



advantage



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NEW LAW (AWNAA)

WASHINGTON, DC – Congress is considering sweeping legislation that will provide new benefits for many Americans. The Americans with No Abilities Act (AWNAA) is being hailed as a major legislative goal by advocates of the millions of Americans who lack any real skills, education, or ambition.

“Roughly 50% of Americans do not possess the competence and drive necessary to carve out a meaningful role for themselves in society,” said California Senator Barbara Boxer. “We can no longer stand by and allow People of Inability to be ridiculed and passed over. With this legislation, employers will no longer be able to grant special favors to a small group of workers, simply because they have some idea of what they are doing.”

In a Capitol Hill press conference, House Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid pointed to the success of the U.S. Postal Service and the Civil Service, which have long-standing policies of providing opportunity without regard to performance. Approximately 74% of postal employees lack any job skills, making this agency the single largest U.S. employer of Persons of Inability. And the best part...they're unionized, so it's nearly impossible to fire them!

Private-sector industries with good records of nondiscrimination against the inept include financial advisers (73%), retail sales (72%), the automotive industry (70%), the airline industry (68%), and home improvement “warehouse” stores (65%). At the state government level, the Department of Motor Vehicles also has a great record of hiring Persons of Inability (63%).

Under the Americans with No Abilities Act, more than 25 million “middleman” positions will be created, with important-sounding titles but little real responsibility, thus providing an illusory sense of purpose and performance. Mandatory non-performance-based raises and promotions will be given so as to guarantee upward mobility for even the most unremarkable employees.

The legislation provides substantial tax breaks to corporations that promote a significant number of Persons of Inability into middle-management positions, and gives a tax credit to small and medium-sized businesses that agree to hire one clueless worker for every two talented hires.

Finally, the AWNAA Act contains tough new measures to make it more difficult to discriminate against the Non-abled, banning, for example, discriminatory interview questions such as, “Do you have any skills or experience that relate to this job?”

“As a Non-abled person, I can't be expected to keep up with people who have something going for them,” said Mary Lou Gertz, who lost her position as a lug-nut twister at the GM plant in Flint, Michigan, due to her lack of discernible job skills. “This new law should really help people like me.” With the passage of this bill, Gertz and millions of other untalented citizens will finally see a light at the end of the tunnel.

Said Senator Ted Kennedy: “As a Senator with No Abilities, I believe the same privileges that elected officials enjoy ought to be extended to every American with no abilities. It is our duty as lawmakers to provide each and every American citizen, regardless of his or her inadequacy, with some sort of space to take up in this great nation.”

Our acknowledgement to whoever first created the above satirical piece. It came to us anonymously.

ALONG DAY

Here are ten hints that it's going to be a long day in HR:

1. “See? Nothing in the employee handbook about rattlesnakes.”
2. “Will this interview take long? My arraignment is at ten.”
3. “So what? I bit the guy. It's not like I have rabies.”
4. “If you had my manager, you'd drink on the job, too.”

5. "You're kidding. That's harassment?"
6. "There's five bucks in it for you if that write-up disappears."
7. "Is this drug test, like...hard?"
8. "Job history? My school didn't offer that class."
9. "Of course you can't see him. He's invisible."
10. "I'd like to introduce myself with a little song."

ODD JOB

Job Title: Prestidigitator
National Average Salary: \$15.62 per hour (June 2005 data)

Bet you can't say that five times fast!

Classified under the job category of "Artists, Performers, and Related Workers," a Prestidigitator performs magic or conjuring tricks with the hands to amuse an audience. (Hence, the derivation of the title of the recent movie "The Prestige," which centered on the rivalry between two magicians.)

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Dictionary.com

COMMENTS MADE IN THE YEAR 1957

"I'll tell you one thing, if things keep going the way they are, it's going to be impossible to buy a week's groceries for \$20.00."

"Have you seen the new cars coming out next year? It won't be long when \$5,000 will only buy a used one."

"If cigarettes keep going up in price, I'm going to quit. A quarter a pack is ridiculous."

"Did you hear the post office is thinking about charging a dime just to mail a letter?"

"If they raise the minimum wage to \$1.00, nobody will be able to hire outside help at the store."

"When I first started driving, who would have thought gas would someday cost 29 cents a gallon. Guess we'd be better off leaving the car in the garage."

"I'm afraid to send my kids to the movies any more. Ever since they let Clark Gable get by with saying 'damn' in "Gone With The Wind," it seems every new movie has either 'hell' or 'damn' in it."

I read the other day where some scientist thinks it's possible to put a man on the moon by the end of the century. They even have some fellows they call astronauts preparing for it down in Texas."

"Did you see where some baseball player just signed a contract for \$75,000 a year just to play ball? It wouldn't surprise me if someday they will be making more than the President."

"I never thought I'd see the day all our kitchen appliances would be electric. They are even making electric typewriters now."

"It's too bad things are so tough nowadays. I see where a few married women are having to work to make ends meet."

"It won't be long before young couples are going to have to hire someone to watch their kids so they can both work."

"Thank goodness I won't live to see the day when the government takes half our income in taxes. I sometimes wonder if we are electing the best people to Congress."

"I guess taking a vacation is out of the question nowadays. It costs nearly \$15 a night to stay in a hotel."

Editor: Deborah Jeffries, PHR, CPC. Advantage is published monthly and is designed to provide information on regulations, HR practices and management ideas and concerns. The intended audience is managers, supervisors, business owners, human resource and employee relations professionals. If you have questions about the content, an opinion about the information, questions about your subscription, or if you need additional Advantage binders, please give us a call at (503) 885-9815 or e-mail djeffries@hranswers.com.



WHEN YOU LEAVE THE ROOM

According to an alarming new study published mid-March in the American Journal of Sociology, the vast majority of Americans are critically discussed after leaving a room occupied by two or more additional people.

The groundbreaking research contradicts decades of previous inquiries into the area, including dozens of informal surveys in which respondents adamantly denied ever having talked behind others' backs.

"Our findings will come as a great shock to the millions of Americans who have assumed people do not speak derisively about them as soon as they are out of earshot," said Dr. Edward Phillips, a professor of sociology at Utah State University and lead author of the study. "This phenomenon affects nearly everyone. If you have ever feared that people whom you considered to be good friends were mercilessly mocking and insulting you shortly after you left their presence, your fears are almost certainly 100% correct."

"It seems that the only people immune to this are the 7% of the population simply too dull and boring to even make fun of," Phillips added.

Phillips' team used an innovative double-blind observation model to study this behavior, which was previously thought to exist only in theory. Researchers put together groups of volunteers with varying familiarity and observed with a closed-circuit camera their behavior when one member of the group—often a perfectly normal person who could hardly be considered a "dipwad" or "dumb dumb" in open conversation—was called away by a researcher.

"If those remaining in the room knew the exiting participant, they quickly launched sophisticated and incisive attacks on that person's competence, intelligence, and character. In 63% of the trials, one or more volunteers performed exaggerated—though often accurate and extremely amusing—impressions of the person who had left," Phillips said. "Amazingly, even if the volunteers knew nothing about the exiting subject, they could still engage in lengthy derision of that person's weight, hairstyle, clothing choices, breath, body odor, speech patterns, and the way they walked, not to mention general discussion based on the perception that the participant who had left the room was most likely a world-class jerk."

Researchers also observed several forms of nonverbal communication that often preceded any group-wide discussion of the subject leaving. According to the data, 89% of volunteers appeared to listen attentively to the subject's receding footsteps, 47% raised their eyebrows and smirked as the subject left, and 23% mouthed the words "what the heck" to others in the room as the door was closing, which usually triggered bouts of stifled giggling.

"Perhaps most exciting was the 9% of volunteers who silently "gave the finger" to the subject as they left the room," Phillips said. "We predicted that this could occur, but it had never actually been observed in a controlled environment."

A number of experts in the fields of sociology and biology have suggested there is an evolutionary component to the uncontrollable urge to talk about an individual after he has left the immediate vicinity. Phillips said the lower-order cognitive functions responsible for knee-jerk gossiping may have played an ancient role in survival by encouraging those in proximity to band together.

"This phenomenon appears to be primal and almost entirely reflexive in most cases," Phillips said after pausing cautiously for a few seconds. "Most people do not appear to be aware that they're doing it at all."

HUMOR OR REALITY? MEN AND WOMEN IN CONVERSATION

Women's Revenge. "Cash, check, or charge?" I asked, after folding items the woman wished to purchase. As she fumbled for her wallet, I noticed a remote control for a television set in her purse.

"So, do you always carry your TV remote?" I asked.

"No," she replied, "but my husband refused to come shopping with me, and I figured this was the most evil thing I could do to him legally."

Wife vs. Husband. A couple drove down a country road for several miles, not saying a word. An earlier discussion had led to an argument and neither of them wanted to concede their position.

As they passed a barnyard of mules, goats, and pigs, the husband asked sarcastically, "Relatives of yours?"

"Yep," the wife replied, "in-laws."

Just Words. A husband read an article to his wife about how many words women use a day.... 30,000 to a man's 15,000.

The wife replied, "The reason has to be because we have to repeat everything to men."

The husband then turned to his wife and asked, "What?"

Law of Attraction. A man said to his wife one day, "I don't know how you can be so stupid and so beautiful all at the same time.

The wife responded, "Allow me to explain. God made me beautiful so you would be attracted to me; God made me stupid so I would be attracted to you!"

THE MOST OVERPAID JOBS

Mutual fund managers are the most overpaid workers in the United States, according to a recent column on CareerJournal.com.

In his article, "The 10 Most Overpaid U.S. Jobs And the Little Effort They Require," Chris Pummer of MarketWatch notes that "'fair compensation' is a relative term, yet HR consultants and executive headhunters agree some jobs command excessive pay that can't be explained by labor supply-and-demand imbalances."

Stock-fund managers, Pummer says, "can easily earn \$500,000 to \$1 million a year including bonuses—even though only 3 in 10 beat the market in the last 10 years."

Second on the list are "Washed-up pro athletes in long-term contracts." While athletes at the top of their game deserve to be rewarded, Pummer says, it's those athletes who "sign whopping, long-term contracts after a few strong years, and then find their talents vanish, who reap unconscionable sums of money." Pummer lays much of the blame on players' unions for "refusing to negotiate contracts based on performance—and driving up the cost of tickets to levels unaffordable for a family of four."

Absent from Pummer's list are lawyers and actors, as he explains, since many individuals in these occupations get paid little in comparison with more successful counterparts. For example, local prosecutors and public defenders don't make nearly as much as corporate attorneys, and there are several struggling actors for every highly paid movie star.

The complete list of Pummer's "10 Most Overpaid U.S. Jobs" are as follows, with samplings of Pummer's comments on each of the remaining eight jobs.

- 1) Mutual fund managers
- 2) Washed-up pro athletes in long-term contracts
- 3) CEOs of poorly performing companies. "These long-time losers draw multimillion-dollar severance packages as a reward for their failed stewardship."
- 4) Orthodontists. "This isn't brain surgery: Orthodontists simply manipulate teeth in a growing child's mouth — and often leave adjustment work to assistants whose handiwork they merely sign off on."
- 5) Motivational speakers and ex-politicians on the lecture circuit. "Former President Reagan raised the bar back in 1989 when he took \$2 million from Japanese business groups for making two speeches."
- 6) Real estate agents selling high-end homes. "While most agents hustle tail to earn \$60,000 a year, those in affluent areas can pull down \$200,000+ for half the effort, courtesy of the fatter commissions on pricier listings."
- 7) Skycaps at major airports. "Many of the uniformed baggage handlers who check in luggage at curbside at the busiest metro airports pull in \$70,000 to \$100,000 a year—most of it in cash."
- 8) West Coast longshoremen. "Unlike their East Coast union brethren who compete with non-union ports in the South and Gulf of Mexico, the West Coast stevedores have an ironfisted lock on Pacific ports. Given their rare monopoly, they can disrupt U.S. commerce...and command exorbitant wages."
- 9) Major airline pilots. "The pilot's unions are the most powerful in the industry...In what amounts to a per-passenger commission, the larger the plane, the more they earn—even though it takes little more skill to pilot a jumbo jet." And let's not even talk about the ability to be on "Auto-Pilot."
- 10) Wedding photographers. "Photographers earn a national average of \$1,900 for a wedding, though many charge \$2,500 to \$5,000 for a one-day shoot, client meeting and processing time that runs up to 20 hours or more, and the cost of materials. The overpaid ones are the many who admit they only do weddings for the income, while quietly complaining about the hassle of dealing with hysterical brides and drunken reception guests."

Source: CareerJournal.com

U.S. BREATH REACHES ALL-TIME WORST

Responding to a foul stench emanating from the mouths of Americans nationwide, officials from the U.S. Department of Breath and Human Services issued an emergency announcement Tuesday warning that American breath quality has been elevated to “stank mouth,” the poorest single rating in the nation’s 231-year history.

In a solemn announcement, DBHS Secretary Michael Leavitt informed the nation that his organization initially considered ignoring the findings, believing that the situation would resolve itself after the next routine tooth-brushing.

“After several days with no improvement in odor, it became painfully clear that this agency simply had to say something,” Leavitt said. Leavitt maintained that DBHS is doing all it can and will continue to observe the worsening crisis from at least three feet away.

Added Leavitt, “I am compelled to ask the American people: What did you eat?”

Attempting to handle the awkward national emergency in the most delicate manner, health officials at first theorized that everyone in the country had been out late the night before and did not have a chance to freshen up in the morning. But after more than 400,000 uncomfortable conversations, officials deemed it necessary to notify the American public in order to prevent the loss of more social lives.

“We can no longer afford to turn our heads away and ignore this problem,” Leavitt said.

Leavitt urged all Americans to accept a breath mint or a stick of gum, or, if such items are not available, a carbonated drink, which he claimed was not clinically proven to be an effective remedy, although there is some evidence that the carbon dioxide molecules may in effect “burn away” stink germs temporarily.

Despite the urgency and magnitude of DBHS’s announcement, some critics maintain that the response has been shortsighted and only aimed at making the problem temporarily smell like mint. Some even claim the putrid smell might already be irreversible.

“This Band-Aid approach will work, but only for a few hours at most,” said Walter Romano, D.D.S., a Cleveland-area dentist who has begun handing out free toothbrushes and stickers depicting sound oral hygiene to residents in his area. “This country hasn’t flossed in years. In fact, I believe some people have even made the ill-advised decision to not gargle with mouthwash at all.”

Others claim the problem is even worse than health officials are letting on.

“This is a full-blown stenchademic,” said Dr. Guy Hammond, a leading researcher of smelliness, who added that the catastrophe will only worsen with dinner approaching. “Before long, the U.S. will surpass even Britain as the nation with the worst breath in the Western world.”

According to an independent study conducted by Hammond, the percentage of Americans whose breath could scare the stink off a skunk increased dramatically over the past year, from 17% to 29%, while the number of citizens whose breath could peel paint off the wall went up from 23% to 45%. The remainder of Americans, the study found, had breath so bad it could sink a battleship.

While no direct cause has been determined for the sudden spike in foul-mouth, officials believe it may be connected to a combination of garlic, onion, meat, cheese, tobacco, coffee, alcohol, plaque, and laziness.

With initial tests showing the rancid odor to be virtually impervious to multiple applications of Big Red, Leavitt said his agency is urging citizens to avoid inhaling through their noses, and cover their mouths when they talk.

“Sadly, millions of Americans were raised to believe they could cup their hand and put it over their face to smell their breath,” Leavitt told reporters. “But our top scientists and health experts informed me personally about 20 minutes ago that this method does not work.”

DBHS has embarked on a widespread campaign to eliminate the deadly odors found in almost every mouth in the country. Refreshing relief has been slow to come, however: Efforts to deliver 30,000 gallons of ACT rinse to the hardest-hit regions of the country have stalled because so many National Guardsmen are already deployed in Iraq and the rest refused to go anywhere near the most troubled cities. In addition, attempts by FEMA workers to distribute Tic Tacs to citizens in Alabama and Texas also failed when hundreds were injured attempting to open the plastic boxes’ flip-action lids.

On Wednesday, officials at the Center for Gum Disease Control and Prevention announced plans to quarantine those with the severest halitosis, though they warned that concentrating so much rotting breath in one place could make the entire nation puke simultaneously.

CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN PILOTS AND CONTROL TOWERS

Tower: "Delta 351, you have traffic at 10 o'clock, 6 miles!"

Delta 351: "Give us another hint! We have digital watches!"

Tower: "TWA 2341, for noise abatement turn right 45 Degrees."

TWA 2341: "Center, we are at 35,000 feet. How much noise can we make up here?"

Tower: "Sir, have you ever heard the noise a 747 makes when it hits a 727?"

A student became lost during a solo cross-country flight. While attempting to locate the aircraft on radar, ATC asked, "What was your last known position?"

Student: "When I was number one for takeoff."

A DC-10 had come in a little hot and thus had an exceedingly long roll out after touching down.

San Jose Tower noted: "American 751, make a hard right turn at the end of the runway, if you are able. If you are not able, take the Guadeloupe exit off Highway 101, make a right at the lights, and return to the airport."

A Pan Am 727 flight, waiting for start clearance in Munich, overheard the following:

Lufthansa (in German): "Ground, what is our start clearance time?"

Ground (in English): "If you want an answer you must speak in English."

Lufthansa (in English): "I am a German, flying a German airplane, in Germany. Why must I speak English?"

Unknown voice from another plane (in a beautiful British accent): "Because you lost the bloody war!"

Eastern 702: "Tower, Eastern 702 switching to Departure. By the way, after we lifted off we saw some kind of dead animal on the far end of the runway."

Tower: "Continental 635, cleared for takeoff behind Eastern 702, contact Departure on frequency 124.7. Did you copy that report from Eastern 702?"

BR Continental 635: "Continental 635, cleared for takeoff, roger; and yes, we copied Eastern... we've already notified our caterers."

One day the pilot of a Cherokee 180 was told by the tower to hold short of the active runway while a DC-8 landed. The DC-8 landed, rolled out, turned around, and taxied back past the Cherokee. Some quick-witted comedian in the DC-8 crew got on the radio and said, "What a cute little plane. Did you make it all by yourself?"

The Cherokee pilot, not about to let the insult go by, came back with a real zinger: "I made it out of DC-8 parts. Another landing like yours and I'll have enough parts for another one."

The German air controllers at Frankfurt Airport are renowned as a short-tempered lot. They not only expect one to know one's gate parking location, but how to get there without any assistance from them. So it was with some amusement that we (a Pan Am 747) listened to the following exchange between Frankfurt ground control and a British Airways 747, call sign Speedbird 206.

Speedbird 206: "Frankfurt, Speedbird 206! Clear of active runway."

Ground: "Speedbird 206. Taxi to gate Alpha One-Seven."

The BA 747 pulled onto the main taxiway and slowed to a stop.

Ground: "Speedbird, do you not know where you are going?"

Speedbird 206: "Stand by, Ground, I'm looking up our gate location now."

Ground (with quite arrogant impatience): "Speedbird 206, have you not been to Frankfurt before?"

Speedbird 206 (coolly): "Yes, twice in 1944, but it was dark, — and I didn't land."

While taxiing at London 's Gatwick Airport , the crew of a US Air flight departing for Ft. Lauderdale made a wrong turn and came nose to nose with a United 727. An irate female ground controller lashed out at the US Air crew, screaming: "US Air 2771, where the hell are you going? I told you to turn right onto Charlie taxiway! You turned right on Delta! Stop right there. I know it's difficult for you to tell the difference between C and D, but get it right!"

Continuing her rage to the embarrassed crew, she was now shouting hysterically: "God! Now you've screwed everything up! It'll take forever to sort this out! You stay right there and don't move till I tell you to! You can expect progressive taxi instructions in about half an hour, and I want you to go exactly where I tell you, when I tell you, and how I tell you! You got that, US Air 2771?"

"Yes, ma'am," the humbled crew responded. Naturally, the ground control communications frequency fell terribly silent after the verbal bashing of US Air 2771. Nobody wanted to chance engaging the irate ground controller in her current state of mind. Tension in every cockpit out around Gatwick was definitely running high. Just then an unknown pilot broke the silence and keyed his microphone, asking:

"Wasn't I married to you once?"

WIT OR WISDOM – YOU DECIDE

Most of us know someone who is currently serving in the military. We worry about them, and are concerned for their safety. But even in the face of all that they encounter, there is humor, wit, and maybe even wisdom. If you don't believe us, read the following and then you decide...

If the enemy is in range, so are you.

- *Infantry Journal*

It is generally inadvisable to eject over the area you just bombed.

- *U.S. Air Force Manual*

Cluster bombing from B-52s is very, very accurate. The bombs are guaranteed always to hit the ground.

- *USAF Ammo Troop*

Whoever said the pen is mightier than the sword obviously never encountered automatic weapons.

- *General MacArthur*

Try to look unimportant; they may be low on ammo.

- *Infantry Journal*

You, you, and you - Panic. The rest of you come with me.

- *U.S. Marine Gunnery Sgt.*

Five second fuses only last three seconds.

- *Infantry Journal*

Don't ever be the first, don't ever be the last, and don't ever volunteer to do anything.

- *U.S. Navy Swabbie*

Bravery is being the only one who knows you're afraid.

- *David Hackworth*

If your attack is going too well, you're walking into an ambush.

- *Infantry Journal*

No combat-ready unit has ever passed inspection.

- *Joe Gay*

Any ship can be a minesweeper. Once.

- *Unknown*

Never tell the Platoon Sergeant you have nothing to do.

- *Unknown Marine Recruit*

Don't draw fire; it irritates the people around you.

- *Unknown*

If you see a bomb technician running, follow him.

- *USAF Ammo Troop*

You've never been lost until you've been lost at Mach 3.

- *Paul F. Crickmore (test pilot)*

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The Piper Cub is the safest airplane in the world; it can just barely kill you.

- Max Stanley (Northrop test pilot)

A pilot who doesn't have any fear probably isn't flying his plane to its maximum.

- Jon McBride, astronaut

If you're faced with a forced landing, fly the thing as far into the crash as possible.

- Bob Hoover (renowned aerobatic and test pilot)

A slipping gear could let your M203 grenade launcher fire when you least expect it. That would make you quite unpopular in what's left of your unit.

- Army's magazine of Preventive Maintenance

As the test pilot climbs out of the experimental aircraft, having torn off the wings and tail in the crash landing, the crash truck arrives, the rescuer sees a bloodied pilot and asks, 'What happened?' The pilot's reply, 'I don't know, I just got here myself!'

- Ray Crandell (Lockheed test pilot)

Unattributed Comments:

The only time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire.

Weather forecasts are horoscopes with numbers.

Mankind has a perfect record in aviation; we never left one up there!

Flashlights are tubular metal containers kept in a flight bag to store dead batteries.

Never fly in the same cockpit with someone braver than you.

If something hasn't broken on your helicopter, it's about to.

Basic Flying Rules: "Try to stay in the middle of the air. Do not go near the edges of it. The edges of the air can be recognized by the appearance of ground, buildings, sea, trees, and interstellar space. It is much more difficult to fly there."

BRICKLAYER ACCIDENT REPORT

The following is reprinted from a newsletter of the American Insurance Journal. This is a true story. Had this guy died, he'd have received a Darwin Award for sure.

Dear Sir:

I am writing in response to your request for additional information in Block 3 of the accident report form. I put "poor planning" as the cause of my accident. You asked for a fuller explanation and I trust the following details will be sufficient.

I was alone on the roof of a new six-story building. When I completed my work, I found that I had some bricks left over that were later found to weigh slightly more than 500 lbs. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel by using a pulley, which was attached to the side of the building on the sixth floor.

Securing the rope at ground level, I went up to the roof, swung the barrel out, and loaded the bricks into it. Then I went down and untied the rope, holding it tightly to ensure a slow descent of the bricks.

You will note, in Block 11 of the accident report form, that I weigh 135 lb. Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rapid rate up the side of the building.

In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel, which was now proceeding downward at an equally impressive speed. This explains the fractured skull, minor abrasions, and the broken collarbone, as listed in section 3 of the accident report form.

Slowed down slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers on my right hand were two knuckles deep into the pulley. Fortunately by this time I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold tightly to the rope, in spite of beginning to experience a great deal of pain.



At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Now devoid of the weight of the bricks, that barrel weighed approximately 50 lb.

I refer you again to my weight. As you can imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the building. In the vicinity of the third floor, I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for the two fractured ankles, broken tooth, and several lacerations of my legs and lower body.

Here my luck began to change slightly. The encounter with the barrel seemed to slow me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell into the pile of bricks and, fortunately, only three vertebrae were cracked.

I am sorry to report, however, that as I lay there on the pile of bricks, in pain, unable to move, I again lost my composure and presence of mind and let go of the rope. I then lay there watching the empty barrel beginning its journey back down onto me. This explains the two broken legs.

I hope this answers your questions.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

Open up your Daytimers, computer calendars, Palm Pilots, and of course those Blackberries. The following is a look at upcoming events, special days and other diverse and fun activities you will want to be aware of and get scheduled. To register for our workshops, please call any of our offices, send an e-mail to Erika Wilson at EWilson@hranswers.com, or simply register online at www.hranswers.com and click on the "Workshop Registration" tab at the top of the homepage.

APRIL 2008

Celebrate Diversity, National Humor, National Poetry, and Stop Animal Cruelty Month

- April 2, 9, 16, HRA Series (Tualatin)
23, & 30 Beginning Supervision Series
8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**
- April 10 National Siblings Day
- April 12 National Licorice Day
- April 16 National Wear Your PJ's to Work Day
- April 18 HRA Workshop (Tualatin)
No More Negativity (Repeat Performance)
8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**
- April 22 Earth Day

MAY 2008

To help you plan ahead, here's a look at what we have planned so far for May.

- May 14 HRA Workshop (Tualatin)
Getting Organized!
8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.**
- May 21 HRA Workshop (Tualatin)
Harassment Awareness for Supervisors
8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**

ON MY SOAPBOX

As I was thinking about this April issue, I knew that I was supposed to come up with something humorous, something about laughter, something light-hearted, and something in keeping with our annual April Fools' Day newsletter. Do you have any idea how hard it is to be funny on command? I can tell you – it's hard!

But it matters. I have people stop and ask about this issue. "How is it coming?" "Are you going to make us laugh again this year?" "Can't wait to see what you all have to share with us for this April." Comments like that tell you that this issue is read and enjoyed. And that becomes a responsibility – do not disappoint.

Fortunately Deborah does most of the work. She collects items throughout the year, tests them on people to learn about the humor quotient, adds new items, and drops others. She edits, modifies, alters, and finalizes the material. And then she comes to me and says, "Do you have Soapbox finished yet?" Invariably, my answer is "Not quite, but I'm working on it." And then I finally have to decide – what am I going to write about this year?

As I was pondering what to write about, I realized that I have lots of books on humor, laughter, positive quotations, cartoons, etc. They are at the office, in my bedroom, in my office at home. I have been surrounding myself with humor most of my life. Part of that is a reflection of my parents who loved to laugh and enjoy the hilarity of living. They knew the power of laughter. It was always present in our dinner conversations around the table, in the stories they shared with my brother and me, and in their recitation to others of the challenges they faced raising the two of us. It wasn't so much that they told jokes - in fact, I don't think they did. It was just that they saw the comedy that inserted itself into every day. They taught me to laugh, to giggle (my brother used to say that I had the "bubbles"), to see the wit or cleverness in people's remarks. They taught me to love puns and innuendos, to relish the quick retort, and to notice the irony that exists in many situations.

That childhood experience has led me to collect books, use cartoons in my presentations, tell stories that use humor to illustrate a point, and make the choice to see the absurdity that is sprinkled into each of our lives. With the Internet and the myriad of TV offerings, one doesn't have to go far to get a laugh. Dilbert.com, YouTube, Onion (careful, this one is a bit raunchy), Andertoons, The Comedy Channel with Stephen Colbert and Jon Stewart, and a host of other programs and websites can provide you with hours of laughter (assuming you can't find things in your own life to laugh at).

We all need laughter in our lives. I won't take up space here telling all the reasons that laughter is good for us, how the endorphins that laughter releases are a natural high, that laughter has been described as our insides going jogging. By now, hopefully, you have heard them all several times. I will just remind you that an entire book (Norman Cousins – *Anatomy of an Illness*) was written about laughing oneself to health after having been told that he had only months to live. And if laughter can do that, well, I'm signing up for my daily dose.



- Judy Clark, President



"Whatever the Question"

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