

MAYBELLE LIVES!

A feline-filled journey through academic life

By

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Acknowledgments

SCP ex-presidents Marv Goldberg, Lynn Kahle, Carol Macklin, and (especially) Dave Schumann.

President of the Maybelle Fan Club: Barbara Stern of Rutgers University

My family: Loretta, Tiger and Keesha

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INTRODUCTION: A TRUTHFUL Q&A

Q. So what's this book about?

A. In 1991 I was asked to edit a newsletter for a professional organization, the Society for Consumer Research, which is Division 23 of American Psychological Association. I created a humor column featuring the adventures of my alter ego, Maybelle Marketing. At the time I was a dedicated full-time academic. I loved research and was (like the early Maybelle) a certified conference junkie. Writing about Maybelle was a way to deal with the frustrations of academia, which are not much different from the frustrations that led Scott Adams to create Dilbert. Recently I yielded to requests from Maybelle's fans to "give us a book that we can give to our favorite administrators!" And I wrote extra episodes just for this book.

Q. Are you Maybelle?

A. Maybelle is my alter ego. I would like to *be* Maybelle.

Maybelle is quite a bit younger than I am and I suspect she's thinner and better-looking. She is an alum of a college sorority. I am an alum of a women's college.

She works hand-in-glove with the union; I crossed the picket line of a faculty strike. Maybelle has three cats and she takes them everywhere; I had two cats during the Maybelle years and recently acquired a dog. I try to take the dog everywhere. I never take the cats anywhere.

Maybelle's cat, Fluffy, has claws that are registered as lethal weapons. My cats were declawed before I adopted them.

Maybelle's cats have dumb names: Fluffy, Tabby and Furball. My cats have dignified names: Tiger (a female tubby tabby) and Loretta (after Loretta Lynn).

Maybelle is romantically involved with a hunky veterinarian who lives in Alaska and drives a jeep.

Alas.

Maybelle drives everyone crazy and she gets excused from committees, jury duty and more -- it's like, "Just get her out of here!"

Could be me.

Q: Are the characters real?

A: All the characters are composites. Sam Stud is taken from at least three people I know and one I know by legend. Three department heads are convinced they served as models for Dr Hy Upp.

Frankie Felon is loosely patterned after a student who was selling his services to faculty members until he got reported to a regulatory authority.

When I asked why the school recommended him, given his weak academic record and reputation for laziness, an administrator delivered the line: "We should not judge his behavior at work based on his conduct as a student."

However, he was never caught cheating on exams, like Frankie was, and never got in trouble with the law. I've never heard of anyone dealing drugs at academic conferences, but it's a great idea for a murder mystery.

Frankie Felon allows the university people to circumvent bureaucracy, applying frontier justice, with the help of the mysterious Organization Enterprises. Does this happen in real life? Well, more subtly.

Every writer and cartoonist shares the experience of having the characters take over and grow in their own directions. These folks did, too. Sam Stud, for instance, moved to center stage with his fashion leadership. Sam pretty much does as he pleases, commanding the family jet and yacht when university life palls. His fashion leadership has evolved. His team of lawyers can keep the administration off his back. Don't you wish you had them too?

Freda Fearless surprised me. Originally she was a composite of some arrogant female colleagues - someone who arrived with all the answers. Freda refused this role. She emerged as a creative problem-solver, the administrator who kept her head while those around were threatening lawsuits. She seems to have found a home at Weird University.

Fluffy's character developed too. Starting as a feline with mostly decorative value, Fluffy became a cat to be reckoned with -- Maybelle's not-so-secret weapon.

Has Maybelle grown? You tell me.

Q: Did everything happen to you?

A. I get ideas from events, questions or even trivial comments. Some episodes take place in contexts that are outside my experience altogether. For instance, I never was offered a free flu shot, and, as a certified medi-phobe, I would never accept one. I never served on Academic Senate or submitted a curriculum proposal. I never picketed or went on strike. But I did fend off a false and bizarre accusation (see "Warned off!") and I did set off a burglar alarm during one of my visiting professor jobs. Nothing happened and there was no bill for damages.

Q: So ...this is fiction?

A: I thought so. However, whenever people see the columns, they often say, "Are you eavesdropping at my university?" People in corporate life say they can relate too.

Q. Do the Maybelle columns make a feminist statement?

A. I try to satirize both ardent feminists and ardent bigots, and I try to be even-handed about male vs. female scandal. One column revealed the checkered past of Daphne Dithers in the topless lounge in Medicine Hat; another "exposed" a male job candidate who was sighted on a porno site. However, Maybelle is female, and some academic experiences are unique to women.

When I wrote "The Ideal Job Candidate" some men were offended, but some women sent e-mails saying, "Right on!"

Needless to say, I was never an Ideal Job Candidate.

Q: Where did you get the idea for administrators-in-the-sauna?

A: That's actually based on a specific but very public encounter. I was asked to serve on a panel to discuss women's issues at a university I decline to name. Two senior administrators were onstage: one slim and good looking, one cute, plump and balding. The first administrator ventured that some parts of a university should not be co-ed; specifically, an all-male sauna was not discriminatory.

We were lost. Half the mostly-female audience began fantasizing about seeing him naked in the sauna and the other half began giggling at the thought of the plump administrator in the sauna. .And the rest is history.

Q: Is Fluffy male or female?

A: Only Maybelle knows and she's not telling. No one else can get Fluffy in a position to let us see for ourselves.

Q. Where did the name "Fluffy" come from?

A. I was waiting in the office of a feline veterinary specialist. The receptionist greeted a large, well-muscled man who was wearing blue jeans and holding a small cat carrier.

"What's your cat's name?" she asked.

The guy looked both ways, then leaned across the desk and whispered, "Fluffy."

Q: Where do you get those X-rated details, like age verification on "adult only" websites?

A: I am a dedicated researcher. And you have a warped mind.

Q: What is the story behind the Christmas Fable?

A: Enough about me! Let's start reading Maybelle.

INTRODUCING MAYBELLE MARKETING
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To: Dr Maybelle Marketing
Consumer Researcher and Conference Junkie, Weird University
From: Dr A. Standard, Conference Co-Chair

I am delighted to report that your paper, *Consumer Behavior: The Feline Perspective*, has been accepted for presentation at our forthcoming Conference on Deviant Research Perspectives. I enclose a brochure and tentative schedule.

To: Dr A. Standard
From: Maybelle Marketing, Consumer Researcher

I'm thrilled to be included in this exciting conference. I'm not familiar with any of the names on the program, but I look forward to making lots of new friends. I believe the attached notice was included by mistake in the letter you sent to me.

CONFIDENTIAL REVIEWERS' COMMENTS: DO NOT SEND TO AUTHOR

RE: MS. #403C "Feline Perspectives"

Definitely accept
 Probably accept
 Lean to Accept
 Accept if you desperately need to fill a slot on the program
 Reject even if it's the only paper submitted

Comments:

This bizarre paper might offer some comic relief if we have too many submissions on cognitive restructuring. The part about why cats conceal their possessions from their owners holds potential for future development. The methodology (telepathic interviews with twelve cats at the local pound) breaks new ground in interpretive research.

To: Dr Hy Upp, Chair, Department of Consumer Research
From: Maybelle Marketing

I urgently need funds to attend a mainstream consumer research conference next month. The reviewers advise that my paper could be considered a seminal contribution to the field. Although I'm over my travel budget, could we make just this one exception?

P.S. Disregard the attached brochure that shows tennis courts, Jacuzzis and a nude beach. After the brochure was printed, the conference was moved to a Lo-Budget Motel. We will hold our sessions in church basements next to the self-help groups. I will not be having fun, I promise.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Dr Hy Upp

Funds approved. Don't worry about the Jacuzzi. I note there will be faculty recruiting sessions at poolside. I hope you will follow your usual practice of participating in *all* the conference activities. Have a great trip!

To: Alicia Adverse, Big University
From: Maybelle Marketing

Would you like to share a room at the conference? The hotel takes cats, so I know you'll enjoy meeting Tabby (he won't be shedding so much by then) and Furball (she keeps her food down most of the time these days. And don't worry if Fluffy claws the curtains again: I just purchased a special insurance policy to cover the damages.

I have new allergy pills so my sneezing won't keep you up this time. We have LOTS to talk about--my divorce, my tenure battle, and my lawsuit against the city government. Can't wait to see you!

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Alicia Adverse RUSH FAX URGENT

I am in a very contagious condition (the exact nature of which I prefer not to disclose) so alas, I will have to room alone.

Why don't you call Henrietta Hotshot, my thesis chairperson? She has a fascinating paper, "Ten Years of Psychotherapy: An Idiographic Perspective."

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Dr A. Standard, Conference co-chair

Can you serve as discussant for a session with Drs. Fuss, Budget and Whine: "The Nasty Consumer: New Research Dimensions." Your role involves summarizing the papers and presenting a harsh critique, in front of an audience of bloodthirsty colleagues. Sounds right up your alley.

To: Dr A. Standard
From: Maybelle Marketing (by fax)

You bet!

Dr Fuss made me re-write my thesis three times. Dr Budget voted against my promotion. Dr Whine rejected my manuscript from the journal he edits. I can't wait.

To: Dr I. M. Power, Dean, Business School, Weird University
From: Maybelle Marketing (via Campus Mail)

Thank you for bailing me out of my predicament at the recent conference I attended. The university's legal staff was extremely helpful.

While I deeply regret any embarrassment this episode might have caused the university, I want to assure you that I was not "out for a fun evening," as one of the lawyers suggested. The twelve of us were conducting ethnographic research up to the last minute when the police arrived. We were inspired by the conference theme "deviant behavior," a legitimate area of social science research. I will be happy to share my field notes and photos as evidence of serious academic purpose.

I assure you that my next trip will be different. My paper, "The Conference Experience: Liminal or Deviant?" was accepted for presentation at the Society for Serious Research. The conference will be held in Thunder Bay, Ontario, next August. SSR is a rather strait-laced group.

Besides, it's hard to get into trouble in Canada once hockey season is over.

A TOUGH JOB, BUT...**© Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com****To: Dr Well Known, Famous Name and Thesis Advisor****From: Norbert New, ABD, Consumer Behavior**

This is supposed to be a good job market, but my only offer came from Weird University. When I showed up for the campus interview, nobody met my plane. In fact, the cornfield where we landed was right next to the Lo-Budget Motel where they put me up.

Professor Maybelle Marketing brought her three cats to my presentation and my lecture was drowned out by all the sneezing and meowing. For evening entertainment, we got take-out hamburgers and watched a video of *That Darn Cat*, a Disney classic featuring the FBI and a Siamese cat.

Do you think the French Foreign Legion needs consumer researchers? The Marines already said no.

To: Norbert New**From: Dr Well Known**

We're still paying off the computer center after you tried to hook up that monitor. I don't think the Legion could afford to fix what you would do with a loaded gun.

P.S. Maybelle has mellowed out. When she brought the cats to *my* presentation, she insisted they get equal time to ask questions.

To: Dr Well Known**From: Norbert New**

Here's the revision of my thesis, with the 264 changes you requested. I apologize for the mildew. There is a little problem with my office space.

To: Physical Plant Department**From: Norbert New**

Please note that Office B-Sub-101 is no longer a closet. It is my office! I will hold you responsible for damage caused by your mops dripping on my new computer.

To: Norbert New**From: Janitor Joyless, Physical Plant**

The last guy who occupied your office used to leave sandwiches out for the night crew. Does wonders for the mops. You can borrow Maybelle's cats if the mice become a problem.

To: Norbert New**From: Human Resources**

We cannot issue your keys or ID card until you fill out our ten-page form and get fingerprinted. We must protect our students from criminals.

To: Dr Hy Upp, Chair
From: Norbert New

What should I do with this memo from Human Resources? When I showed up last week, Officer Sally Student said I had an honest face and gave me a master key to the campus as well as a VIP ID card.

To: Norbert New
From: Dr Hy Upp, Chair

Officer Sally has had difficulty finding an advisor for her stimulating thesis, "The Consumer Researcher: A Police Officer's Perspective." While nobody is required to supervise a thesis, the last person who refused managed to accumulate 300 points of traffic violations while driving half a block to the parking lot. I'd file the memo with the mops in your office.

To: All Faculty
From: Dr I. M. Power, Dean

Organization Enterprises has donated a fund for our international conference travel. Extra trips will be made available to selected destinations, including Colombia and Thailand.

The president, Frankie Felon, is one of our former students. As some of you may remember, he was expelled for cheating on exams and changing his grades on the computer. However, I do not think we should make inferences about his behavior at work based on his behavior as a student.

To: Dr Hy Upp, Chair
From: Norbert New

Thanks to the Organization Enterprises Fund, I'm off to a conference in Mexico to present my paper, "Choosing Brands of Chewing Gum: An International Perspective."

Frankie Felon seems to be a real pro. His assistant, Wally Weasel, dropped by my office with a nice gift-wrapped package for me to take to Frankie's old fraternity brother in Mexico.

While Wally was chatting me up, Officer Sally came by in uniform for her twice-weekly thesis conference. Her campus police dog tried to chew up that nice package. Wally left right away, apologizing for taking up a student's time, saying, "Don't worry about the gift wrap, just put it in a safe place." What a class act.

To: Dr Norbert New
From: Dr Hy Upp, Chair

As you know, we like our new faculty to bring creativity to their teaching as well as their research. However, a few of the students are a little nervous about the assignment to buy a product or service that our society labels "deviant." Our legal department is nervous, too, especially when your students ended one discussion by claiming that all legal services could be considered deviant.

Why don't you offer an alternative assignment that involves buying something simpler, like toasters or socks?

Press Bulletin - For Immediate Release

Officer Sally Student, a rookie campus cop and part-time consumer psychology student, was commended today following arrest of a criminal ring of former Weird University students.

"My police dog seemed very interested in a package in my thesis advisor's office," said Ms. Student, "so I came back at 3 AM, confiscated the package, and had it analyzed."

The advisor is believed to be completely innocent, although an application to the French Foreign Legion marked "Please reconsider" was found on his desk amidst a pile of student papers reporting illicit and illegal consumer behaviors.

To: Dr Well Known, Dissertation Chair

From: Norbert New [*first class letter attached to AirFreight box with holes*]

Thanks for agreeing to sponsor me for another round of interviews next year. The pace here has proved to be a little too frantic for me and the Legion sent around a rather large recruiter who taught me some things about de-marketing.

Attached you will find a box containing two kittens, a present from Maybelle to help me recover from my interview with the Feds. Believe me, real agents are nothing like the ones in *That Darn Cat*. Since you and Maybelle were such good friends, I'm forwarding the kittens to you as a token of appreciation. We got most of the fleas off and the vet says they'll outgrow their tendency to claw people's faces.

Enjoy!

MAYBELLE JOINS A COMMITTEE
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To: Business Faculty, Weird University
From: Dr I. M. Power, Dean

Please join me in welcoming Dr Freda Fearless, our new Associate Dean. Dr Fearless brings an unusual breadth of experience to this position, having served in various administrative capacities with 5 American universities and 1 Australian university in the last eight years. All of these well-regarded institutions sent glowing recommendations to our Search Committee.

To: All Faculty
From: Freda Fearless, Associate Dean

Enclosed is a list of committees and a sign-up sheet. Everyone should serve on at least one committee
 --no exceptions!

To: Freda Fearless, Associate Dean
From: Dr I M Power, Dean
URGENT AND CONFIDENTIAL

Now you've done it! For the last three years, we have been going to Maybelle Marketing's mailbox and quietly removing all mail that solicits participation in committees. We have somehow convinced Maybelle there are no committees here at Weird University. You may have let the cat out of the bag (an unfortunate analogy in this case). You're on your own on this one.

To: Freda Fearless, Associate Dean
From: Maybelle Marketing

I'm *so* glad you have decided to establish committees at our business school!
 Let me be the first to sign up!
 (1) Faculty Diversity Committee
 (2) Distinguished Speakers Committee.

To: Dr Hy Upp, Chair, Consumer Research Department
From: Norbert New, Assistant Professor

I have just been assigned to the Building Review Committee. Nobody wanted to serve as chair, so I volunteered. This committee does not seem to have anything to do. Last year, they met once and decided to ask the faculty to suggest a mission. There were no replies. Do you think it would be OK to make a motion to disband this committee?

To: Norbert New
From: Dr Hy Upp, Chair

Such a motion would disrupt our annual ritual of investigating the purpose of this committee, a tradition that goes back at least ten years. I suggest you send out a copy of last year's survey and make a note to that effect in the official committee minutes.

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Herman Hungry, Manager, Faculty Club

Enclosed is a bill for damages associated with the meeting of the Diversity Committee. As usual, Maybelle shared her refreshments with the cats who should not have been there in the first place. Bill Bigot, who should not have been there either, objected when Maybelle proposed to incorporate species discrimination into the committee's mandate.

I can understand why he was upset, as he claims Maybelle encouraged her cat Fluffy's retaliatory scratching behavior. However, a distinguished full professor should be able to restrain himself from throwing rolls--some buttered and toasted--during what is supposed to be a professional meeting. Our prize-winning food was not intended to serve this purpose. I can understand why Dr Freda Fearless was called to intervene, but we do not know why she chose to bring Frisky, a combat-trained German Shepherd that she obtained as part of her divorce settlement. Maybelle's cats are bred for spoiled indoor living and they were no match for Frisky. Things got rather furry by the time the campus police arrived.

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Freda Fearless, Associate Dean

Don't you think this bill is a little ridiculous--tranquilizers for Maybelle's cats following their traumatic encounter with my dog? The union has threatened to picket my office if I don't pay at once. What kind of a place are you running here?

To: Freda Fearless, Associate Dean
From: Dean I. M. Power

Please recall my earlier memo regarding Maybelle's committee participation. Trust me, we're getting off cheap. The true test of an associate dean is what he or she can bury in the discretionary expense accounts.

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Freda Fearless, Associate Dean
Re: Changes in Committee Assignments

Bill Bigot has been reassigned from Faculty Diversity Committee to the Tree Planting Committee. This committee chooses a tree to be planted in the quadrangle to honor the graduating class.

Maybelle Marketing has been assigned to the Distinguished Visitors Committee. She has promised to leave the cats at home while she escorts visitors around the campus.

I'm sure I can help Maybelle develop into an effective committee member. You just need the right blend of interpersonal skills.

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Phil Psych, Ivied Halls University

I was truly honored to be chosen as a Distinguished Speaker at Weird University. Maybelle Marketing was a gracious hostess. It was a rare privilege to meet her three cats and view the cult film, *That Darn Cat*, at her home--a delightful change from the usual steak-and-drinks evening.

Please tell Maybelle not to worry about the scratches--they cleared up with a little drugstore antiseptic. I also enclose the dry-cleaning bill for my new suede jacket. Maybelle said she preferred to explain the incident in person.

To: Freda Fearless
From: Dean I. M. Power

Attached are expense reports and letters from the last three distinguished visitors to our faculty. Please apply your interpersonal skills to tell Maybelle that the film *That Darn Cat* is not universally regarded as a classic, and that our Distinguished Visitors Grant will soon be depleted if we continue to reimburse our speakers for emergency stitches, allergy medication and tetanus shots.

Perhaps you can also think of a tactful way to tell Maybelle what to do with the attached proposal she submitted--a special visitor series featuring feline consumption.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Freda Fearless, Associate Dean

I have just been advised that, according to the terms of your feline consumption research grant, you are forbidden all committee and governance service until five years after completion of the three-year grant. Regrettably, we must place your service on hold until 2005 to avoid jeopardizing this important funding source.

To: Search Committee, Business School, Corn Husk University
From: Dean I. M. Power

I note that you are seeking a new associate dean. Let me nominate Dr Freda Fearless, who has been with us for six months. Dr Fearless is creative, innovative, and dynamic. Her interpersonal and administrative skills are beyond compare.

We would like to keep Dr Fearless forever; however, she seems to be getting restless for a new challenge and, despite the last three petitions, I am not ready to retire. We do not want to stand in the way of new opportunities for this outstanding individual. Please call *anytime* if you need more information; I enclose my office, fax, home and car phone numbers.

DEAR SPIRIT GUIDE: Faculty meetings
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Dear Spirit Guide:

I am a new assistant professor. We have a faculty meeting next week. What should I wear to make a good first impression? Signed: "New Kid on the Block"

Dear New:

You didn't say whether you're male or female, but it doesn't matter. You are asking the wrong question. You should be asking, "How can I get out of going to faculty meetings for the rest of my life?"

Faculty meetings are like this:

Chair: "Do we have a motion to approve the minutes of our last meeting?"

Professor X: "I so move."

Professor Y: "My name was spelled wrong in the minutes. I move that we amend the minutes to correct the spelling."

Chair: "Do we have a second to Professor Y's motion?"

Professor Z: "We met in Room 203 last time, not 204 as stated."

And so on.

Sometimes your dean or department head will publish a list of dates of meetings for an entire year. Get out your list of conferences and submit papers immediately so you can miss as many as possible! Try to get your presentations scheduled on the exact day so you can't be asked to fly back a day early.

However, the Spirit Guide warns, if you miss a meeting, you may find yourself elected in absentia to chair the most boring committee ("Committee to Report on Building Garbage Collections") or the most political ("Committee to Evaluate the Mental Health of Doctoral Students.") The trade-off is yours.

PURCHASING POWER

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To: All Faculty

From: Melvin Miser, Purchasing Manager, Weird University

Effective immediately, to be reimbursed for university expenses, you **MUST** use a Preferred Supplier.

Our Approved Vendor List favors struggling businesses whose owners have criminal records or psychological problems. I will answer your questions at our meeting next Friday.

To: Associate Dean Freda Fearless

From: Norbert New

Maybelle Marketing asked me to let you know that she will miss Friday's meeting as she begins a weekend of data collection associated with her feline research program. She and the cats were climbing into a muddy four-wheel drive vehicle with Alaska license plates, chewed-up seat covers, and a large, bearded human male dressed in an L.L. Bean parka and high-top Sorels.

To: Dean I M Power

From: Associate Dean Freda Fearless

VERY CONFIDENTIAL

Rumor has it that Maybelle is involved with someone from Alaska. Can we use your conference room for the party? I plan to knit twelve cat-sized booties as a farewell present.

To: Associate Dean Freda Fearless

From: Dean I M Power

Don't buy the yarn yet. Last year Maybelle became involved with an exchange professor from Saskatchewan. We secretly subsidized an evening for two at the Romantic Inn. Alas, we did not realize that Canadian males prefer to watch TV in the bar during hockey season.

Maybelle tried to start a new game during the first intermission, but Fluffy resisted efforts to remain in the penalty box following an illegal clawing action.

To: Melvin Miser, Purchasing Manager

From: Maybelle Marketing

I am *so* glad that you have selected Godfather Inns as the Approved Hotel Chain for our faculty! Fluffy caught a mouse in our room the first night (maybe that's why we got a discount for the cats instead of the usual surcharge).

The complaint-handling standards are a lot homier than the Ritz-Carlton ("I got some sleeping bags here if you'd rather go camp in the park"). The management is pretty broad-minded about the activities of its guests, many of whom were wearing handcuffs, chains, guns and police uniforms right in the lobby. They weren't too responsive when I tried to interview them for my Deviant Behavior research project.

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Associate Dean Freda Fearless

The VP--Policies and Procedures says that declawing Fluffy is an allowable expense that will enhance the quality of university life. The university-approved veterinarian charges \$1000, including a week's tranquilizers for the owner and limousine transport for the cat. My own vet does the same operation for \$92.50, and he isn't on probation with the state board. What gives?

To: Associate Dean Freda Fearless
From: Dean I M Power

The job of the purchasing department is to *purchase*. Just as we evaluate the productivity of our faculty by weighing the articles they publish, the VP--Policies evaluates purchasing by weighing a bundle of dollars equivalent to last year's authorized spending. Let's make other plans for Fluffy.

To: Melvin Miser, Purchasing Manager
From: Norbert New, Assistant Professor

If I take the university-approved flying service to my next conference, I will have to spend five hours in a Cessna with no bathrooms. I also have to be the co-pilot. The legal airline covers the distance by jet in one hour, and the state police think I'm a hazard on the ground. Can we negotiate something here?

To: Norbert New
From: Melvin Miser, Purchasing Manager

Our Approved Flying Service is owned by Phil Party, who won the "Outstanding Fraternity Social Director" award during each of his four years at Weird University. He started this flying service after the Air Force realized he had written "average parties per week" in the place for "grade point average in coursework."

Of course the safety of our valued faculty is our primary concern at all times. Our contract requires the pilot to demonstrate current membership in a 12-step program, and we will issue you a personal parachute (which must be returned to us in its original condition or you will be charged).

To: Dean I M Power
From: Associate Dean Freda Fearless

Maybelle's mysterious friend is a veterinarian--a match made in heaven, or at least the North Pole. Maybelle wants to visit Fairbanks and Barrow to study arctic feline consumption. Melvin Miser has authorized first-class air travel if she buys a one-way ticket. Frankie Felon has offered to loosen the bolts on Fluffy's cat carrier somewhere in the vicinity of Denali National Park. Unfortunately, he will probably be unavailable for the next few months.

To: Weird University Faculty
From: VP - Policies & Procedures

Please delete as a Preferred Supplier the Organization Enterprises catering service owned by Frankie Felon & Associates.

Please cancel all outstanding orders and return any inventory in your possession. In particular, please do not eat the sugar cubes or the brownies that were supplied free as an incentive to do business with this supplier. Brenda Battleaxe (Legal) is coordinating an investigation with the FBI,

DEA and RCMP. The personnel of these agencies are staying in our VIP suites. They are forbidden to use our Preferred Supplier, Godfather Inn, because standing in the lobby could be construed as consorting with known criminals.

Effective immediately, Melvin Miser will assume a new career as university liaison to the Building Maintenance union. Edwin Entitled, union president, says, "Our members anticipate a secure, productive future after just a few rounds with this tough-minded negotiator."

SOME VERY HUMAN RESOURCES

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To: All Faculty and Staff of Weird University
From: VP - Policies and Procedures

Please welcome Daphne Dithers, our new Human Resources (HR) Manager. Ms Dithers comes to us from Corn Stalk University, where she managed the word processing center. She holds a Certificate of Personnel Administration (dated 1972) from the College of Desperation.

To: Dean I M Power, Business School
From: VP - Policies and Procedures
VERY CONFIDENTIAL

We agree with your faculty that Ms. Dithers could not pass our own undergraduate courses in industrial relations and organizational psychology.

However, our reputation for living up to the name of Weird University has preceded us on the job market. Qualified applicants are not rushing to the prairies to battle six unions who jointly sponsor the Mediocrity of the Year Award; two feminist groups that exchange weekly death threats; a Board of Regents collectively known as Corn Meal Mush; and, last but not least, Maybelle's cat Fluffy, whose claws are registered with the sheriff as lethal weapons.

We are well aware that the Foreign Legion and a branch of the Family have set up successful recruiting centers in the Faculty Club. We're lucky to hire anyone who can write "human being" in the space for "job qualifications" on the application form.

To: Dr Hy Upp, Head, Consumer Psychology Department
From: Norbert New, Assistant Professor

Because of all the budget cuts, I was given only one copy of my course syllabus. I had to pass it around so everyone could write down the first assignment.

I notice that Ms. Dithers just distributed 5000 copies of her HR newsletter to faculty, staff, students and vagrants. Page 1 has the life history of Ms. Dithers (I didn't know there was a drama school in Medicine Hat, Canada) and pages 5-15 give us the lowdown on the summer vacations of the HR staff (they like Club Med). Page 16 shows us the newly decorated HR lounge and recreation center. Should I write a letter to the editor?

To: Norbert New
From: Dr Hy Upp, Chair, Consumer Psychology

Pens cost money. The last time anybody questioned HR expenditures, his paycheck was deposited to a Wyoming ghost bank and all his medical claims had to be approved by a witch doctor. Find something that isn't alive and hit it.

To: Daphne Dithers
From: Maybelle Marketing

I'm delighted with the new Faculty Assistance Program you have inaugurated. I hope you will ignore the narrow-minded spoilsports who feel that our counselors should have experience dealing with college-educated adults.

I am especially grateful that your counseling staff includes Ms. Lotta Furr, a licensed feline therapist, whose compassionate understanding of Fluffy's litterbox problem has given new meaning and purpose to my life. Her advice for my long-distance romance ("Get him neutered!") may be a little harder to follow.

To: Daphne Dithers
From: Brenda Battleaxe - Legal

Much as I like to sue faculty members, I'm afraid we can't support Dr Fran Feminist's complaint relating to Dr Sam Stud's acquisition of a male-oriented magazine. We have no jurisdiction over faculty purchases at legal airport newsstands. This campus lacks an enforceable standard of taste and literary quality, as evidenced by the rather fiery responses to your own newsletter.

Anyway, don't jump to conclusions. Sam looks for Lauren Polos, not Lustful Photos. Last year, he grabbed five copies of a glossy periodical when he saw the words "Giorgio Armani" on the cover. Maybelle walked by just as Sam began reading a *Cat Life* fantasy about high-fashion kitty sweaters. Luckily, Sam found an earth-friendly way to burn his copies before Maybelle could add his name to her Feline Fanatics support group.

To: Daphne Dithers
From: Maybelle Marketing

I wish to report a case of species discrimination. Dr Fran Feminist has the book *Fun Things to Do with a Dead Cat* right on her office shelves. As a professor of English, Dr Feminist will be aware of the symbolic implications of this title. I am deeply offended.

To: Daphne Dithers
From: Dr Fran Feminist - English

I wish to report damage in the form of claw marks to my property, a book entitled *Fun Things to do with a Dead Cat*.. I thought felines were not allowed in university buildings. Whatever happened to sisterhood?

To: Faculty, Weird University
From: Daphne Dithers - Human Resources

As a modern HR manager, I do not dismiss trivial complaints in the traditional way ("Chill out! Grow up! Get a life!") Instead, we have just completed a 500-page policy manual to help faculty decide whether materials displayed in offices meet today's standards of taste and fairness. Cartoons should not poke fun at females, males, dogs, cats or pigeons.

Other standards will evolve as we settle the 2000 grievances that were filed after I personally searched all the faculty offices. We confiscated over fifty Far Side Cartoons, two sleeping bags and one catnip mouse found by the K-9 Corps. Several offices occupied by senior faculty have been closed by the Fire Marshal due to toxic paper accumulation.

To prepare and enforce our new regulations, we have hired three full-time lawyers and purchased a small paper mill. Most of you won't notice the academic budget cuts that were necessitated by these essential expenditures. Do we really need a communications department?

To: All Faculty and Staff
From: VP--Policies and Procedures

We regret that Ms. Daphne Dithers will become the first staff member to take advantage of her own new stress leave policy. Ms. Dithers has made arrangements to enter a private clinic. When we suggested her own new counseling service, she began screaming, "No! I am not a cat! I want a shrink, not a vet!"

Brenda Battleaxe (Legal) has drafted a binding promise to reward anyone who can connect Frankie Felon with the photos that mysteriously appeared at the Board of Regents meeting last week. Following the customary group prayer, the Board's eyes were opened to Dazzling Daphne of the Medicine Hat Topless Lounge, glossy 8x10's in living color.

Some of you have hinted that Ms. Dithers falsified her job application, which listed her thespian activity as Shakespearean drama. However, administrators take a blood oath to protect one another in time of need. Therefore, we are prepared to argue that Ms. Dithers was developing her dramatic presence as preparation for future leading roles. Her only mistake was to believe that these tragedies and comedies would be played on a stage rather than a college campus.

MAYBELLE GOES JOB-HUNTING
 © Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com

To: Dr Maybelle Marketing
From: Dr I Leed, Chair, Consumer Research, Strange University

Congratulations! We had a record number of applicants for the Associate Professor position, and you are one of the three lucky finalists. We look forward to your presentation: Academia as Permanent Liminality.

To: Dr I Leed, Chair, Consumer Research Dept
From: Dr H. M. Bigg, Dean, Business School, Strange University

Yes, I have time to see Maybelle Marketing during her recruiting trip. However, this is the first resume to cross my desk that includes the names, ages and breeds of the applicant's three cats. Where do you get these people? I thought jobs were scarce this year.

To: Dr H M Bigg, Dean
From: Dr I Leed, Chair, Consumer Research

We're very late on the market because you vetoed the Recruiting Committee's first choice, Dr Well Dunne, the distinguished scholar from Ivy Drip University. We had not anticipated that the faculty malcontents would hold their annual picketing of your office during Dr Dunne's visit. Nor did we realize that Dr Dunne had obtained picketing experience during the Sixties, before he became an academic.

Therefore, we did not expect Dr Dunne to grab a sign and start chanting, "No, no, Bigg's got to go!" right after his official recruiting chat with you and the Associate Dean. Dr Dunne assured us his actions were purely automatic responses to the picket signs and were not intended to convey disrespect to you or this institution.

We voted unanimously to reject Ms Sandra Selling, a PhD candidate with no publications but an unusual thesis: "Why Leona Helmsley Should be the Model for Female Marketers of the 1990's." Ms. Selling suggested that I schedule classes by lottery and do away with faculty year-end evaluations. A few of the faculty were enchanted with her last idea, to replace the dean's office with a four-person committee (2 males, 2 females, one of whom should be an untenured, unpublished assistant professor).

There are no adjunct professors within shouting distance. We are desperate.

To: Dr Maybelle Marketing
From: Dr I. Leed

I'm afraid we can't authorize accommodations for cats during your campus visit. Besides, your feline family seems well known in the world of hotels. This is the first time we have had to ask our Legal Services to negotiate reservations for a job candidate.

To: Dr Maybelle Marketing
From: Dr Hy Upp, Chair, Marketing, Weird University

I'm sorry that personal business precludes your attending our Friday meeting. I wish you the best of luck and am always happy to serve as a reference.

To: Dr Maybelle Marketing
From: Dr I Leed

We hope you had a nice trip home. I must say I was a bit surprised to receive a glowing recommendation letter from Dr Hy Upp, your department head. We thought your job search was confidential.

To: Dr I Leed
From: Maybelle Marketing

Regretfully I must withdraw my application for your vacant position. Ms. Lotta Dough, a distant relative of the president of our Board of Regents, has just designated a fund to be used for feline-related research and teaching. I have been chosen to receive a substantial research grant on condition of remaining here. Ms. Dough is charming and we have many common interests. She assures me that tenure will not be a problem.

If you're looking for someone at the more senior level, my department head, Dr Hy Upp, is rumored to be on the market. However, we anticipate that he will be very selective. His vita states that he seeks to head a department where there are "no cats and no crazy people." We expect these opportunities will be limited for the remainder of this century.

Dear Spirit Guide:***How do I know when it's time to change jobs?***

A good question.

You may decide to move if your office has gotten so filled with paper and books that you can't find your desk and don't remember if you ever were issued a computer. There's a little mound over there...no, that's the box of cookies from last Christmas. By the time you've sorted through everything and thrown away non-essentials, you're all ready for the moving van.

Alternatively, your department head may ask you casually, "Are you planning to attend our next national conference?" You don't have a paper? Well, they'll make Faculty Development funds available. You don't want to go? No problem.

When you come in early the next day, your department head is locked in the photocopy room with a large pile of paper that looks suspiciously like your c.v. Although he isn't on the program, and your department isn't recruiting, he heads off to the conference on his own. He returns with a lighter briefcase, humming a triumphant little tune. A few days later, you start getting calls from universities you never heard of. Time to move on.

Maybelle's Home Page
By Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com

Welcome to my new website!

Here is a photo of myself, Maybelle Marketing, in my office at **Weird University**, surrounded by 330 cat mugs and a wall of photos of my cats, **Fluffy**, **Tabby** and **Furball**. The large framed photo on my desk was taken with the county sheriff the day we got **Fluffy's claws** registered as lethal weapons.

I teach courses in **Consumer Psychology**. Click here to sign up for special seminars on **feline consumption behaviors**, based on my internationally recognized research. Some of my favorite websites are <http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Meadows/6430/quagga.html>, and <http://www.sniksnak.com>.

If you click on the Home Page of **Dean I. M. Power**, you will find a copy of my updated resume, a glowing reference, and a promise to pay my relocation expenses if I move at least 1000 miles away. Fortunately, Ms. Lotta Dough, whose husband chairs the **Board of Regents**, has become a close friend through our mutual association with the **Stray Cat Rescue Squad** and our mutual efforts to implement a Feline Consumption Research Center here at **Weird University**.

Ms. Dough has retained Frankie Felon of **Organization Enterprises, Inc.** to obtain photos of Dean Power and the VP - Campus Environment in the sauna of the **Campus Recreation Center**. These photos demonstrate why the sauna remains all-male despite periodic protests from **Dr Fran Feminist**, who fears losing access to steamy campus secrets, and **Dr Sam Stud**, who fears losing access to females who can nominate him for the Annual Beefcake Award. We predict that resistance to our proposal will melt away as soon as Frankie's goons distribute prints of these candid shots at the next **Academic Senate** session.

Click here for the most recent link, **Fluffy Gets Arrested**. Our Human Resource Manager, **Daphne Dithers**, ruled that personnel committees need diversity. I was the Token Female, brought along Fluffy, the Token Feline. Fluffy contributed significantly to the deliberations by napping on a sunny corner of the conference table.

Bill Bigot, whose home page celebrates the all-male virtues of the old Citadel, paid considerably more attention to Fluffy's views than he ever did to mine. He deserved those scratches after he claimed that applicants who trained German Shepherds showed leadership, while those who raised Siamese cats lacked commitment to academic values.

Our **Faculty Union** has agreed to represent Fluffy, whose lifestyle exemplifies their credo: work as little as possible and never stop asking for handouts. We anticipate Fluffy will soon be exonerated. Brenda Battleaxe, Esq., advises that our **Weird University Legal Department** exists primarily to protect the blood and other private body parts of deans and vice presidents. However, after a few rounds at the Faculty Club, she admitted that the **VP - Policies** rewards anyone who contributes an increase in faculty bloodshed.

Sure enough, right after this incident, a case of Pounce treats mysteriously appeared in my office addressed, "To Fluffy from a Secret Admirer." When **Campus Police** Officer Sally Student unlocked my door for the messenger's furtive delivery at 3 AM, her academy-trained observation powers drew her attention to a ten-digit code embedded in the return address. A VIP parking pass smuggled to our informant, "Deep Debit" in **Accounting**, revealed only that an unspecified grocery product was charged to a High-Level Administrative Account for Discretionary Spending. Fortunately, academic researchers know how to derive scientific conclusions with limited data obtained from a small convenience sample.

Thank you for visiting my home page. Please look me up at the next Consumer Psychology Association conference in Medicine Hat, Canada. I'll be the one checking into the **Godfather Inn** with three unmatched cat carriers, a notarized agreement to pay for any feline-inspired damages and a message forwarded from **Dean I. M. Power**: "Have fun, good luck with the job hunt and don't hurry back!"

KIDNAPPED!

© Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Anonymous

I have your cats in a safe place. I will return them after you take the litter box, cat dishes and toys out of your office and restore the academic purity of the building.

To: Employee Relations
From: Dean I M Power

Maybelle's grievance claims I endangered her health and well-being by allowing her cats to be kidnapped from our building. Since when does the union support felines?

To: Dean I M Power
From: Employee Relations

Last fall, the union was prepared to support Maybelle's cat Fluffy for tenure and promotion. The union felt that purring skills far outweighed research in contributions to our society. They also pointed out that Fluffy is a lot more collegial than most of our faculty. There was a lot of public support for Fluffy, particularly from the students and the business community.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Vice President - Campus Environment

I was not amused by your photo on the front page of today's newspaper. You were pictured with an empty cat carrier in front of our business building while the headline blared, "UNSAFE FOR ANIMALS--AND PEOPLE, TOO!" This photo could be interpreted as a criticism of our splendid Maintenance Department. Their union is even worse than yours. Please write a formal apology at once.

To: Vice President - Campus Environment
From: Union President - Maintenance and Grounds
URGENT AND CONFIDENTIAL

Please, please withdraw your request for Maybelle's apology! Maybelle believes that apologies, congratulations and appreciations should be accompanied by gifts of kittens. She finds these peace offerings at a shelter that specializes in cats with psychological problems.

Please visualize fifty uniformed maintenance workers picketing your office, each holding a flea-ridden kitten. We are well aware that the administrative offices were just redecorated in delicate shades of avocado and peach--very soothing, but impossible to clean.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Melinda Meticulous, Secretary to University President

In response to your letter marked "URGENT AND DESPERATE," I'm afraid our president cannot become personally involved in your cat-napping case. He has asked me to advise you that he is a major contributor to the local Cat Rescue Squad but he also has a university to run.

We realize that the president did devote several hours to Professor Sam Stud's parking problem. Dr Stud had just purchased a mauve Miata that clashed with the sickly green walls of his assigned parking stall. He was able to document severe emotional stress each afternoon as he retrieved his

car. However, Dr Stud has won several campus-wide teaching awards and the law firm that administers his million-dollar trust fund was rather aggressive.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Vice President - Campus Environment

In response to the union grievance that was on my desk this morning, we have formed a committee to review possible inequities in policies that favor families over companion animals (formerly known as "pets").

I regret that I was unable to meet with your union rep in person yesterday afternoon, and I am always available if you want to share feelings. However, please remember that I used to coach football and have never visited California, so I may need an extra time-out after you share some of those feline-related feelings. The union rep's remark ("Nobody notices if a VP takes the afternoon off") is not conducive to a spirit of mutual problem-solving.

Meanwhile, I am deeply concerned about your feline family and promise to give this matter my personal, undivided attention.

To: Captain, Campus Security
From: Vice President - Campus Environment

Since Officer Sally Student is writing a thesis in the Consumer Research department, let's assign her to the Maybelle Catnapping Case. I trained attack dogs in Vietnam and can't tell one cat from another.

If you can't close the case fast, just go to the pound and find three cats. Charge the building fund for shots and flea removal and go back to catching criminals. Maybelle won't know the difference.

SELECTIONS FROM**NEWS-N-NOTES: Weird Life at Weird University**

Officer Sally Student won another commendation for meritorious service after she identified Bill Bigot as the campus cat-napper. Professor Bigot sought revenge for his assignment to the tree-planting committee follow Maybelle's accusation of species bias during a Diversity Committee meeting. "The trail of kitty litter led right to his office door," Officer Student said modestly.

You may remember that Frankie Felon, the recent Weird University graduate, was convicted of distributing illegal substances at academic conferences. Because his confidential assistance enabled us to retrieve the missing felines, the university legal staff has agreed to support his appeal for a reduced sentence. Brenda Battleaxe (Legal) has refused to comment on recent remarks of the local District Attorney ("If the staff lawyers at Weird try to help this guy, he'll end up serving a life sentence for first-degree murder").

Bill Bigot is taking a leave of absence to study sports marketing at Tough Guys Military College (TGMC), an all-male institution somewhere in the deep south.

Maybelle has graciously declined to press charges.

"My former sorority sister is married to the head football coach at TGMC," she says, "and I've been assured that the team looks forward to sharing their tackling drills with this distinguished visiting scholar."

'TIS THE SEASON

by Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com

To: Legal Dept, Weird University
From: Ouch, Pain & Wince, Esqs.
Counsel to Dr Sam Stud

We seek legal compensation for damages to our client sustained at the departmental Christmas party. A cat (hereafter known as "Fluffy") allegedly belonging to one Maybelle Marketing, jumped into the lap of our client, Dr Sam Stud.

Dr Stud was trying to dispose of a particularly noxious tuna-related appetizer that attracted Fluffy's attention. Bodily injury, in the form of scratches, required application of three (3) Band-Aids to a private portion of Dr Stud's in-shape body. Injuries to fashionwear (otherwise known as "clothes") consisted of loose threads in Dr Stud's new Armani suit, snags in his Calvin Klein silk boxer shorts and clumps of orange cat hair on his maroon Versace tie.

As administrators for Dr Stud's million-dollar trust fund, we are determined to seek justice for our high-profile, image-conscious client.

To: Dr Freda Fearless, Associate Dean
From: Dr I M Power, Dean

Please coordinate with Legal on this. What was Fluffy doing at this party anyway? I thought you were going to have a little talk with Maybelle.

To: Dean I M Power
From: Dr Freda Fearless, Associate Dean

Nobody can talk to Maybelle unless s/he is a student or a cat. Sometimes I think Maybelle can't tell the difference. For Thanksgiving, Maybelle gave each student a small plastic bag filled with catnip. Some students did not understand the purpose of their little gifts and tried to sell them to Frankie Felon, the former student convicted of dealing drugs at academic conferences. Frankie's goon squad has taken up a crusade against deceptive labeling. They do not need lawyers to make their point.

To: Dr Hy Upp, Department Chair
From: Dr Norbert New

In response to our administration's Open Door Policy, I have sent five memos, each suggesting a brilliant new way to restructure the university. After one year on campus, I feel my views are accurate and insightful. I have never had a reply. Should I continue?

To: Dr Norbert New,
From: Dr Hy Upp

Next time you visit the Administration Building, notice the beautiful blaze in the reception area fireplace. There is no budget item for firewood. Instead, the ashes contain bits of memos from faculty, students and staff, a tribute to our enthusiastic Open Door policy.

However, if you come up with a way to keep Maybelle's cats off the campus, our university president will probably take you to lunch and buy you first class tickets to the Consumer Psychology Conferences in Tokyo, Copenhagen, and Sydney.

To: Dean I M Power, Dean
From: Dr Freda Fearless, Associate Dean

Dr Stud's lawyers have offered to settle if we find an indoor parking spot for his mauve Miata and get the cat hairs off his maroon Versace tie. The university lawyers insist on their day in court. What's going on here?

To Associate Dean Freda Fearless
From Dean I M Power

The staff of the VP-Policies includes eighteen lawyers. Seventeen would lose their jobs if we began settling claims peacefully. The loser of the annual "VP with Largest Staff" contest has to respond to queries from the Open Door Policy while the winner doesn't have to leave the Administration Building for a whole year. It's a tough call.

To: Dr Freda Fearless
From: Brenda Battleaxe, Legal
Re: Sam Stud's pending litigation

Here is the university's position on the above-captioned matter. The seven administrators attending the party (3 VPs, 1 AVP, 1 dean, 2 associate deans) know that cats are not allowed in university buildings. They are familiar with Fluffy's unique clawing propensities and are well aware that we have been quietly paying damages to Fluffy's victims for years. The fact that all seven administrators observed Fluffy at the party and failed to alert Campus Security does not contribute to the university's liability in any way.

In the past, our Christmas parties have conflicted with Dr Stud's annual flight to the French Riviera. This year, his family jet was grounded by unforeseen fog. Dr Stud had never met Fluffy and had no reason to expect any felines to be present at this event. Still, it is his responsibility to be aware of any and all cats that might be on university property, illegally or not, and to take precautions against feline-related injuries.

In our view, Dr Stud's partial consumption of a tuna-on-cracker represents contributory negligence and relieves us of all liability.

To: Dean I M Power
From Freda Fearless, Associate Dean

Good news! Dr Stud has withdrawn his lawsuit. We had a lucky break when the fashionwear evidence disappeared. Dr Stud's household staff apparently has strict orders to donate all of his clothes to charity as soon as the new issue of *Gentlemen's Quarterly* arrives on his doorstep.

At my encouragement, a photographer from *Beefcake Magazine* prepared a photo spread featuring Dr Sam Stud. He has convinced Dr Stud that cat scratches make a strong fashion statement. Frankie Felon managed to obtain the photos and negatives so that the good name of Weird University will be protected from any association with *Beefcake*.

At first Frankie thought he could get a better deal by selling these photos on campus; however, students have already viewed Dr Stud's body, clad in a Ralph Lauren halter top and shorts set, at the orientation barbecue. They have seen enough.

To: Dean I M Power
From: VP - Policies

As usual, my legal staff was instrumental in settling the Sam Stud Lawsuit. My accounting staff has just devoted three full weeks to finding the right ten-digit budget number for the charges submitted by your associate dean--payments to a sleazy photographer and a convicted criminal. Our next major project involves finding a place in the budget for some firewood.

To: All Faculty and Staff
From: VP - Policies

Please note that we are canceling the Open Door Policy. We are still considering the last suggestion submitted anonymously by a consumer researcher--an enterprising idea to replace the Faculty/Staff Counseling Program with a feline-based system of stress release ("Hold a Cat"). If our detailed accounting reports show that five felines are cheaper than five trained psychologists, you can expect a new campus resource to be in place in the very near future.

MAYBELLE GOES ON LEAVE**By Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com****To: Maybelle Marketing****From: Dean I M. Power**

Delighted to approve your leave to study Stray Cats: Predators and Prey. If you need more time to complete this seminal research, I have already signed renewal papers. No need to rush back.

To: Maybelle Marketing**From: Nefarious Airlines**

We are sorry to learn that Fluffy feels humiliated if her cat carrier is marked "Excess Baggage." Please remember that, in proportion to her size, Fluffy has more room in her carrier than our first class passengers enjoy in their recliner seats.

Anyway, your cats are well known in the airline world. We had to override the Hazardous Cargo Alert to allow Fluffy on board in any capacity.

To: Maybelle Marketing**From: Northern Trails University**

We're delighted to learn that you will be joining us for your extended leave. To move your household goods, we contracted with Organization Movers, Frankie Felon's latest acquisition. I believe Frankie got his start at your very own Weird University, where he began building an empire by dealing questionable substances at academic conferences. Frankie's lawyer, Big Tony, assures us Frankie has reformed.

To Organization Moving**From: Maybelle Marketing**

I've always wanted to try some participant observation research on the topic, Life without Furniture (not to mention clothing, dishes or sheets), and I am deeply grateful to your company for giving me an opportunity to experience this condition while my possessions remain lost somewhere near Delaware.

Since both my origin and destination are both west of the Mississippi, I'm glad my furniture will get to see something of the East Coast, even if I don't. However, my data collection is now approaching redundancy and I am ready to sleep in my own bed again.

To: Maybelle Marketing**From: Organization Moving**

We can authorize temporary accommodations until your furniture arrives, but we cannot force any hotel on the continent to accept Fluffy, Tabby and Furball as guests. Nor can we authorize restaurant meals for felines. We are sure Fluffy will recover from the trauma of eating off a paper plate on the floor.

Alas, we don't have a Feline Therapy Unit, but Big Tony has offered to devote some quality one-on-one time to Fluffy's morale problem.

To: Customer Service, Organization Moving Corp.
From: Central Dispatch, Organization Moving Corp.

Who hired Driver Tom in the first place? When the Highway Patrol asks about funny-looking plants, our drivers are supposed to declare them as household geraniums, slightly wilted from travel trauma. They are not supposed to say, "Gee, I dunno, but it sure looks like something from the sixties, don't it?"

After the entire van had been unloaded and inspected at the Oklahoma border, and all the dust analyzed, Tom just started driving east and didn't stop till he saw the ocean. It's up to the PR suits to tell Maybelle Marketing what happened to her stuff.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Customer Service, Organization Moving

We are genuinely sorry about the delay associated with delivery of your household goods. Believe me, our founders know all about life on the run.

We believe you will understand when we tell you that Driver Tom, one of our most experienced and dedicated professionals, halted his truck when he spied a cat caught in a tree on a freezing cold day. (OK, it was August, but he was in the mountains.)

Fortunately, ladders are standard equipment for Organization Movers. Driver Tom climbed the tree, rescued the cat and held its paw during surgery at the local veterinary hospital. After getting medical treatment for his own scratches, Tom climbed right back in his truck--but not before making sure that the cat would have a loving home with the veterinarian's assistant. We're sure you would have done the same.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Dr Hy Upp

In your absence, the department formed an Office Decorating Committee.

Bill Bigot has replaced your wall of feline symbols with a shrine to Vince Lombardi.

Sam Stud replaced your Feline Research bookshelf with a shrine to Giorgio Armani.

Dr Norbert New has requisitioned your computer to replace the one that was destroyed by mildew. He downloaded all your files to floppy disks for safekeeping.

Dr Nancy Nice (Education) has received a grant to use the freed-up space for her latest research project: How Nursery School Students Interact with Their Environment in the Absence of Restrictions and Restraints. She apologizes for the mix-up involving your floppy disks and the children's throw toys.

Please be assured that we miss you and we eagerly await your return at leave's end. However, don't skimp on your research: I fully support Dean Power's willingness to grant extensions into the next century.

Can Maybelle Be Replaced?**© Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com****To: Consumer Psychology Dept, Weird University**
From: Bill Bigot

Just a reminder that I'm chair of the departmental recruiting committee. We need to replace Maybelle, who will be on leave for the next two years and, hopefully, forever.

Let's also welcome Professor Charley Chart, who will serve as Acting Department Head while Dr Hy Upp takes a much-needed vacation somewhere in the South Seas.

Carry on, Charles!

To: Department of Consumer Psychology
From: Charley Chart, Acting Head

To preserve the quality of our fine academic programs, all course outlines must follow a common format: names on right, office hours on left, textbook title on top. Our program's integrity will not be challenged by hanging indents, loose commas or unjust margins.

To: Department of Consumer Psychology
From: Bill Bigot

To save everyone's time, I have sorted the applications into two piles, waste-basket and in-basket, using legitimate academic criteria. Three of our finalists are allergic to cats and the fourth co-sponsors a website for cat-haters. All could converse knowledgeably about Razorbacks, Lions, Wildcats and Dragons. Under my leadership, we will soon have a normal, wholesome consumer psychology department.

To: Department of Consumer Psychology
From: Charley Chart, Acting Head

Notice my new six-foot poster right next to the reception desk. I have listed everyone's name, office, and phone number. I also listed the dates when each person will be attending out-of-town conferences. We must keep track of each other's whereabouts at all times.

To: Adam Applicant
From: Bill Bigot, Search Committee Chair

Thank you for visiting the campus last week. I am sorry you became ill during the Wrestling Match, which was supposed to be the highlight of your visit.

There appears to be some confusion regarding your eligibility for the position, as you indicated you have moved in with an allergist and her three cats. Would the cats accompany you to Weird University? Please advise ASAP.

To: Adam Applicant, Job Candidate
From: Charley Chart, Acting Department Chair

Thank you for taking time to express your concerns about the hiring policies here at Weird University. Bill Bigot assured me he followed procedures to the letter.

You note that nobody asked about teaching or research, only about the degree of felinity that occupies your lifespace. These questions merely demonstrate the spirit of holistic awareness that permeates our department. No harm was intended by anyone, I assure you.

To: Adam Applicant, Job Candidate
From: Dean I. M. Power

Thank you for your query about Dr Chart's investigation of your complaint. Dr Chart asked Bill Bigot, "Did you do anything wrong?" Professor Bigot swore on his statue of Vince Lombardi that he followed procedures. Although Dr Chart was not present at any recruiting activities, he provided valuable information to support Professor Bigot's claim.

I trust that your mind will now be set at ease. We didn't mean to hurt anyone's feelings.

To: Campus Police
From: Norbert New

A computer was removed from my office while I attended a conference in Stillwater, Oklahoma. This equipment was borrowed from Maybelle Marketing's vacant office. If you find the culprit, I'll arrange to have it gift-wrapped. I am placing an emergency order for a blueberry iMac that does not have cat hair embedded in the keyboard.

By the way, am I hearing things or is there a strange humming sound coming from the Administration Building?

To: Weird University
From: Ouch, Pain & Wince, Lawyers for Dr Sam Stud's Million-Dollar Trust Fund

Dr Stud has asked us to write you concerning thefts of fashionwear that occurred in his office while he conferenced in the Northern Himalayas.

Your faculty may not care to track one another's whereabouts, but the very visible Travel Schedule has earned considerable attention from an undervalued segment of the reading public.

To: Adam Applicant
From: Daphne Dithers, Human Resources

Thank you for sharing your concern about irregular interview questions. I extended the investigation by interviewing the janitorial staff. They assure me that the committee followed procedures. The lawn-mowing crew concurred.

Best wishes as you move forward in your feline-filled life.

To: Adam Applicant
From: VP - Policies and Procedures

We are a respectable university and we take great pride in the professional quality of our recruiting. Dr Hy Upp, who has been on leave in Fiji, insists that all procedures were followed.

Bill Bigot's parting mutter ("no cats and no crazy people") was not intended to be discriminatory or insulting. We are sorry if your perception differs from his.

To: Charley Chart, Acting Head
From: Frankie Felon, President, Organization Enterprises

Welcome to our Referral Network! As a reward for alerting our representatives to some lucrative professional opportunities, we are pleased to enclose two first-class tickets to Hawaii as well as vouchers for a poolside double at the Waikiki Hilton. Just don't change those dates!

P.S. To activate your reward, please forward the license numbers of cars belonging to the ten best-paid administrators.

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Dr Hy Upp, Chair on Vacation

Your phone call, begging me to interrupt my sabbatical and return home, was most timely. As soon as my luggage has been steam-cleaned to meet the requirements of the Department of Agriculture, I can hop aboard a flight back to Weird University.

My sabbatical spirit was destroyed by a fortuitous encounter with Maybelle Marketing in the lobby of the Waikiki Hilton. It seems that an anonymous benefactor entered our names in a contest sponsored by Organization Enterprises, and we tied for first prize. What a coincidence!

Hawaii requires a 6-month animal quarantine, so I was spared the sight of Fluffy, Tabby and Furball. However, the head bellman agreed to waive all tips if Maybelle returns to the mainland with Aloha and Mahalo, disgruntled felines who failed their Hotel Mascot auditions.

To: Brenda Battleaxe, Legal Dept., Weird University
From: Rich, Bloated & Still Greedy,
Lawyers for Adam Applicant

Dr Applicant has agreed to withdraw his lawsuit in return for our fees and an undisclosed payment to the Stray Cat Rescue Fund. He anticipates great satisfaction in his new role as Special Consultant to the State Highway Patrol. However, he cannot guarantee that the Troopers will apply Weird University's investigative techniques when their radar detects identify unmarked administrative cars traveling the highways at the speed of sound.

To: Norbert New, Assistant Professor
From: Sally Student, Campus Police Officer

Never fear, your sanity remains intact. If you walk through the campus on a quiet evening, that sound you hear coming from the Admin Building does not represent crickets chirping, but rather ghostly whispers of the administrative choir chanting our campus mantra, "The committee followed procedure."

Your old computer has been cannibalized for parts and painted yellow. Could I borrow your new iMac for my next term paper?

MAYBELLE GOES TO THE BIG APPLE

By Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com

Call for Papers

FELINES AND FILM IN THE BIG APPLE!

Organized by Maybelle Marketing and Fluffy

I'm sure you all noticed the Disney classic, *That Darn Cat*, will be released this spring in New York. Our Foundation for Feline Unappreciated Research (FFUR) will sponsor a conference in New York to celebrate the movie event of the century. Naturally, we have arranged for a private screening followed by a panel discussion of this film. Attendance will be optional but we anticipate an SRO audience, so sign up early!

You may recall the plot of this world-renowned film: a large Siamese cat goes visiting in the evening. The FBI places a homing device on the cat's collar, in hopes that the feline will lead them to the criminals. There are some great shots of agents in trees. As tradition-bound academics, we solicit papers based on the classic version.

To: VP Policies & Procedures

From Brenda Battleaxe, Esq.

Re: legal aspects of affiliating a conference with a feline-inspired film. We cannot allow the good name of Weird University to be tarnished by association with films of questionable reputation. However, a visit to Blockbuster confirmed that this film has about as much sex and violence as a jar of peanut butter. Naturally, I needed a basis for comparison, which explains the attached invoice: three (3) videos from Frankie's Porn Palace and one (1) disguise to be worn during my visit to the Porn Palace.

From Dr Sam Stud - Consumer Research

Abstract: Clothing has always symbolized authority relations in police work. FBI agents dress conservatively in dark suits. The problem is that their suits come from ordinary stores and dark colors will show cat hair. For maximum effectiveness, agent attire should include Ralph Lauren's classical tweed.

Note: I won't need funding for the conference. The family helicopter will drop me off at the World Trade Center and I'll stay at our little pied-a-terre on Park Avenue. I suspect the screening of the film will conflict with Armani's private party at La Grenouille, honoring his favorite clients. It's a tough choice. I'll let you know.

From: Dr Fran Feminist - English

Abstract: Why are cat films always sexist and elitist? Inevitably the feline protagonist is male and Siamese. Remember *Bell, Book and Candle*? Surely a calico could be found to fill the leading role. Calicos are nearly always female.

The subtext of this film is about male power. Note that the male cat bonds with the FBI agents as they climb trees together.

When will we see a plain, well-muscled female agent who looks more like Charlie than one of the Angels?

Note: I suspect the screening of *That Darn Cat* will conflict with my invited address to Feminists for Fargo, celebrating another movie sub-cult.

From: Norbert New

Abstract: The film's feline hero demonstrates deviant consumer behavior. Rather than enjoy a bowl of nutritious crunchies in the warm fireside glow, he chooses to beg for scraps from the neighbors.

Note that the nature of the exchange relationship has been transformed. The food donations of the neighbors represent the purest form of altruism. The typical pet-owner relationship more closely resembles dominance and submission, with the pet communicating sentiments like, "Open that salmon if you value your sofa!"

Note: Much as I'd love to attend the screening of *That Darn Cat*, my former thesis advisor wants me to share *Secrets of Being Employed* with some of his current graduate students. He's afraid I will no longer have secrets to share if I don't get busy and publish *That Darn Thesis*.

From: Officer Sally Student

Abstract: This film supports my thesis, police officer as consumer researcher. Like cats, the police visit places and make observations. And they share their findings only with others of the same species. OK, it's not a strong proposal, but remember that reviewers can be stopped for speeding on their homeward journeys.

Note: You won't need my protection in the Big Apple. Just walk with confidence and carry Fluffy. And I'm afraid I'll have to miss the film. I've arranged to observe New York's Finest as they participate in an undercover caper. I believe they use trained German shepherds these days, not Siamese cats.

To: Frankie Felon, President, Organization Enterprises
From: Dr Hy Upp, Department Chair
CONFIDENTIAL

Here's a chance for your New York friends to make a little money. Fluffy and Tabby would make splendid specimens for a science lab. Furball would be an excellent main course for some zoo creature. The Hil-Mar Hotel. I'm sure you can get a pass key.

To Dr Hy Upp
From: Big Tony, Representing Frankie Felon
CONFIDENTIAL

Hy, baby, love to help, but my hands are tied. Seems that Big Arnie, who runs our New York operation, has a girlfriend who wanted to adopt a stray cat. Maybelle got the girlfriend a couple of passes to *That Darn Cat* and convinced the adoption agency to waive questions about Big Arnie's source of income. Anyone who messes with Fluffy will be feeding fishes in the East River.

Dateline: New York

New York Times Wire Service

Brenda Battleaxe, Esq., was released from custody after a lawyer identified only as “Big Tony” posted bail on her behalf. Ms. Battleaxe, an attorney for Weird University, was arrested in a Times Square boutique after she signed the name Lulu Labelle to a credit card imprinted with her real name.

“It’s all Maybelle’s fault,” she sobbed as she was led away. “I had to look at those films again, just to make sure!”

Police were unable to establish a connection between Ms. Battleaxe’s arrest and the activities of a feline research conference chaired by Maybelle Marketing, although both are from the same university.

“Never mind Visa!” Big Tony was heard to mutter as he led Ms. Battleaxe away. “Next time you need credit, call Organization Enterprises. We lawyers take care of each other.”

WEIRD UNIVERSITY GETS ACCREDITED!

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To: All Faculty
From: Freda Fearless, Associate Dean
Re: Mission and Accreditation

Dean Power has assigned me responsibility for managing our business school's application for accreditation. We must each grab an oar as our ship moves toward this momentous harbor.

As a start, here is a forty-page questionnaire that must be completed within three working days. Thank you in advance for your fine cooperation.

To: Dr Hy Upp, Department Chair
From: Norbert New, Assistant Professor

Help! I am supposed to prepare certified copies of the minutes of our committee meetings for the last three years.

Our committee has never met. In fact, we have no idea what this committee is supposed to do.

To: Norbert New
From: Dr Hy Upp

Of course your committee has met. You have had four meetings a year to review the building. Your committee is merely experiencing repressed memory syndrome, which is what keeps our committee system alive. If we remembered what happened during those meetings, we'd do away with committees altogether.

Just come up with a "best case" meeting scenario and change the tense.

To: Dr Freda Fearless
From: Maybelle Marketing

Let's invite the accreditation team over to my house! I can serve my specially blended catnip tea and show the classic video of *That Darn Cat*. They'll relax after they've had a chance to play with Fluffy, Tabby and Furball.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Dr Freda Fearless

Alas, we have already slated you for a special mission that conflicts with the team's visit. You have been chosen to visit our sister school in Brazil to negotiate our new exchange program. They are eagerly looking forward to meeting you and we have promised you will bring along your feline family. Start packing!

To: All Faculty
From: Associate Dean Freda Fearless

Attached is a request for a list of your research. Please be thorough. Did you write a fourth-grade book report? By all means, attach a copy. We need to have the exact title and page numbers, however.

To: Bill Bigot
From: Dean Freda Fearless

It is not clear why you have chosen to tell Maybelle that the Brazilians do not share our appreciation of the psychology of feline consumption behaviors. Please assure Maybelle that you were joking about the alligators.

We have worked very hard to find a spot to hide Maybelle during the accreditation team's visit. When I said we must each pick up an oar, I did not mean that we should hit each other on the head between strokes.

To: All Faculty
From: Associate Dean Freda Fearless
Re: Service questionnaire

The accreditation team wants details about the community and professional service of all our faculty. Attached is a ten-page questionnaire to help you provide this valuable information. Comprehensiveness counts! Taking your dog to obedience training or getting Fluffy declawed can certainly represent service to the community.

To: Associate Dean Fearless
From: Ouch, Pain and Wince, Esqs., Counsel to Dr Sam Stud

Please be advised that our client Dr Sam Stud is on a sabbatical leave. He has borrowed the family yacht to study consumer psychology along the Mediterranean beaches, with a comparison sample from Maui. While Dr Stud admires your persistence, he notes that the speedboat you chartered to hand-deliver the latest questionnaire has dented his yacht.

This comes at a particularly awkward time, as the VP - Campus Environment has been negotiating with Dr Stud to donate an espresso bar to the administration building, solely for the use of the VP's, their guests and their lawyers. I am sure you can find a way to create adequate documentation for the accreditation team without disturbing our client's voyages through the Med and through life.

To: Associate Dean Freda Fearless
From: Norbert New, Assistant Professor

Attached please find my 200-page justification of the Consumer Psychology course sequence. One hundred and ninety-nine pages are devoted to justifying the inclusion of Maybelle's Feline Psychology course. The appendix includes an enlarged photo of Fluffy's claws. One hopes this will suffice.

To: Consumer Psychology Faculty
From: Bill Bigot, Chair, Committee to Explore Graduate Programs
MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The accreditation team wants to see evidence of faculty participation. Accordingly, Associate Dean Freda Fearless has asked me to chair a committee to review the graduate program and make recommendations to the dean.

The committee members normally congregate at the sports bar down the road and we invite everyone to join our meetings. We take breaks to celebrate touchdowns and observe a moment of respect for field goals.

At our first meeting, we reviewed Norbert New's proposal to put the following on the agenda: Articulate the program's goals, objectives and outcomes. The committee unanimously agreed that we are to focus on making the existing program more effective and efficient -- to "clean it up," so to speak. Our mission is to explore, not plan. Therefore, we will defer the proposed agenda item to an undisclosed future date.

A lengthy discussion ensued on whether to hold the comprehensive exams in the auditorium or the fourth-floor classroom. The committee unanimously rejected Dr Norbert New's proposal to review the content and purpose of the exams. Our student representative's proposal -- allow students to type the exams into a computer -- was also rejected, although we agreed to enter a new agenda item to allow students to use mechanical pencils as well as ballpoint pens.

The committee unanimously approved a resolution to market the program as "Consumer Psychology for the Twenty-first Century." We then adjourned to celebrate a decisive televised victory that was shown on the big screen.

To: Consumer Psychology Department
From: Associate Dean Freda Fearless

Thank you all for your cooperation on my project, Accreditation for the Millennium. The activity of the accreditation team consisted of (a) weighing all our documents and (b) assessing the quality of restaurants in our neighboring village. Our copy machines have managed to process a quarter-ton of paper, and we found heavy binders in the store room to add ballast.

Special thanks to Bill Bigot, whose timely application of soy sauce to a quarter-pound burger with onions was successfully consumed as "Asian Delight."

Just one question: Is Weird University a Big Ten football school? I never did get these things straightened out and can't imagine where students would get that idea.

To: Dr Hy Upp
From: Norbert New, Assistant Professor

I just learned that we have devoted \$200,000 to getting accredited. That does not count the time we took away from class preparation, research and program development.

What do we gain from accreditation? Most of our students don't even realize their degrees come from Weird University. A few of them seem to think they saw our school in last year's Rose Bowl.

To: Norbert New
From: Dr Hy Upp

Enclosed is a copy of the travel schedule for Dean I. M. Power. Notice that he has been assigned to accreditation teams designed to study schools in Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the Grand Cayman Islands. Without accreditation, such travel would be neither appropriate nor realistic among university administrators who lack independent trust funds.

I'm sorry we cannot come up with funds to send you to Chicago to present your fascinating research on Imaginary Student Consumption. The accreditation team says we've done enough research to last two years, and even a bus ticket would strain our budget at the moment.

PAWS, CLAWS AND – TROUT?!

© Cathy Goodwin

To: Our weird little family at Weird University
From: Daphne Dithers, Human Resource Director

Free flu shots next week, yet another service of your Human Resource Department, in conjunction with the discount plan offered by Organization Enterprises Health Services Division.

First come, first served. Bring campus ID card, results of last blood test, copies of recent driving record, passport and smelling salts. Blindfolds will be provided for the squeamish but there are no refreshments or places to rest. Fainting must take place in your own work area.

To: All Faculty
From: Barry Boring, President, Academic Senate
Re: Proposal for new major in Feline Consumption

Attached is a proposal submitted by Maybelle Marketing of the Consumer Psychology department. The major has five courses, no prerequisites and no substitutions. Please comment.

To: Faculty and Staff, Consumer Psychology Department, Weird University
From: Daphne Dithers, HR Director

Okay, who posted this sign on your department bulletin board:: “Flu shots: another way for the HR folks to stick it to us.” He or she will get the black plague if I have anything to say about it.

To: Barry Boring, Chair, President, Academic Senate
From: Deanna Detail, Linguistics
Copy to Consumer Psychology Department

Point of clarification: Does feline consumption mean that felines will be consumed?

Or is there a proposal to study how what felines consume in our society? In other words, is this one of your b-school plays for getting your research subsidized by a cat food company?

To: Barry Boring and Deanna Detail
From: Bill Bigot

If it’s about consuming felines, the proposal gets my vote. Pass the salt and butter!

To: Barry Boring, President, Academic Senate
From: Maybelle Marketing

I move that Bill Bigot be excused from future deliberations and votes pertaining to my Feline Consumption proposal. Obviously he is biased.

To: Barry Boring
From: Bill Bigot

Thanks for the excuse letter. Now I can schedule my annual fishing trip to Moose Lake with the other excusees and cat-haters. Best of luck with the debate.

Sorry we can't take Fluffy with us. While I am deeply moved by the thought of Fluffy swimming to shore from a rowboat in an icy lake, I am less thrilled by the prospect of sleeping in a claw-shredded tent. Besides, I am convinced that, in any contest with nature, Fluffy would prevail.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Deanna Detail

Point of clarification: On your Introduction to Feline Consumption syllabus, does the topic "Siamese vs. Persian: Talk versus Silence" come before or after "Paws, Claws and Fur: The Feline Infrastructure?"

And in the five-course sequence, is "Canine vs. Feline Consumption" a prerequisite to "Advanced Feline Consumption?"

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Deanna Detail

What do you mean, it doesn't matter? Of COURSE it matters. A student's entire lifetime of learning will be affected by course and topic sequences.

I suggest you sign up for the HR's unique Attitude Adjustment course before you pursue this matter further.

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Daphne Dithers

I'm sorry you were refused a flu shot because the Organization Enterprises health nurse accused you of faking your ID. Your ID photo appears to come from your high school yearbook, showing dark hair with more than two visible strands atop your head. Also your photo shows a face that radiates considerably more happiness than we would associate with a dean of a modern-day business schools.

The Organization Photo Studios has offered to update your photo and/or face at a heavily discounted fee. They are very experienced in the art of change and creation of appearance to meet strategic needs.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Daphne Dithers

Sorry, our Attitude Adjustment course does not include alcohol or catnip, although it is held on Friday afternoons from four to six, after the Academic Senate meeting. Wherever did you get those ideas?

To: Barry Boring and Maybelle Marketing
From: Sam Stud

My course, Consumption of the Super Rich, should be a required course in the Feline Consumption sequence. Rationale: This course is my favorite. I get my highest ratings in this course. I feel as though I own this course and want to see it thrive and prosper.

To: Barry Boring and Maybelle Marketing
From: Fran Feminist

Students should be allowed to substitute a Feminist Consumption course for any course in the Feline Consumption sequence. I have designed three versions of such a course and am prepared to implement a Women and Consumption sequence as soon as the ballots are counted.

To: Weird Family Members who are Experiencing Weird Side Effects from Flu Shots
From: Daphne Dithers

There appears to have been a misunderstanding with our Health Services Supplier. Approximately half of those who sought flu shots were actually processed for blood donation to the Organization Enterprise Support for Wounded Felons unit.

Please disregard the comments of Nancy Nolo, associate dean of the law school: "Given the state of modern medicine it is nearly impossible to tell the difference."
 Meanwhile, whether you experience physical or emotional trauma, our Hold-a-Cat unit is standing by to offer supportive therapy.

To: All Faculty
From: Barry Boring, President, Academic Senate
Re: Report on Feline Consumption Proposal

Academic Senate met for three hours last Friday to discuss adding this major to our university's curriculum. It was recommended that the proposal be amended to include courses in feline statistics, catnip as an addictive substance, and sleeping as an art form.

A full hour of debate was given to nomenclature of the course FS 09L: "Paws, Claws and Fur." The social science group felt the course should be titled "Weapons and Decoration: Claws and Fur," with "Paws" incorporated into the Feline Mobility course. The library science group insisted on alphabetizing the course title to read, "Claws, Fur and Paws," with no concern for content.

Accordingly, the proposal was shelved until next September, when the Senate will meet again with a new president. Best of luck and thanks to everyone.

To: Bill Bigot
From: Barry Boring, President, Academic Senate
CONFIDENTIAL

Thanks for the trout. Next year, I'm coming with you! The next senate president is fond of fresh catfish. It is not too early to begin strategic planning for the perfect getaway.

NEW OFFICES!
© Cathy Goodwin

To: Department Faculty
From: Dr Hy Upp, Chair

We have just been allocated two floors in the new Business School building. Although the finance department has tried to get our little group transferred to the College of Arts and Crafts, Dean I. M. Power has no desire to downsize his domain and I suspect the faculty have become attached to their B-school salaries, perks and conference rooms. We will have a meeting next week to discuss assignment of offices. It shouldn't take long.

To: Dr Hy Upp
From: Dr Sam Stud

I absolutely must have an eastern exposure. If I miss the morning sun, I become grouchy and irritable. I will need extra outlets for the minibar refrigerator and microwave. And I must have a small closet to keep a few changes of clothes.

To: Dr Hy Upp
From: Norbert New, Assistant Professor

Has the new building been checked for mildew?

To: Dr Hy Upp, Chair, Consumer Psychology
From: Maybelle Marketing
Re: Mandated Absence

I will have to miss the meeting because. I have been summoned for jury duty. Therefore, I'll have to spend three days waiting to be called for service on a trial.

I think I'd make a great juror! I can be impartial and understanding. And my analytical skills should be helpful in sifting through evidence. After all, I've had years of practice sifting through kitty litter. Not much difference, from what they tell me.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Dr Hy Upp
Re: Your absence

Great idea! Maybe you'll get assigned to one of those six-month cases. We will miss you, but we know you will find the experience stimulating and informative.

To: Bill Bigot
From: Dr Hy Upp

I know you've asked to have your office located far away from Maybelle, but she has asked for the office next to yours. She said Fluffy enjoys teasing you.

To: Campus Parking Office
From: Dr Sam Stud

There is a possibility that my new office will overlook Faculty Parking Lot 3 West East. Please be sure that you assign only Lexus, Acura, Mercedes and BMW owners to this lot. My aesthetic sensibilities are offended by Hondas and I would like to see GM cars banned permanently from places of higher learning.

To: Bill Bigot
From: Dr Hy Upp

Okay, okay. we'll put you and Maybelle on separate floors. No need for profanity or Rottweilers to make your point.

To: Bill Bigot
From: Ouch, Pain and Wince, Esqs. Lawyers for Trust Fund of Dr Sam Stud

We regret that we cannot accommodate your request for a donation to the new business building that would be designated for "Device to Prevent Felines from Entering the Premises."

Our client's priorities involve Toyotas, not tabbies. We suspect you drive an SUV, a species that our client seeks to outlaw altogether.

To: Department Faculty
From: Dr Hy Upp, Department Head

Please, please do not call me about your offices over the holiday weekend. My family and I will be celebrating a combination of two birthdays and three religious holidays. We will turn off our telephones and refuse to read e-mail. All offices are the same size and color. And as yet there is no cat hair anywhere in the entire building.

To: Dr Bill Bigot
From: Colleen "Cutting" Upp, Daughter of Dr Hy Upp, Aged 12

Thank you for the Harry Potter book that was FedExed to me over the weekend. Unfortunately I just switched to Nancy Drew.

I did tell my dad he should be extra nice to you. He just laughed and poured more zinfandel from the case we received from Dr Sam Stud. Well, I guess now I am supposed to call him *Uncle Sam*.

To: Dr Hy Upp
From: Maybelle Marketing

Good news! I may be back sooner than you think. The judge asked me if I would be biased. As a student of consumer psychology, I told her that all perception is biased. Five seconds later, I was back in the waiting room watching Judge Judy re-runs.

I bet Judge Judy allows cats in *her* courtroom.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Chief Judge, Circuit Court

We are sorry that you were embarrassed by the judge's screening (and screaming) questions during your stint on jury duty. It is customary to ask if there are criminals or law enforcement officers in your family and whether you can tell the difference.

Perhaps the judge should have been more respectful when you raised the question of whether registration of Fluffy's claws designates this cat as a law enforcement officer or a criminal. Regardless, we have removed your name from the list of eligible jurors for the next twenty years.

To: Dr Hy Upp
From: Maybelle Marketing

You did a great job with those office assignments! I love my corner office with the southeast exposure and the windowsill is just the right size for Fluffy's cushion. What a nice surprise! How did this happen?

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Dr Hy Upp

While you were gone, everyone lobbied for offices. When we tallied the list, we realized we had forgotten your office altogether.

The faculty originally voted to assign you and your feline family to the Agricultural Building on the other side of campus. You were saved when Professor Nancy Nice of the Education Department requisitioned the ninth floor conference room for her project: "Effect of children's screams on parental facial expression."

We suspected the building would become an unplanned field experiment for, "Effect of exposure to pre-teen screams on family planning decisions of hirtherto childless adults." Since we are pro-child and pro-family, we converted the conference room to two offices. The second office was requisitioned by the doctoral students, who particularly wanted to be next to you. I have no idea why.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Darius Diffident, Doctoral Student

Hi, Maybelle! Do you need someone to babysit with Fluffy, Tiger and Furball while you are teaching or travelling? Have I got a deal for you.

Six faculty members have been too busy to chair my paradigm-shattering dissertation. I have a draft of the first 200 pages, single spaced, and a permit from the local police to conduct the experiments under close supervision in a locked room with fire extinguishers. Can we talk?

WARNED OFF!

© Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com

To: Dean I. M. Power
From Melinda Meticulous, Secretary to University President

The president acknowledges your 100-page complaint about a viewpoint expressed in an e-mail transmission by Maybelle Marketing of our Consumer Psychology Department. He is sorry your feelings were hurt, but encourages you to seek assistance through our normal, lengthy legal channels.

Our maintenance staff has refused to erect your fifty-foot sign proclaiming, "MAYBELLE IS EVIL." Their union president has become quite fond of the stray kittens Maybelle donated to celebrate their successful contract negotiation.

P.S. What did Maybelle say that was so horrible, anyway?

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Daphne Dithers, Human Resources

Delighted to approve the attached memo as a formal warning to Maybelle. I particularly commend your use of the words "scurrilous," "libelous," and "unprofessional" to describe her message. Don't forget to remind her that, if she keeps this up, she'll soon be living on a park bench and fighting Fluffy for a share of Tabby Tuna.

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Brenda Battleaxe, Legal

I concur with Ms. Dithers. However, our policy requires at least two inches of paperwork for a warning letter and four for a more serious disciplinary action. How about making a few dozen copies of Maybelle's noxious e-mail?

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Edwin Entitled, Faculty Union President

Maybelle's grievance of your formal warning will be our Event of the Year. Dr Sam Stud has faxed the Giorgio Armani headquarters, offering big bucks for a designer poster that is sure to become a collectors' item. Dr Fran Feminist's demonstration, Weir Women versus Weir University, will be featured on the six o'clock news. Maybelle's cat Furball is perfecting her Patsy Cline imitation so she can sound lonely and betrayed on Drive-to-Work Radio tomorrow morning. We anticipate no conflict with the Alumni Reunion Week that is now in progress.

Maybelle claims she has never transmitted the memo you describe so vividly. Will you fax over a copy, or shall we send over a process server while you're presenting the State of the Business School to the assembled alums?

To: All Senior Administrators
From: University President

Man--er, Person--the Battle Stations! All hands on deck!
 Never mind--just get me out of this g--d--- mess!

To: Frankie Felon, Organization Enterprises
From: Vice President - Policies & Procedures

Will you be in the sauna tonight around eleven? No concealed weapons or tape recorders this time!

To: Frankie Felon, President, Organization Enterprises
From: Halibert Hacker, Independent Contractor

Per your request, I accessed the e-mail network of the business school at Weird University, searching for slander amidst the files of one Maybelle Marketing.

The only thing that came close was a two-line note in the on-line Trash file of deleted messages, addressed to fifty recipients who are grouped together electronically as "Feline Support Group." The note said: "Dean Power is one of the most dastardly cat-haters I have ever met. Shouldn't we investigate? Signed: Maybelle Marketing."

There is no sign that the contents were ever sent. Apparently the sender had second thoughts.

Enclosed is my invoice for \$5000, which includes a premium for emergency service and an extra \$1000 for the confidentiality agreement that had to be signed in blood. Small unmarked bills as usual.

To: Vice President - Campus Environment
From: Colonel Biggas ("Big") Brass, US Marine Corps

Of course I remember serving with you in Vietnam. Your K-9 unit was always "Best Groomed Under Combat Conditions," but we had to abort a number of missions because your attack dogs were easily distracted by endless games of chase-the-ball.

Sorry, we can't solve your problems by inducting them into the Marine Corps. The Secret Weapons unit has long admired Fluffy's skills, but we are not equipped to incorporate Maybelle's peculiar brand of feline-assisted psychological warfare. Try the Air Force.

Semper Fi to you, too.

To: Brenda Battleaxe, Legal
From: Daphne Dithers, Human Resources

Professor Bill Bigot apparently saw the message on Maybelle's screen and made a verbal report based on his immediate recollections. Dean Power argues that Maybelle's note WAS transmitted to him--through Bill Bigot as the Agent of Justice. Will this hold up in court?

To: All Administrators
From: Brenda Battleaxe, Legal

Henceforth ALL warnings to faculty, formal or informal, must be backed up by at least six inches of paperwork and twenty copies of all available evidence. Electronic and telepathic copies are not acceptable.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Freda Fearless, Associate Dean

Good news! You've been hinting that you'd like to spend more time attending to your personal life in Alaska. Therefore, I am delighted to advise that you have just won a fellowship to spend a year in Nome, Alaska, working on your feline research projects. Dean Power was kind enough to put your name forward, with Department Head Dr Hy Upp lending enthusiastic support.

The fellowship includes first-class transportation as well as accommodation for yourself and your feline family. Your only out-of-pocket cost will be the usual Hazardous Cargo charge for Fluffy.

The fellowship does impose one condition, however. For the year in Alaska, you must have no contact with Weird University or its inmates, particularly by e-mail. And while you will always be a much-appreciated member of our campus community, please be aware that there is no obligation to avoid consideration of alternative opportunities that you might find more attractive after a year in the arctic.

To: Frankie Felon
From: VP - Policies & Procedures

Ten thousand dollars to poke around in a file?! This is criminal!
I have another assignment for you regarding a dean on this campus. Sauna at ten. Dress is black towel, no wires.

WEIRD QUALITY AT WEIRD UNIVERSITY
© Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com

To: All Faculty in Business School
From: Dean I. M. Power

Effective immediately, everyone is to participate in our new Customer Service program. Please adjust your schedule so you can sign up for a two-hour workshop in Classroom 306B. We must have everyone who works in this business school involved in this important program.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Campus Communications

We appreciate the fact that your phone was struck by lightning. We tried to call you to schedule a repair but were unable to reach you. Please call us at once from the number that is having problems.

To: All Faculty
From: Bill Bigot

As coordinator of the Customer Service workshops, I am asking you to complete the following survey. Please rank in order of importance:

Courtesy

Friendliness

Accuracy

To: Dr Hy Upp, Department Chair
From: Norbert New, Assistant Professor

Why is Bill Bigot in charge of Customer Service? His research program is geared to demonstrating the superiority of robots over humans. And as a consumer psychologist, I have to question his motto: "Treat your employees like feudal serfs and they will treat your customers like lords of the manor!"

To: Norbert New
From: Dr Hy Upp, Department Chair

At the last College meeting, which you wisely missed, we had three proposals for Mission Statement. Maybelle Marketing offered "Clawing the Competition" with a live demo. Sam Stud presented a video for "Take Flight into the Future," featuring his family jet. Bill Bigot used a full-color PowerPoint™ presentation with sound effects. It was no contest.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Campus Communications

Glad your phone is working. Sorry your voicemail was inadvertently disconnected. We left you a message about this problem yesterday.

To: Dr Hy Upp, Chair, Consumer Psychology
From: Norbert New, Assistant Professor

My efforts to instill quality in the classroom are meeting unexpected obstacles. Yesterday my student Cynthia Cheer said, "You are giving too many assignments! I have other obligations. I have my Irish dance class, I am maid of honor in my sister's wedding, and I have to help my boyfriend's fraternity brothers write their English papers. How do you expect me to do all that and homework too?"

To: Norbert New
From: Dr Hy Upp

Give her time. Next semester her tendons will be torn, her sister will be divorced and her boyfriend's fraternity will be placed on academic probation. How are your counseling skills?

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Edwin Entitled, Union President

Bill Bigot claims that the presence of Fluffy has a negative effect on teaching quality in our classrooms. We are prepared to argue that the presence of Fluffy has a powerful upward effect on Maybelle's student evaluations and a downward effect on speculation about Maybelle's clothes, hair style and personal life.

Dr Sam Stud has tried to rent Fluffy on a class-by-class basis after he wore his Armani suit and Brioni tie to a cognitive psychology lecture. Students changed the discussion to "why the prof is dressed up today" and "what does a guy do for fun around here anyway."

We suggest you look the other way this time. If Fluffy gets on the agenda for contract negotiations, we will raise the stakes by proposing tigers and end up compromising on Rottweilers. Your quality scores will be off the chart.

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Saralee Sweetheart, Doctoral Student

Since when does a southern accent signify below-average customer service above the Mason-Dixon line? If Bill Bigot brings this up again, he will be plucking magnolia blossoms from some very embarrassing portions of his anatomy.

To: Dr Hy Upp
From: Vladimir Visitor

Bill Bigot wants me to introduce quality in my classroom by setting up a class website and putting my overheads online. It would be nice to have handouts too. Alas, the department secretary has advised that these options are not available to me.

To: Vladimir Visitor
From: Dr Hy Upp

As a visitor, you do not have access to software and support that our students have come to take for granted. We realize your student evaluations will be low as a result, but of course that gives us an opportunity to decline your re-appointment for next year.

To: Bill Bigot
From: Dean I. M. Power

Effective immediately, I realize your skills are far too critical to be wasted on the Customer Service project. Our Football Liaison program makes a significantly greater contribution to our bottom line. Henceforth you will be responsible for making sure everyone on the faculty has access to football tickets and football pools, and you will host tailgate parties for our Distinguished Visitors and Contributors.

I strongly advise you not to expand your role into basketball. The head coach of the women's basketball team is a distant relative of Frankie Felon and the author of a book, "Basketball can be murder." A word to the wise...

MAYBELLE GOES FOR MAGNIFICENCE

© Cathy Goodwin

**To: Faculty, Consumer Psychology Dept
Magnificent University (Mag U)
From: Elmer Eminent, Department Head**

Maybelle Marketing of Weird University will spend next year with us. I realize that nobody here has heard of Maybelle or her innovative research on feline consumption. However, if we can't fill our slots, we lose our lines to Home Economics and Sports Marketing.

Maybelle's current department head, Dr Hy Upp, has offered to transfer a large unrestricted donation if we keep Maybelle and Fluffy for at least a year. I got the impression this Fluffy is some sort of a stuffed cat that Maybelle carries around. She's rather sensitive on the subject.

**To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Consumer Psych Dept Secretary, Mag U**

Re your request for an empty shelf, please be advised that we are still using part of your office as a broom closet. Don't touch anything! Since you're just here for a year, I've allocated a small cardboard box to hold your supplies, books and notes.

**To: Elmer Eminent
From: Maybelle Marketing**

Bob Brilliant, my erstwhile colleague, just introduced me to the faculty. He described me as a clueless researcher and suggested that people could use my research papers to line their cat boxes.

I apologize for the claw marks on the conference table, However, Fluffy has always been welcome at department meetings and did not take kindly to such epithets as "terrorist," "intruder," and "moth-eaten old alley cat."

**To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Elmer Eminent**

Professor Brilliant's sense of humor is...well, brilliant. He's a good sport. After all, he's the only faculty member who tried to pat Fluffy and he didn't bill you for the Band-Aids and tetanus shot.

**To: Bob Brilliant
From: Elmer Eminent
CONFIDENTIAL**

Great intro! If you need more filling for the catbox, I have extra copies of Maybelle's resume.

**To: Elmer Eminent
From: Maybelle Marketing**

I notice there is a three-day orientation seminar for new faculty, including gourmet lunches and the Mag U special seminar, "The role of beer in faculty research: an experiential exercise." Am I registered?

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Elmer Eminent

You're only here for a year, so I won't authorize spending the \$10 registration fee. You get five minutes with the secretary for orientation. After all, how much trouble can you get into in eight short months?

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Peter Perfect

Thank you for sharing a draft of your 50-page paper, a detailed analysis of feline vs. canine consumption, with thirty-five experiments and forty-two hypotheses. The paper has potential to make a small but significant contribution. No further comments.

Also thank you for bringing chocolate chip cookies to school. Baking is both gender-appropriate and visitor-appropriate. Attached is a five-page critique of the cookies. They were a little dark around the edges. Perhaps you need to calibrate your oven. A few more trials and you should be, well, perfect!

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Elmer Eminent

I have received a complaint about your recent attempt to consume a truffle while waiting your turn at the copy machine. Please note that we have two candy dishes in the copy room. The dish with truffles and Godiva chocolate is available only to permanent faculty, staff and doctoral students. The stale tootsie rolls and recycled airline mints are intended for visitors, vagrants and students who overslept through a test and want a make-up. Don't get above your station.

To: Elmer Eminent
From: Security
Re: Report of False Alarm

Enclosed is a bill for \$500. Your visitor, Maybelle Marketing, set off the burglar alarm on Saturday. She explained that she needed to work weekends to grade papers from the three courses that were added to her schedule after her research presentation to the faculty.

Also enclosed is a bill for \$750 for water damage that resulted when Maybelle set off the fire alarm. It seems she didn't have time for lunch and was trying to revive a stale tootsie roll in an illegal microwave next to the illegal catbox, cat food and cat. I believe these issues are covered thoroughly at New Faculty Orientation.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Elmer Eminent, Peter Perfect and Bob Brilliant

Why don't you come to the basketball game with us next week? Bring Fluffy.

Mag U Mouthpiece, the Distinguished Student Newspaper**HEADLINE: Visitor's Cat Victorious Over University Mascot**

Charlie Crocodile, Mag U's live mascot, was treated for claw marks following a confrontation with Fluffy, a mixed-breed cat owned by Visiting Faculty Person Maybelle Marketing. Fluffy escaped with only a little collar damage. Campus police have declined to investigate the reason for Fluffy's close proximity to Charlie's jaw.

To: Frankie Felon, Organization Enterprises
From: Maybelle Marketing

Hi, remember me from Weird University? I need your help.

To: Dr Hy Upp, Department Chair
Consumer Psychology, Weird University
From: Elmer Eminent, Department Head, Mag U

I have just received a copy of a book., Magnificent University Unveiled, published by Organization Enterprise. This book includes our doctoral students' candid evaluation of all the faculty. Worse, there is a shot of our senior scholars de-furring the cheerleaders after Fluffy's recent encounter with the university mascot and their own encounter with the local beer service.

We love Maybelle and suspect you are missing her. Therefore, we'll pay her salary for the rest of the year but she can reside on your campus. Fluffy too. Good luck.

MAYBELLE'S ACTIVITY REPORT**© Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com****To: All Faculty****From: Associate Dean Freda Fearless**

Time for our annual faculty activity reports! Attached is a twenty-page outline that you can follow when submitting your activities. Please be thorough.

Although I was a month late mailing these forms, your deadline does not change. You didn't want spring break anyway, did you?

To: Associate Dean Fearless**From; Ouch, Pain and Wince, Lawyers for Dr Sam Stud**

We are disturbed that you refuse to consider Dr Stud's clothing purchases as job-related. Dr Stud's fashionwear has enhanced his teaching and research activities considerably. Student evaluation forms included such comments as "Cool dude!" and, "Great dresser!" A few even wrote, "Looks like a marketing guy." Dr Stud adds class to your faculty and he expects to be appropriately recognized and compensated.

To: Dr Hy Upp, Chair**From: Eleanor Earnest**

As a new adjunct professor, I am a little disturbed about the system of student evaluations. I realize we are supposed to treat students as customers. However, our standards for customers are somewhat lower than those of most local restaurants. Our students import their own food (pepperoni pizza in the front, cheeseburger with fries in the rear), wear clothes that expose their belly button rings and take mysterious calls on their cell phones throughout class. One student scrawled, "This course was no good. We had to read the book to get a passing grade!"

To: Eleanor Earnest**From: Dr Hy Upp, Chair, Consumer Psychology**

Our faculty review committee considers one number: the average of student responses to "Rate this instructor on a scale of 1 to 5." We realize that some students assume 1 is highest and others prefer a 5. We realize that some students may have sat in your class by mistake the entire term and won't know the difference till they see their final grades.

However, our procedures are carved in stone and are hardly unique. After all, a car salesperson told me he had to get all "Excellent" customer ratings to keep his job. He admits he doesn't assign grades to his customers, at least not out loud. So why should we be different?

To: Dr Sam Stud**From: Associate Dean Freda Fearless**

Thank you for the note from the editor of the Journal of Prestigious Research acknowledging receipt of a case of Rabbit Ridge Zinfandel – Sonoma 1998, a box of Belgian chocolates and a gift box of Brie and French Munster cheeses. Of course you can include this note in your report. File it under "evidence of research productivity."

To: Dr Norbert New
From: Associate Dean Freda Fearless

I realize there is no place on the faculty review form to list “Caring for Maybelle’s three difficult cats while she attended the annual Feline Consumption conference.” It is not clear that you actually performed a service that created a benefit for the department, college or university. After all, you did manage to return the cats alive.

You may want to include this item as evidence of collegiality. Collegiality and teamwork are vital aspects of our work here at Weird University, and evidence of these qualities will add at least nineteen cents to your annual raise.

To: Dr, Hy Upp, Chair
From: Norbert New, Assistant Professor

Last year I supervised 3 dissertations, published two articles and made four conference presentations. Dr Karl Killjoy wrote a letter to the editor of the local paper and gave a talk to a group of zookeepers on the topic of Herding the Big Cats. Our state’s sunshine law gives me access to everybody’s record, so I learned that Dr Killjoy’s raise was considerably larger than mine! What’s the scoop here?

To: Norbert New, Assistant Professor
From: Dr Hy Upp, Chair

As usual, the scoop can be found in the litterbox. Dean I. M. Power has decided that faculty need more exposure to the corporate world. The wife of the chairman of the Board of Regents has encouraged more exposure to felines. Don’t even ask about Maybelle’s raise.

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Associate Dean Freda Fearless

I have just reviewed and evaluated all the faculty annual reports from the Department of Consumer Psychology. I have no idea how to evaluate Maybelle’s summary, which reports research, teaching and service on topics that range from marginally valuable to just plain ... well, weird.

However, Maybelle does have close relationships all over campus and her students say that the presence of Fluffy in her classes has made a valuable contribution to their learning experience, far more than traditional texts, term papers and exams. The union president says Maybelle has made his job more meaningful, probably because her feline-related problems account for half his workload. And the wife of the Board chairman personally wrote an enthusiastic note about Maybelle’s research.

I gave Maybelle the highest rating possible and recommended her for a significant pay raise. It is certainly your prerogative to override my recommendation and I will understand perfectly if you choose to do so.

However, please remember that Brenda Battleaxe has used her legal skills to obtain a six-month parental leave to honor her adoption of two stray cats. It is possible that Maybelle played no role in this charade, but I wouldn’t bet on it. You’re on your own on this one.

“THE IDEAL JOB CANDIDATE”

© Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com

Ideally, we would like to hire:

a sweet young woman (because we're being investigated by the Governor's Commission on Equity in State Universities)

with sixteen single-authored papers in our most rigorous journal

(we need our accreditation! and we don't have anybody to mentor a beginner)

who finished her PhD a year ago

(so she won't be too uppity)

will collaborate with others

(generous about putting the names of her colleagues on her very best work)

who's also nice and kind and never raises her voice.

Her make-up is flawless and she finds time to get her nails done every week. (Square corners with subdued clear polish, of course.)

Her hair doesn't frizz in July

and, in committees, she supports the majority, the incumbent, and the Old Guard.

BUT

our new hire will build bridges to the business community,

provide leadership to the junior faculty,

win teaching awards

AND

produce 2 or 3 articles each year for our most prestigious journals

(mainstream topics, of course--none of this touching-feeling, stream-of-consciousness stuff).

ON A PERSONAL LEVEL

she will be happily married

to an independently wealthy businessman

(he played football in college and, on weekends,

can be counted on to round out a foursome at golf)

who can work anywhere, so relocation is not a problem.

She will never, ever have kids,

so she won't need maternity leave

or embarrass you with breast-feeding in the Faculty Lounge.

But she might adopt a sweet little girl after she gets tenure

so she can raise up a replica

of herself.

She can hoist a beer with the boys, but

look the other way when they go to the strip bar,

and mostly her own social life is about playing tennis and sipping iced tea

with her sorority sister alums

or their clones in the next town.

She bakes cookies for the secretaries at Christmas.

She offers home cooking (not a sprout in sight!)

to the male junior faculty and doctoral students,

who in turn play raquetball and drink beer with their mentors,

and she doesn't expect to be invited.

She might have a nice, medium-sized dog.

But if she has a cat, it's a sealpoint Siamese and she never, ever talks about it, especially during meetings.

RECRUITING RECONSIDERED

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To: Griselda Graduate

From: Dr Hy Upp, Chair, Consumer Psychology, Weird University

Can you come visit our campus next week? We would prefer that you come on Wednesday, thereby disrupting your entire week if you're on a Tuesday-Thursday teaching schedule. We can't change the date because we have scheduled your visit in between the two candidates we really hope to hire and the dean's schedule will be booked up for the following month.

To: Griselda Graduate

From: Daphne Dithers, Human Resources

Please complete the enclosed Confidential Data form. This form asks for such personal details as ethnicity, gender, religion (upbringing vs. current activity), tolerance for four-letter words, and wildest fantasy about administrators. This information is optional and, if submitted, will be used only for statistical purposes within the Human Resources department..

To: Dr Hy Upp

From: Bill Bigot

Attached is the bill for lunch with myself, Maybelle Marketing and Griselda Graduate. I think you should know that Griselda and I both found Maybelle's conduct to be thoroughly unprofessional, inappropriate and reprehensible. Maybelle asked for a kitty bag to take home the leftover tuna salad. She asked Griselda to order an extra shrimp appetizer so she could bag another treat for Fluffy.

I don't think Maybelle should be allowed anywhere near our job candidates.

To: Dr Hy Upp

From: Maybelle Marketing

CONFIDENTIAL

Griselda Graduate is one of the most unusual job candidates we've ever hosted. Although she refuses to discuss her religious, sexual or animal companion preferences, she said my aura was perfectly visible in tasteful shades of teal and magenta. Clearly she's someone who should be taken seriously.

To: Dr Hy Upp

From: Daphne Dithers, Human Resources

CONFIDENTIAL

Attached is the Confidential Data form submitted by Griselda Graduate. What a hoot! If you need some travel money, we can publish her administrative fantasy in one of those adults-only online sites.

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Griselda Graduate

Thank you for the lovely job offer. I especially appreciate the lavish conference travel (four conferences a year, including first class travel anywhere in the world), the generous moving expenses (“a four-bedroom house or equivalent”) and especially the \$5000 phone-and-fax budget for the first year.

Professor Bill Bigot was a delightful host, although I have no idea why he went out of his way to tell me that shipment of felines would be excluded from the relocation budget.

To: Dr Hy Upp, Dept Head, Consumer Psychology
From: Dean I. M. Power
PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

As I recall, we thought she was marginally qualified. Bill Bigot recommended a “Definite Reject.” He claims she changed the subject when he asked her about feline attachments, a sure sign that there was something nasty buried in the litter box. Did you make her an offer?

Do you have any recollection of our recruiting dinner with Griselda Graduate?
 I have a mysterious “Hope your head is better” card from Officer Sally Student of the Campus Police. Officer Student scribbled a smiley face with, “I’ll never tell!” just under her signature.

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Dr Hy Upp, Dept Head, Consumer Psychology

Do you remember anything after Associate Dean Freda Fearless tried to warn you: “Dean Power, did you ask your pharmacist about three martinis and your blood pressure medication?”

Guess we’d better dust off the New Hire procedures ASAP.

To: Griselda Graduate, New Hire
From: Daphne Dithers, Human Resources

Delighted to have you aboard!

We require all new hires to utilize the services of Organization Movers for relocation to Weird University. Please call Wally Weasel directly to make arrangements. I’m sure you’ll find their services to be thoroughly efficient as well as innovative.

Enclosed is a five-pound packet of forms to be completed at your convenience.

To: Griselda Graduate
From: Organization Movers

Thank you for alerting us to your problem with shipment of three felines to Weird University. Never fear: we will place them in crates labeled “Live Laboratory Specimens.” No one will be the wiser.

To: Griselda Graduate
From: Brenda Battleaxe, Legal

Your query about the required lie detector test has been forwarded to me. You will be asked only three questions:

- Do any felines currently occupy your household?
- Do you plan to adopt any felines during your stay at Weird University?
- What would you do if you saw a feline on the Weird University campus?

To: Griselda Graduate
From: Daphne Dithers, Human Resources

Here is your schedule:

Orientation for New Faculty

7:00 Breakfast

Where: Your own kitchen. We used to provide coffee and stale pastries. Now we provide fifty pages of handouts that you will file away for future reference and discard when you leave Weird University or decide to clean your office, whichever comes sooner.

8:00 – 8:05 Welcome from Provost.

8:05 – 8:15. Meet the Research Admin staff who help you prepare grants.

8:15 – 10:00 Preview the athletic schedule and learn how to buy season tickets.

10:00 – 12:00 Parking and transportation

10:00 – 10:15 : How to obtain a parking decal
 10:15-10:30 Explanation of blue, green, red, orange, purple, yellow and gold
 decals

10:30 – 10:45 Break.
 Helpful hint: there is a coffee shop across the street, guaranteed to keep you waiting at least twenty minutes for a watery coffee and frozen bagel.

10:45 – 11:30 What to do when you get a ticket you don't deserve
 11:30 – 12:00 Q&A on parking

12:00 – 1:30: Lunch.

Helpful hint: The nearest spot for lunch is Doug's Diner, a short ten-minute drive. Guaranteed surly service, greasy food and weak lukewarm coffee. Weird University is not responsible for rise in cholesterol that may be experienced simply by opening the door to this diner.

1:30 – 1:35 Teaching at Weird University

1:35 – 1:40 Faculty Governance at Weird University

1:40 – 1:45 How to get help if you have problems at Weird University

1:45 – 3:45 How to apply for benefits, line by line by line

3:45 – 4:00 Break (and you'll need one!)

Helpful hint: Nearest soft drink vending machine is two buildings away; for a candy bar, you have to hike half a mile to Admin Building).

4:00 – 4:05 Weird University's policies on sexual harassment, diversity and other sensitive topics

4:05 – 4:55 How to use the telephone system

4:55 – 5:-00 Your rights as an employee

5:00 – 7:00 Optional get-together at university president's home

Dress: Ties for men, pantyhose for women. Other articles of clothing at your discretion. Campus security has been alerted to remove guests who look too casual or too comfortable.

Non-vintage wine and cheese-related snacks will be served and students-for-hire will be passing through with trays of mushrooms and celery stuffed with something chopped and spicy.

Parking: Adjacent lot requires blue or gold decal, which can be acquired at a cost of \$500 and a two-year waiting list. Buses will be provided from the all-decal garage, a mere mile away. Each bus has an armed security guard to handle union members with pickets reading, "Prez gets mansion while faculty get no raises." Leave the arm-twisting to us.

FAQ: There is only one FAQ: Where is the form for new faculty to evaluate Orientation?
And there is only one answer: "You must be kidding."

To: Dean I. M. Power
From: Griselda Graduate

I realize we're only a few weeks away from the start of fall semester.

However, I must tell you that an emergency has arisen that prevents me from honoring my commitment to serve on Weird University's stellar faculty. The exact nature of this emergency cannot be disclosed due to reasons of national security.

However, I will be accepting a position at the opposite end of the country with the distinguished Malibu U: Your Own Life-is-a-Beach Citadel of Learning. They are particularly interested in my research program relating to the swimsuit issue of *Sports Illustrated*, as well as swimsuit issues in general.

Please give Bill Bigot my very best regards, I am sure he will be most interested in the outcome of this exciting research program.

CHAIRMAN MAYBELLE? OR WAS THAT CHAIRMAN MAO?**© Cathy Goodwin**

To: Alvin Aggressive, Interim Chair, Consumer Psychology, Gopher Hole University
From: Dr Hy Upp, Chair, Consumer Psychology, Weird University

I note that you need a chairperson. Let me recommend one Maybelle Marketing, a stellar researcher, devoted teacher and fanatical cat-owner. There is no area of academia that remains unaffected by the adventures of Maybelle and her feline sidekick Fluffy.

Our university has a fund to help sister universities who offer jobs to Maybelle and Fluffy. I enclose a brochure.

P.S. Disclaimer: The word “sidekick” does not describe what I would like to do to Fluffy. Not even close.

To: Acting Dean C.R. “Cream” Puff, Gopher Hole University
From: Alvin Aggressive, Interim Chair, Consumer Psychology Department

As interim chair of the departmental chair search committee, I am pleased to enclose resumes of three candidates who will be visiting our campus next month: Otto Organized, Darrell Dapper and Maybelle Marketing. If none of these candidates appears suitable, I will be happy to continue in office for another year or two or ten.

To: Alvin Aggressive
From: Dean Puff

Over my dead body. If we can't get someone by August, I will ask Dilbert Dollar, the chair of finance, to take over. He understands about preservation of equity, sunk costs and the need to avoid devaluation of prime assets.

Where do you get these candidates, anyway? Otto Organized attached an inventory of his Permanent Records going back to kindergarten. Darrell Dapper attached an inventory of his wardrobe, featuring Brioni, Armani and Versace. And Maybelle Marketing attached names, breeds, ages and weights of her three cats. Does she know about our zero tolerance policy for fur, fleas and felines?

To: Otto Organized
From: Alvin Aggressive

Thank you for raising the question, “Why don't you continue as chair?” I am flattered by your suggestion, which of course echoes the sentiments of my distinguished colleagues and administrative leaders.

However, let me assure you that I do not want to be a department head. I want to be a teacher whose electrifying lectures earn campus-wide teaching awards and a researcher whose publications give new direction to the discipline of consumer psychology. A chair appointment would negate the essence and meaning of my career. I am holding the position only in response to the urgent requests of my colleagues who asked me to make this ultimate sacrifice. The new chair will have 150% of my support.

To: Darrell Dapper
From: Alvin Aggressive

Look forward to seeing you again. Seems like just yesterday we were sitting together in Dan Dusty's doctoral seminar as first-year students, and now – we're infamous!

Have you upgraded your preference for beer along with your resume? You'll be a great chair. We think alike.

To: Alvin Aggressive
From: Greta Groupie, Assistant Professor, Consumer Psychology, Gopher Hole University

Why is there only one female candidate? I wanted to make this point at a meeting of the Recruiting Committee, but was not allowed into the male-only sauna room.

To: Greta Groupie
From: Alvin Aggressive

As you know, committee deliberations are secret although we do include input from everyone. Let me assure you that we chose our candidates without regard to sex, race, religion, age or clothing styles. We focused solely on teaching, research and that indefinable quality of leadership best exemplified by the US Marine Corps. Anyone can play.

To: Alvin Aggressive
From: Otto Organized
Via Overnight Mail

Enclosed are nine copies of the overheads for my presentation, one for each department member, as well as a list of discussion questions that can serve as the basis for follow-up. I also included copies of my transcripts from high school onward, teaching evaluations for the past ten years (indexed by date, subject and class size), credit report, police record and result of last blood test. My perfect record is marred only by a single jaywalking ticket, which I earned while attempting to rescue an old lady who had fallen under the wheel of a Fifth Avenue bus.

Let me know if you need additional information. I would be happy to send you my marriage license, birth certificates for my three children and AKC registration papers for the Doberman.

To: Dean Puff
From: Alvin Aggressive

Our committee recommends Darrell Dapper to be the next chairperson. His professional appearance and positive attitude will lead us to new heights.

We do not recommend Otto Organized. The committee had to hire a statistical consultant to evaluate his presentation. The tale told by his course evaluations will depend on the technique chosen for data analysis. A few phone calls revealed that Professor Organized has been chased from his classroom many times by frustrated students, department heads and associate deans.

We particularly do not recommend Maybelle Marketing. We did not anticipate that she would include her cat Fluffy in her presentation. Fluffy's yowls gave new meaning to the term "Chairman Mao."

To: Dean Puff
From: Greta Groupie
CONFIDENTIAL

As always, I want what is best for the department: a female-friendly, feline-friendly work environment. Attached is a printout from the site Wild Butts on the Town, which does not seem to refer to cigarettes. Prominently featured is a photo of one of our own chair candidates in a most unusual setting. Can this person provide the type of leadership we need so desperately?

P.S. Enclosed is a receipt for the Age Verification that was necessary to enter the site, which turned up accidentally while I was engaged in a literature search for my forthcoming article.

To: Alvin Aggressive
From: Dean Puff

I regret to say that I cannot accept the committee's recommendation for reasons that must remain confidential. True, Professor Dapper's perfect tan does complement his white shirt and dark suit. He could easily be a model in an ad for department chairs, or, for that matter, an ad for living room chairs. Alas, I believe he has already modeled in somewhat more interesting positions.

I have decided to appoint Maybelle Marketing as your new chair. I was not influenced when Professor Greta Groupie came to my office and threatened to cry if we failed to appoint a woman. I don't think Professor Groupie has shed a tear in the last twenty years, but I appreciate her adherence to stereotype.

I believe Maybelle is uniquely qualified for two reasons. First of all, we all know that managing faculty is like herding cats. No one knows more about herding cats than Maybelle. Second, by hiring Maybelle, we would qualify for Weird University's Special Fund for Removal of Fluffy, a bonus for our Summer Research program. And Fluffy does look deceptively gentle and loving with a red velvet collar and bow.

Your committee should have considered these points. Let's send out a warm welcome to Maybelle and her feline family.

To: Dean Puff
From: Maybelle Marketing

Although I am flattered by your offer, I have decided to remain indefinitely at Weird University. My astrologer reminds me that Fluffy is a home-loving Virgo and the sun is badly aspected for Virgos to move right now.

Also the real estate lady I met on my visit said, "I don't know where you will be able to live. We have very strict zoning regulations here and that cat of yours violates all of them." We were not amused.

To: Alvin Aggressive
From: Otto Organized
Via UPS with letter attached to shipment

Thank you for choosing me to be your new department head. I will arrive in six months, ready to find a new place on the map for Gopher Hole University. With this letter I am shipping ten boxes of forms for the faculty to complete over the summer. I am sure we will have a productive and happy department in a very short time.

P.S. The real estate lady was very detail-oriented – a professional after my own heart. Perhaps we can add her to the adjunct faculty list, which already includes half the city of Gopher Hole.

To: Maybelle Marketing
From: Greta Groupie
CONFIDENTIAL

Thank you once more for slipping me the number of Frankie Felon during our Recruiting Lunch. I really hoped you would be our new department head but of course I would not want Fluffy's aura to be disturbed.

Frankie was most helpful. I will keep his number for future reference, as I anticipate offering him a new challenge during the forthcoming year.

A CHRISTMAS FABLE

© Cathy Goodwin cathygoodwin@mindspring.com

'Twas the week before Christmas and all through the schools
the staff had packed up to go home (they're no fools).
The papers were graded, the bluebooks piled high.
If the travel agent hadn't screwed up, they could fly.
All over the campus, snow layers piled dense,
The quad lay in peace 'neath a cast iron fence.
From o'er the river, heading south, came a cry,
"I've turned those damn sleighbells all the way up to high!"
On ice a ship landed, then went into a spin.
"Blast!" cursed the driver. "The brakes locked again."
She was dressed for the cold in a parka by Bauer,
And she seemed wide awake despite the late hour.
The campus was bored and the noise was so loud
That hopes of an incident drew a great crowd.
"Where's Santa?" they gasped as she veered to a ditch.
"Forget Santa," she yelled. "I'm your new Christmas witch.
I don't do chimneys or windows. A sack? I don't tote 'em.
Just a chic Mark Cross briefcase and a laptop with modem.
Where's the juice?" she concluded, as deep from her pocket
Came a modular cable in need of a socket.
'Twas forty below, so at once they adjourned
To a phone-jacked room where a Yule log burned.
"Those who've been good," said the witch, "can soon get
Presents rush-ordered through the Internet.
Those who were bad will find cat-hair and ash
On top of their desktops. Their computers will crash."
They swore they'd been good, they deserved all the best.
"But I have," said the witch, "a lie detector test
which is infallible." And as the computer hummed
some Old Guard admin types began to feel bummed.
"We'll write you a memo," they said with a quiver,
"And run it by Legal before we deliver."
"No time," she clicked keys, "if you're good it will show."
And every nose suddenly started to grow.
"Works every time!" said the witch. "Now get clear.
Surely one of you acted with kindness last year."
A silence descended as everyone thought
That this was one time they had really been caught.
Someone cried, "Get the union! For the phone make a beeline!"
When into the room snuck a tiny stray feline.
The Old Guard, forgetting the holiday season,
Returned to their habits of everyday reason:
"No cats! Throw it out! Cats are only for fools!
And no matter what happens, we follow the rules."
Someone opened the door and, though most thought it mean,
All believed the worst sin was creating a scene.
The laptop snapped shut. The connection was blown.
"I think you'll do better if left on your own,"
Said the witch. "Such a strife has arisen
That I think I'll move on to my next stop, the prison."
And tucking the kitten just under her collar

She strode back to her space ship, ignoring the holler:
“You should have a broom -- not a sleek shiny ship!”
The radar showed only a weak whiny blip.
The witch fastened her belt, shoved the gear out of fourth.
“Take a lesson!” she waved as she skidded due north.
“Think ahead to next year, and for good always strive,
And maybe by then I’ll have learned how to drive.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cathy Goodwin, Ph.D. is a recovering academic. She periodically thinks of returning to a university position, but realizes that publishing this book may not do much for her checkered c.v. and undeserved reputation for an equally checkered past.

Dr. Goodwin holds an AB from Barnard College, an MBA from the Wharton School, and a Ph.D. from UC Berkeley. She spent nearly twenty years as a full-time and visiting professor in University of Alaska, University of Manitoba (Canada), University of Florida, Nova Southeastern University and Georgia State University. She was tenured at University of Manitoba.

Dr. Goodwin published a respectable number of academic articles, obtained research grants and taught at all levels, from undergraduate to doctoral, in venues ranging from traditional classroom to corporate on-site settings to distance education. Occasionally she was allowed to serve on committees.

Dr. Goodwin lives with two cats (Tiger and Loretta) and a dog (Keesha). She has a business that combines writing, speaking and personal coaching, specializing in career and relocation as life transitions. Her first book, *Making the Big Move: How to transform relocation into a creative life transition*, can be obtained from the publisher (www.newharbinger.com), amazon (www.amazon.com) or most major bookstores.

Dr. Goodwin answers all her e-mails: cathygoodwin@mindspring.com. Fluffy's mailbox is tigertabby@mindspring.com.

Figure 1: Cathy and Keesha

