



Bosses: There's a reason why they call it work

[by G. Patrick Kelley]

Got a boss you'd trade for ingrown toenails?

Do you go home at the end of the day and stick pins in your What's-his-name doll?

Do you have a job that leaves you without an appetite for supper?

You're not alone. Given the chance, many of the workers quoted in this story jumped at the chance to talk about some the real stink-ers under some nasty conditions.

KITTY'S TOP CAT WAS A MEAN DOG

Kitty Deames Burgett's worst boss was the principal of a high school where she taught on Cleveland's west side. The bad boss had big shoes to fill because his predecessor was "a heck-of-a nice guy" who dropped dead one day while mowing his lawn.

But the replacement was "a flat-out bully" who wasn't above harassment or blackmail to get his way, Burgett said. He instituted rules that showed he didn't trust or respect his staff any more than the most unruly student. Mr. Wrong never had to fire anyone, but a teacher or two would quit every year after he targeted them, making their lives miserable, she said.

He got his comeuppance. Mr. Mean was caught changing his daughter's grades so she would be valedictorian. The school board permitted him to resign shortly before he was indicted for fraud and malfeasance.

His memory lived on. More than a decade later, Burgett was talking with an Ohio school administrator and mentioned working for the man. "You worked for him! Oh, you poor thing!" was the response.

NO MONKEYING AROUND

Bobbi Ries got her first job as a dental as-

sistant in 1975. "My boss, a dentist, told me a monkey could do my job ... and he was serious," she said. "Needless to say, I didn't work for him long."

UNSCRUPULOUS

Kris Sexton worked for a now-defunct Midwest medical equipment supply company that took advantage of insurance companies and doctors. "I was miserable because I knew they had no scruples and I was a part of it," she said. That job lasted three months.

Another job was working for an insurance agent who kept coming up with "fees" for customers "just to put a couple more bucks in his pocket," she said.

"Then, he would 'borrow' from the cash payments, promising to pay it back either with cash or a check, but he never would." The boss would come in ranting and raving at employees when the bank account would be overdrawn because of the loans.

"I don't even list these two jobs on my resume," Sexton said. "I'd rather explain the lapse in time."

A REAL DOWNER JOB

Larry Werstler sold plots for a cemetery many years ago. "It was going door-to-door in all kinds of weather," he said. "How many people really want to talk about death, their final expenses, or the planning of their final days on Planet Earth."

Werstler said he excelled in sales throughout his career, and there was nothing wrong with the company or the product, but "this was a bummer. What a challenge."

SMELLY JOB, STINKY BOSS

Ray Roney had a bad job with a bad boss, too.

It was at a company that sold pet supplies to pet stores. "The owner was a cheapskate and treated everyone badly no matter how hard you worked," Roney said.

Roney's week began with picking up 3,200 pounds of fish at the airport and included truck trips to Arkansas and Texas. But that wasn't the whole week. On Saturdays, "I went in and cleaned out the dead fish from the fish tanks and fed the rats, mice and birds," he said. That also had to be done on all the holidays including Christmas.

Roney worked 50 to 60 hours a week, and when he asked for a raise, the owner told him, "All that overtime is like having a raise."

A RECIPE FOR INDIGESTION

Maria Muhleman's worst job was as a waitress when she was still in high school in 1986.

"It was hot at the time, and the air conditioning did not work," she said. "The guys in the kitchen were literally dripping with sweat ... really gross considering they worked over open steaming pots of sauce and the like."



Roaches, and moldy bread being toasted and served also grossed her out, and she quit the job without notice and told her parents she was fired so they wouldn't ask too many questions.

It didn't sour her on restaurant work, though. She went across the street to another eatery and got a job.

ON-THE-JOB LESSON

Paul Carbenia worked at bowling alley in the American Legion Post in Canton, Ohio, in 1965. "I worked two or maybe three days, only getting 10 cents a line," he said. Driving his father's car, he didn't make enough to pay for the gas.

"We had to spot the bowling pins by hand, then roll back the ball, then jump back up to get out of the way."

One New Years Eve, "They had set up railings on the alleys for blind people to bowl. Carbenia said he thought that was a really nice gesture, "until you would get down to re-spot the pins and they would throw another ball. Those pins would hurt when they hit you," he said.

"I learned real fast not to roll back their ball until I finished setting up the bowling pins."

SWEATING TO THE OLDIES

Sharon Barrett had her worst job early, too. When she was 16, Barrett stayed with her grandparents in Massachusetts. Her aunt got her a job in the dress factory she was managing.

"The pay was good but no one there spoke English," Barrett said. The shop was dominated by Portuguese-Americans, and her aunt was bilingual. "But she was way too busy to hang out with me."

So for 40 hours a week one summer as a 16-

year-old, "I worked without talking to anyone. My only saving grace was the radio piped in," she said. "I would sing all day to the pop, Motown and country music that would continuously chorus through the building. I can only imagine what the people there thought of the blond-haired, blue-eyed young girl who ambitiously attempted every note that came over the factory speakers.

BOSS NUMBERS

- 26 Percent of employees would like to have their manager's job.

- 71 Percent would not like to have their manager's job.

- 30 Percent of workers think they could do a better job than their boss.

- 63 Percent think they couldn't do a better job than their boss.

Source: Officeteam survey.

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