

TRADING PLACES

Bob Bailey

Our semester's mid-term is now behind us. The last couple of weeks in April and the first few days in May will no doubt find you boning up for finals. MTC's graduation is in full view. Many are thinking in terms of entering the workforce. The mention or thought of the word *resume* can strike fear and trembling into the hearts and minds of students. It may – but it shouldn't.

One of the services offered by Student Employment Services is the resume critique. We handle these as a matter of course. There is no charge for Midlands Tech students and alumni. You can avail yourselves to a wealth of reference material with trained counselors.

I've decided on an unorthodox and novel approach to the composition of an effective and winning resume. Really, the weather is just too nice to stay inside. Our activity involves a field trip. Gas up the car and don the sunglasses.

THURSDAY – NOON

Our hypothetical construct finds Billy Clyde and Darlene preparing to take a long weekend at one of South Carolina's beaches. Both are early twentysomething second-year Midlands Tech students just a few weeks away from their respective associate degrees. The two are newlyweds and, for now at least, the parents of two dogs. A three-day break from studies and part-time jobs is just what the doctor ordered. They've set aside a few dollars for the getaway. The couple, acting on a whim, does not bother with reservations for lodging. Their two beloved mixed breed mutts, Warp and Woof, take note of suitcases on the bed. They eyeball the casual wear, swimsuits, laptop and mama's size six little black dress. Daddy's golf clubs are pulled from the hall closet. Something's afoot here and it looks exciting. They make known their sentiments. Four brown eyes plead not to be temporarily consigned to the concrete and wire-cage kennel at Columbia's Camp Bow Wow.

Billy Clyde and Darlene have basically subsisted on fast food for months. Chinese carryout has been a diet staple for supper. At least twice a week lunch has consisted of a Bronco Burger and cold fries consumed in the car between classes at the school's parking lot. BC has steadfastly promised his lady love a couple of elegant, sit-down dinners. Instead of Styrofoam cartons, flimsy plastic utensils and tiny paper napkins our protagonists are looking forward to table linen, cloth napkins and the subtle sound of lightly clinking silverware. Perhaps the background music would be the shimmering strings of a Paganini selection as opposed to a heavy metal band with the lead guitarist playing his instrument with a claw hammer. They've wearied of picking up their food from shouting food workers in logo-printed baseball caps. What a treat it would be to have something other than iced tea, soft drinks and water for their beverage of choice. Our student friends have been sleeping on undersized futons and lumpy mattresses. Their

budget won't allow for cable or satellite TV. The thought of fresh, clean sheets on a king-size bed and four-star HBO special on a giant plasma screen has them salivating. Billy Clyde and Darlene don't mind displaying their trim, athletic figures in swim suits. Needless to say, their Spartan apartment complex has no pool.

Between studies and work, Billy Clyde and Darlene have taken a whack at putting together their respective resumes. It has not gone all that well. Like their nuptials of a few months earlier, this endeavor is a first for both. The project has been temporarily laid aside and now virtually forgotten.

THURSDAY – 3:00 P.M.

We now find the couple cruising down I-26 toward the coast. In the distance a colorful rectangle catches their notice. Billy Clyde eases off the accelerator and pulls on his glasses. And what in front of their wondering eyes doth appear? A gigantic billboard.

SOUTHERN COMFORT INN

RESTAURANT COCKTAIL LOUNGE CABLE & HBO

KING SIZE BEDS POOL & JACUZZI PETS WELCOMED

ROOMS WI-FI EQUIPPED EXERCISE FACILITY

GOLF PRIVILEGES AT SANDY TRAPS

CONVENIENT SHOPPING AT NEARBY CLEAN-U-OUT
FANTASMAGORIA OUTLET EMPORIUM – 2 FULL ACRES

40 – 60% discounts!!! Brand Name Clothes * Sportswear * Swimwear * Shoes *

So how do you think the above might be received by our traveling couple? It's obviously a rhetorical question. Every hot button has been hit. Billy Clyde winces at Darlene's ear-splitting shriek of delight at the thought of being surrounded by four-dozen pairs of new shoes. He quickly focuses on crushing a 250-yard drive off the first tee. In short, this is a boffo message and a lead pipe cinch to seal the deal. There is some squirming room left on the credit limit of their VISA card. The two will be weekend guests of Southern Comfort Inn! Billy Clyde cracks open a cold Mountain Dew. Darlene changes the radio

station selector with her bare toes. The dogs sense their owners' anticipation. Elongated pink tongues loll out of the sides of their mouths as they happily slobber on their back seat towels. Yeeeeee haaaa!!!

SUNDAY – 3:00 P.M.

Our friends are westbound on I-26 heading back to the Midlands. Outside of their honeymoon, this has been the best weekend of their early married lives. The two rehash their last three days. The taste of pork medallions, shredded arugula, crème brule and merlot still linger. Darlene looks down at her gleaming new pedicure framed in the just-purchased straw wedgies. (Two more pairs are in the trunk.) Billy Clyde smiles as he glances up at his golf score card tucked in the sun visor. He relives the two birdies on the back nine. Warp and Woof are asleep in the back seat no doubt savoring the past few days. What could be better than sharing a seat in their master's golf cart hurtling down fairways with ears aflutter?

About halfway back to Columbia they take note of a familiar overpass. They recognize this was the locale of the billboard that led them to their weekend Shangri-La. The couple can only see the back side of the outdoor advertisement which appears on their left. It was at that point seventy-two hours earlier that the two first learned of Southern Comfort Inn. Then it simultaneously hits them and the light bulb illuminates. They come to the realization that this particular outdoor advertisement was the instrument that sold them on a terrific weekend. So the motorists decide on **trading places**. For the last three days they were the consumers; now they would become marketers. The product? Themselves! Our guy takes the exit and stops for gas. Darlene gets out and walks near the shoulder of I-26 for a photo of the billboard. Billy Clyde gasses up the car while Warp lifts a leg in a grassy strip. Back on the interstate Darlene studies the picture on her cell phone and gives her man an occasional quick peak at the sign's image.

Our friends' conversation then turns inward to their long overdue resume project. Billy Clyde and Darlene disengage themselves from the pleasures of the weekend. For the remaining fifty miles the tone and tenor of their conversation turns serious. They discuss their upcoming job searches. How might the billboard apply to their deferred resume projects?

Somebody somewhere did an outstanding job of using a visual medium to sell Southern Comfort Inn. There were some obvious applications as they project transitioning from school to careers. The couple analyzes each and every single word; each morsel was digested. There was no wasted space. The invitation contained balance and symmetry. This was not a slapdash design. They surmise that this was a one-shot deal and that the message would be seen only once by travelers headed toward to state's coast. Allowances had to be considered for distance from motorists, size of lettering and estimated speed of drivers. While they had no idea of the cost of outdoor advertising, it must've been considerable. It came to mind that their dream jobs may depend largely on a single, well-crafted resume. There would be no second chance as the reader would

likely have a dozen or more resumes to peruse. While they understood that personal resumes do not allow for photographs or drawings, our student friends had an appreciation for the overall attractiveness of the message. It was absolutely tantalizing and begged to be read. (Darlene's private wish was that she could insert a photo of herself as first runner-up in the swimsuit competition in the Miss Hickory Nut Gorge beauty pageant two years ago.) The aqua-blue water of the pool shimmered. The warmly smiling waitress cradled a leather-bound menu. It also dawned on the couple that there were certain bits of information that did *not* appear on the billboard. Nowhere did it mention something to be effect that “. . . children under 12 stay free.” There would likely be no kiddies doing cannonball dives from the pool's edge splashing water over sunbathers. Nor did the restaurant tout a buffet consisting of 75 items. Darlene could picture being elbowed and muscled around by some lout while pausing over her food selection. The thought of beef gravy invading pineapple rings was not particularly appealing at a slop fest featuring plates mounded high with food.

MONDAY – 10:30 A.M.
(SUSPENSION OF REALITY CONTINUES)

Billy Clyde and Darlene climb the steps to the second floor of the Student Center and check the sign reading Counseling & Career Services. They enter and take a seat in my office. The young lady is sporting an enormous canvas bag emblazoned with **Southern Comfort Inn**. She fishes out two resumes and her picture phone. “Mr. Bailey, you're not going to believe this, but “

ANY DAY

Student Employment services is ready and willing to serve our Midlands Tech students. Ya'll come.

layout
With special thanks to Justin Thompson for artistic billboard

