

GUEST

Is bottomless overtime right for you?

BY DANNY TYREE

Is work-life balance dead, and will you even find time to attend the funeral?

During different phases of my five-decade working career, I have worked all three shifts, toiled every holiday, struggled with doubled production quotas, accepted 48 hours as a standard work week and missed countless family events.



Still, today's job applicants are facing unprecedented obstacles to squeezing in a little "me" time.

According to the Wall Street Journal, in the post-COVID business environment, remote work, clock-watching and water-cooler gabfests are history.

Employers are bluntly (gleefully?) warning applicants that attendance at after-hours events is non-negotiable, do-or-die projects may be dumped in their lap without warning and flinching at routine 70-hour workweeks brands employees as sissies/underachievers/traitors.

Yes, as the labor market loosens up, companies are back in the driver's seat. ("That's right. We're back behind the wheel! We may doze off, sideswipe a schoolbus and send it careening down a ravine - but we're back behind the wheel, baby!")

Job-seekers are encouraged to apply elsewhere if they don't lust after mandatory overtime. Some start-up companies are even stipulating retroactive mandatory overtime. ("Signing bonus? There's no signing bonus. In fact, we're docking you for all those times you shut down your front-yard lemonade stand in November.")

Entrepreneurs such as Mark Cuban snidely advise that workers better get on board with the New Normal, because unless they give 110 percent 24-7, that bogeyman The Competition is going to eat their lunch. ("Dude, I'd be glad if somebody actually found time to eat my meals! I can't. And trying to catch a red-eye flight while hooked up to an IV pole is not what my high school guidance counselor prepared me for!")

I know there's a lot of alpha-male (or maybe "The Devil Wears Prada") bravado exacerbating the "survival of the fittest" mentality; but it also looks desperate when you force your employees to upend their downtime for Zoom meetings with vendors/customers halfway around the world. Better to bluff your way through. ("Listen, you can make yourself available when it's convenient for MY people, or I'm buying your whole %\$#@ time zone!")

These managers and HR directors remind me of Steve Martin as Navin Johnson in "The Jerk." You know the speech: "I don't need this stuff and I don't need you. I don't need anything except this. This ashtray. And this paddle game. The ashtray and the paddle game and that's all I need. And this remote control ..."

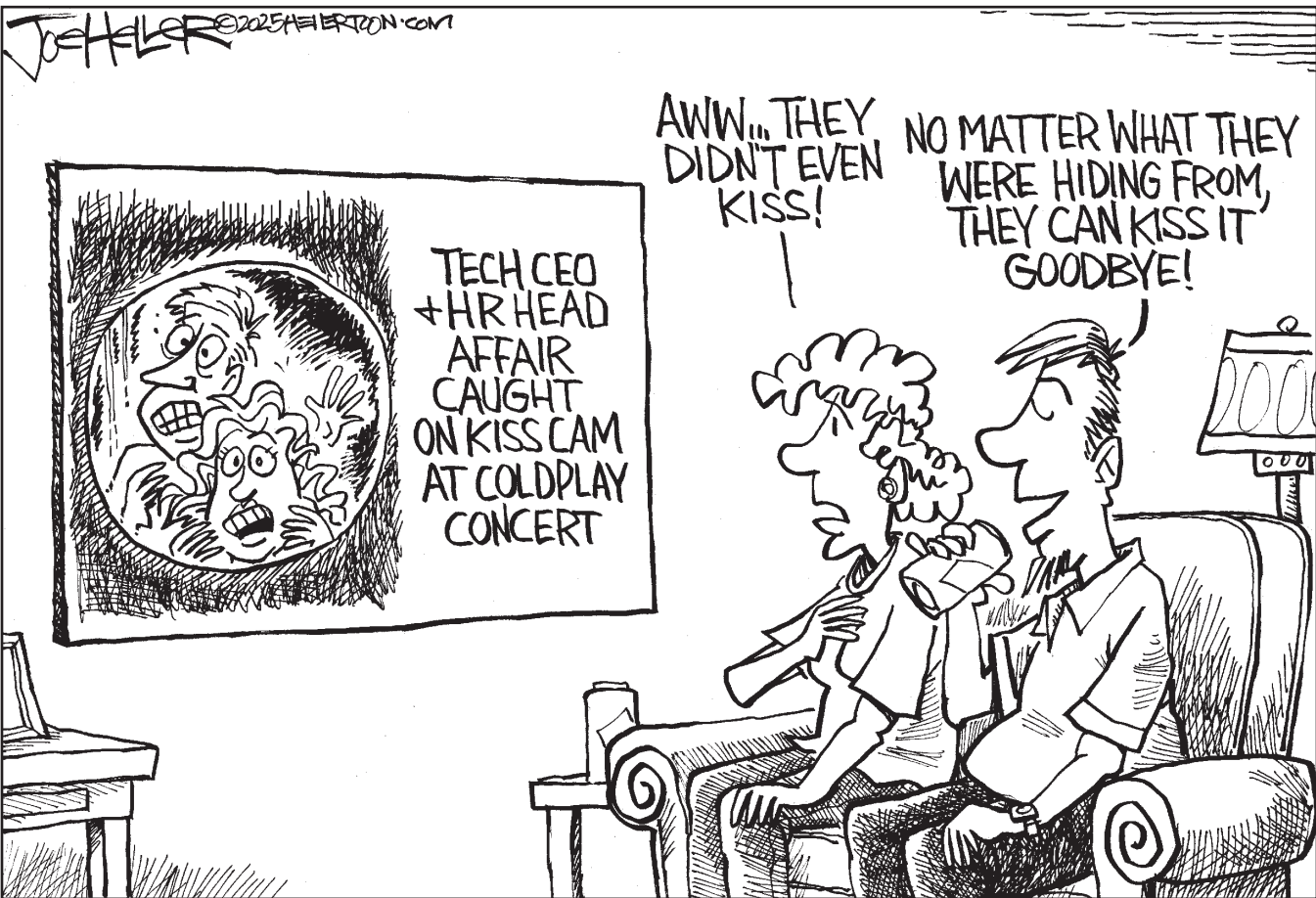
Except their message is more "This company can't survive without humbly indispensable me working 80 hours a week. Well, me and my dedicated hand-picked team. And their long-lost friends from summer camp. And, oh yeah, that litigious guy who hasn't been able to fall sleep since one of our delivery trucks hit him and ..."

Ambitious college graduates find themselves having to reconfigure time-tested life goals. The mantra used to be "Live fast, die young and leave a good-looking corpse." Now it's "Live fast, die young and leave a really good stock portfolio for ... the blood relatives who forgot you were alive ... um, the Significant Other you never asked for a date ... uh, the faithful dog you never adopted ... er, the museum whose doors you never darkened ..."

Don't get too cocky, bosses. Pendulums swing both ways. "No, you may NOT vacation on Mars ... not until I've given you a raise and a footrub and let your darling rugrats rummage through my desk!"

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Danny Tyree welcomes email responses at tyreetyrades@aol.com and visits to his Facebook fan page "Tyree's Tyrades."



UPSIDE DOWN UNDER

A thriving co-op

BY MARVIN BAKER

In just about every community in North Dakota you'll find a local cooperative called Farmers Union Oil Company that is part of the North Dakota Farmers Union and is affiliated with the Cenex brand.



The organization was established in 1927 around the principles of cooperation, legislation and education. Its first convention was on Nov. 4, 1927 in Jamestown and with 13,000 farmers, NDFU had the largest membership at the time among the 31 states in which Farmers Union was active.

But co-ops started long before that. Benjamin Franklin is credited with forming the first-ever co-op when he pooled people's money together to form an insurance company.

When small town North Dakota was springing up, numerous communities started independent co-ops that later became part of the North Dakota Farmers Union.

They included Valley United in Reynolds, 1899; Hoople Farmers Grain Co., 1906; Honeyford Co-op in Gilby, 1908; Edinburg Farmers Elevator Co., 1909; Mott Equity Exchange, 1910; Finley Farmers Grain & Elevator, 1911 and Farmers Union Oil Co., Hazelton, 1914.

These co-ops and others began essentially as buying clubs in which farmers saved money by pooling their orders to buy staples such as twine, hardware,

fuel and coal. From this group effort, the understanding and experience in cooperative purchasing and marketing developed into the farmers union oil and elevator companies.

The co-op spirit rose up about the same time a political movement called the Nonpartisan League (NPL) started to ensure that farmers had a fair shake for their products, becoming stronger through its dividend program.

So by 1927, the NPL had come and gone, but the farmers union was quickly gaining in popularity. And by the late '20s, people outside North Dakota were taking notice.

One man, Charles Talbott, knew that cooperatives would need their own wholesale supply to provide oil companies with products they needed, such as gas and oil. So in 1931, he helped establish the Farmers Union Central Exchange in St. Paul, Minn., serving as its first president.

Farmers Union Central Exchange today is called Cenex Harvest States Inc.

During that same four-year period, from 1927 to 1931, hundreds of cooperative elevators were organized across North Dakota to market grain through the Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association (GTA), which later became Harvest States Cooperative and then merged with Cenex to become Cenex Harvest States Inc.

By 1940, the GTA terminal elevator in Minnesota, was the largest grain receiving organization in the world. North Dakota farmers contributed 53 percent of its entire volume. By 1943, GTA had 236 affiliated elevators in North Dakota.

North Dakota Farmers Union has also been involved in some major legislation that has assisted the state's farmers.

As an example, the Farm Storage Act of 1929 was the first legislation sponsored by Farmers Union. The North Dakota bill, sponsored by Usher Burdick, allowed farm granaries to be eligible as public warehouses.

In 1932, North Dakota Farmers Union won support for an initiated measure that prohibited corporations from owning farmland. It passed with 56 percent of the vote. At the time, corporations and government agencies owned nearly 20,000 farms, 25% of all farms in the state at the time. The new law required them to dispose of the property by 1941.

The same fight occurred in 1968 with anti-corporate farming forces winning an election 3-1. It was upheld again in 1979, but in 2015 NDFU referred legislation that would allow the state to have corporate dairy and hog operations.

Education has also been a hallmark of the North Dakota Farmers Union. It included publication of the Union Farmer newspaper, a Monday night radio program and by 1957, a 10-minute TV program called Focus on the News. Today, youth camps are a big part of NDFU's education that teach leadership skills and co-op education to about 1,200 kids annually.

(Marvin Baker is a news writer for the Kenmare News and formerly Foster County Independent.)

– Weekly Crossword –

CLUES ACROSS
1. Popular potato snack
5. Guards the Pyramids
11. Furnish anew
14. Herb
15. Preoccupy the mind continually
18. The lowest adult male singing voice
19. NATO commander (abbr.)
21. A major division of geological time
23. New Zealand parrot
24. Notions
28. Lump in yarn
29. Indicates position
30. Lose hold of
32. Hindu honorific
33. Former OSS
35. Electronic data processing
36. Cost per mile
39. Snake-like fish
41. They start the alphabet
42. Taylor Swift's tour
44. Intermediate ecological stage
46. Scarlett's home

CLUES DOWN
1. Earliest human form: -Magnon man
2. Flavoring
3. Notion
4. Bundy and Fenwick are two
5. Qualities of sound
6. One who gets paid
7. Expresses surprise
8. O.J. trial judge
9. Pointed ends of pens
10. Shield bugs genus
12. Container for shipping
13. Upper body parts
16. Closes tightly
17. Nigerian World Heritage Site
20. Volcanic island in Fiji
22. Commercial

47. Of he
49. Ohio city
52. Breakfast item
56. An evening party
58. __ Falls
60. Linked together
62. Mythological spirits
63. Small Eurasian deer

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22. Commercial

25. -__: denotes past
26. They __
27. Confraternities
29. A way to gain a point
31. Parts per billion (abbr.)
34. Brew
36. Badgers group
37. Sailing boat
38. __ Polo, explorer
40. Elder citizen (abbr.)
43. Frankish law code
45. Exclamation of surprise
48. Groan
50. It presses clothing
51. Do not allow
53. Gelatinous substance
54. Common Japanese surname
55. Present in nature
57. Electronic counter-measures
58. Last or greatest in an indefinitely large series
59. Commercials
61. News agency

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