management program designed to teach participants the appropriate skills for succeeding in a rapidly changing, unpredictable business environment. The reception desk is an old airplane wing jutting from a wall.

Founder Uffe Elbaek says that old business schools haven't made the transition to a knowledge economy. "We want to prepare young people to navigate in chaotic systems, to see change as opportunity."

The program's focus is learning by doing. Students work with external clients. They also develop their own software and test the latest CD-ROMs in classrooms equipped with Mac-based workstations. About a third of the training aims to help each participant develop his or her "inner pilot," using assertiveness training, stress prevention, group dynamics, and physical training.

A recent graduate is now an organizer of Copenhagen '96, a \$180-million, year-long festival with more than 700 events.

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SPEAKING OF COPENHAGEN

One-third of all commuters in the Danish capital get to work by bicycle. In fact, the government plans to decree that for four of every 100 miles now traveled by automobile, transportation must be by bicycle or foot.

In Denmark, there are 5.2 million people and 4.2 million bicycles.

MAYBE IT EVEN HELPS

A study of 21 business managers and professionals conducted by Penn State College of Medicine found that having a hangover doesn't impair managerial decision-making abilities.

"The subjects felt bad, but their decision-making performance wasn't affected," says one of the researchers.

THE RAIN IN REDMOND FALLS MAINLY ON MICROSOFT

This year, Microsoft had 900 job openings. It received 1 million resumes.

DON'T TRY THIS AT MICROSOFT

Here are some actual job-interview bloopers from OfficeTeam, a staffing service based in Menlo Park, California.

- ▶ A recent graduate showed up at an interview wearing a new suit with all of the tags still hanging from a sleeve.
- ▶ Another recent grad remarked what a coincidence it was that two other firms she'd interviewed with also had the word ink in their names.
- ▶ An applicant brought along his pet lizard to show his "creativity."
- ▶ A candidate asked his mother to call during the interview to request that he be given an entry-level position of vice president of operations.
- ▶ At an interview over dinner, the

HOT TITLES, COOL QUOTES

- ▶ **Director, department of the future (Chiat/Day).** "The best training for predicting the future is reading supermarket novels."
- ▶ **Messaging champion (Sequent Computer Systems).** "My breakfast of champions is fat-free yogurt, juice, and tea. Hate handwritten memos."

applicant chewed her fortune cookie, paper included, and then pulled the fortune out of her mouth and read it aloud.

- ▶ A candidate took a call on her cellular phone during an interview. She did say, "Excuse me."
- ▶ A job seeker arrived late, explaining that his dog refused to eat anything that he cooked for the pup.
- ▶ An applicant said she'd be ideal for the job because it provided exactly the kind of training she needed for starting her own company.

BATS LEFT, MANAGES RIGHT

Trade in your business cards for... well, trading cards.

Big League Cards of Washington, D.C.—founded by former big-league baseball player Jim Bouton—will print 50 cards for \$39. You supply the text and photo. The cards look just like sports trading cards, with the person's picture and business-related stats to the right.

EMPLOYEE OF THE CENTURY

Rosie Gries, 100, of North Dakota still hits the road about six times a month to take cosmetic orders from her 25 regular customers. Gries is the oldest living Avon salesperson (of which there are 2 million worldwide).

"I think I'd die if I stopped selling," says Gries. Gries started with Avon in 1938 at age 42.

MAKE WORK, NOT LOVE

A man was awarded \$250,000 by the Peace Corps to settle a sexual harassment suit, possibly the largest payment ever by the U.S. government. The man accused his female boss of making sexual advances toward him.

AS IF THE FOOD WEREN'T BAD ENOUGH

Business travelers beware: ECS (economy class syndrome), a circulatory condition, can lead to potentially fatal blood clots.

Stanley R. Mohler, medical director of aerospace medicine at Wright State University School of Medicine, says that cramped coach seating on airplanes restricts circulation in the legs, allowing clots to form. Usually, the clots dissolve after you deplane. But they can break loose and travel to the lungs or brain, causing an embolism.

To protect yourself from ECS, stretch every 45 minutes while flying, and massage your legs and feet while seated. You can also take an aspirin (with your doctor's permission) before a flight to help thin the blood. And women shouldn't wear knee-high stockings; they crimp circulation even more.

Sources include Washington City Paper, Fast Company, Self, People, and the Washington Post.