CALENDAR WEEKS

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SUCCESSIVE CI

LETS GO EAT WORMS!

by

Sandra L. Fisher
"First things first, one at a time."

--Ogden R. Lindsley
April 17, 1967
April 18, 1967
April 19, 1967
April 20, 1967
April 21, 1967
April 22, 1967
etc.

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY
OG
I'm extremely bored with the position I held, I decided to look for a job that was challenging, interesting, educational and something that would give me a chance to be creative. I applied at the Medical Center hoping to get a temporary position until I could find something that I really wanted. When you go into a personnel office and announce, "I want an administrative secretarial position, however, I do not type or take dictation," they look at you like you've lost your chinnies. Nevertheless, they arranged an interview appointment for the following day. In the meantime, I consulted with a very good friend, with knowledge of the job, who advised me not to even consider the job because it was a
"wash out!" I had to go through with the interview though before I would be assigned another one. I was positively not interested in any way, shape, or form. But I had to keep the appointment. I knew what the doctor looked like for I had seen him on several occasions. He was a tall, slender, red bearded character. The first shock wave hit me as I entered the front door. The place was an ungodly mess! Pardon the expression. Not just a mess here and there, but the entire place. You couldn't even walk through. I expected his office to be fairly neat and organized only to find it worse than anything else in the house. The doctor and his crew worked in an old house converted to offices. There were piles that could not even be called heaps all over his office. You couldn't tell where one pile ended and the next started. Glancing at his desk, I caught sight of a can of Campbell's Mushroom soup, surgery masks, newspaper clippings, magazine ads, pliers, almost anything from a to z. Frank disorganization as far as I could see! We traded small formalities as in all interviews I concluded that we were both wasting our time, as I really could not accept their salary offer. The salary was far too low. Wait - Wait - How much was I interested in? I boldly replied, that if I started at my minimum salary I would expect a $50.00 raise in three months. The doctor asked if I meant $50.00 a year? I absolutely could not believe him. I replied, "You must be crazy, I mean a month!" We finished by talking about whether or not I had any good references -- one of the most ridiculous
questions he managed to ask throughout the entire interview. We walked out of his office with me contemplating working there until I could transfer to a better paying position in the center. He informed the present secretary that I would start the next day. Sorry, but I had to give two weeks notice.

The two weeks went by quickly. The first day on a new job, it was sort of like the first day you go to school without your mommy. You wouldn't believe it. I still don't! Twenty-one file drawers in my office with only a few sheets of paper in each. None of them labeled in any way. This must be the place to start organizing. What a mistake! I emptied eighteen boxes of filing that first day. I thought I had accomplished a miracle. It was only the beginning.

I found the s - t - and y's of the catalog file in the downstairs bathroom, the a - b - and f's in the upstairs closet under a sweat shirt and pile of notes. It took me three weeks to accomplish what I considered an hour job. The next tasks I contemplated at great length before attacking.

The first day with the doctor was only a sample of what I had in store for me. He was leaving at 4:15p for his 4:30p class. I was standing in the door more or less waving good-bye. He was down the steps and across the lawn still talking to me. My instructions were to follow him. I was going to learn to make transparencies. The directions were given to me at one of his strides for every ten of mine, across the drive, up the two flights of stairs and down the hall. I could make four
every minute, if they were properly chain fed into the machine. Wow! I watched him make the transparencies and it seemed very very simple. I made one while he watched. It turned out fine. He left for class, about seven minutes left to make fourteen. The first three I ruined. Panic stricken, I could not make fourteen in the time left. I was not going to work overtime and fall into the trap I heard existed in this office for the last secretary (7:00a to 6:00p with no breaks or lunch hour). The world was mad if it thought I was going to let that happen to me. I gathered up all the intestinal fortitude I had and took the ones I finished to him. He met me on the first flight wanting to know if they were done. I completed half of the transparencies and would finish the other half first thing in the morning.

He smiled. What a relief! The end of the first day. One battle down - victor or loser - I still don't know. I later found out that the machine only has the capacity of making one transparency per minute.

Could it be possible that this office had really lasted over three years. I could see no apparent organization to anything. My next task was to learn to read an original set of hieroglyphics. I still have not completely mastered the art. There must be some comfort though in the fact that no one else can read them either. For example, the file clerk was completing her daily work assignment when she came across a memo from the doctor which she read as:

Please wash my car, pat dry and return. Be careful not to scratch.

Feeling a little insecure in her interpretation
of this memo, she consulted with one of the graduate students who also read it to be:

Please wash my car, pat dry and return. Be careful not to scratch.

Well, this particular young lady wasn’t going to pat dry anybody’s car when the Robo wash just up the street did a real good job and they had never scratched her car! The car didn’t get washed that night. The memo was left for me to interpret the next day. It really read:

Please wash mylar, pat dry and return. Be careful not to scratch.

On my third or fourth day a graduate student came into the office. She asked in a casual tone to have a note put into the doctor’s Day-timer. There is a meeting for me at 8:00a next Monday. No reason why or for what. I put the note into his pocket

Day-timer, his desk Day-timer, and on my desk Day-timer. At that time the editor was doing the travel and appointments. I knew the doctor was out of town but did not find it important to mention as it was not emphatically implied that he should or must attend the Monday meeting. Well, Monday rolled around. At 8:05a the phone rang and a voice asked where the doctor was. Familiar with the caller, I jokingly said, "Oh! Somewhere between here and Boston!" Dead silence. At that exact moment (without a soul telling me) I knew the final orals for her doctoral degree had been scheduled for 8:00a. Uck - I could have died! Was the goof entirely my responsibility? I wasn’t even in charge of the appointments! However, I had heard fantastic stories about how unfair and cruel the doctor could be when mistakes were made, be they ever so slight.
This I can assure you was anything but slight. It was done. Now what to do? I considered typing my resignation papers and leaving before the doctor returned. Instead I called his wife to hear what she had to say. "You couldn't have made a worse mistake."

That was all I needed. The doctor would be in within the hour, what was I going to do? I cried a little, then wiped my tears and decided to bear up. I could take anything he could dish out!!!

Whenever I feel afraid I hold my head erect and whistle a happy tune so no one will suspect I'm afraid.

I was still whistling when the phone rang again. This extremely pleasant voice said, "Good morning. How are things going?" That was the last thing I expected. Completely thrown off guard, I confessed. The orals had taken place and he should call as soon as possible. Now he was on his way to the office. I was still whistling. A little off key but still whistling. He arrived. I thought, the tongue lashing is coming now and then he'll fire me. Instead, we made some telephone calls. Then he said, "Sandi, bring your note pad, I have a letter to dictate." This is it! Oh! He really thinks he's cool! We're going to do it like they do in the movies. I'm going to be dictated my own termination letter! To my surprise it was a letter approving the final doctoral orals had taken place in his absence. After I had transcribed the letter, he said make a call to the Dean for me. I placed the call thinking just as soon as he gets this mess cleared up then he'll fire me. Personally, I was getting
tired of waiting. I couldn't believe the conversation I was hearing. He told the Dean that he was sorry for being delayed and apologized for missing the orals. The favorite excuse in any office when something goes wrong is that the secretary goofed again. Even if it is or isn't true. The doctor had just won my undying loyalty.

I found that the phone rang as often as eighty times a day. The telephone duty was soon delegated to the youth corps trainees only to find that it was almost as much of a headache supervising them on this job as it was to do it myself. Especially when it was all I could do to supervise myself in this environment. I went through ten youth corps trainees in six weeks. Three of them did not even last one whole day. The following pictures were developed by one of the graduate students as her birthday present to the doctor in 1967. They represent the basic procedures of Precision Teaching. Unfortunately, I did not follow these procedures with the youth corps trainees!

*Cartoons drawn by John Nicholson, University of Kansas, 1967.*
record

consequate
try again

+ 5 5
10

+ 7 14

Moon Man

and again
One morning before attending a budget meeting I set two boxes of pendaflex frames in front of the mail slot near the front door. Another doctor, in charge of overseeing our portion of the grant funds was sitting in the chair in front of the window next to the door. The meeting was proceeding quite well, when all of a sudden there was a loud thud, the clashing and banging of metal and mail scattered all over the floor. The visiting doctor jumped up from his chair looked out the window, looked at the floor, looked out the door, turned around and looked out the window again. He really could not believe that the mailman had tossed those packages through the mail slot with the rest of the letters that were laying on the floor. My boss said, "Can't you just see the household puddy cat lying there taking a nap when all of a sudden SQUASH!" We both went into laughter with the visiting doctor looking very grim indeed. Throughout the rest of the meeting every time we looked at each other we both laughed — the visiting doctor never cracked a smile.

One of the first things the doctor tried to teach me was to control the students. Instead of lecturing them on bad habits, I got the lecture and was to do something about it. One of the lectures concerned the Crown tape recorders with FM radios. The doctor said that radio listening was in no way accelerating to study habits. Furthermore, it was stupid to use a $260.00 piece of equipment as a $10.00 radio. It was only a ten minute lecture after which I went upstairs and knocked on the door. Four graduate students were watching as I un-
plugged the recorder they were listening to, look it downstairs and locked it up. As I went down the stairs I could hear them chuckling.

The editor that was there when I started, left because she was pregnant. After several months, we finally hired a little meek and seemingly mild mannered man.

Time came and passed. Tomorrows became todays, and todays became yesterdays. The data department was holding its own. That was until the doctor got upset with one of the graduate students. The doctor happened to be in the data department, when he let lose with all sorts of profanity and stomped his foot on the well worn wood floors. I had no idea what was happening. I kept hearing sobs from down the hall. I couldn't imagine who would be crying. I checked.

Our data plotter was in her supply closet sobbing. What on earth had happened? She confided in me that the doctor had been upset about something over which she had no control. I urged her to take the rest of the day off - go home - relax - paint - just get away from this mad house. No, she would be okay. She would stay. There was work to be done. Twenty minutes later she came in, handed me a note and left. The note read:

Thanks for everything, if I don't come back.

Assuming she would be in the next morning I dismissed it from my mind. The next morning and no data plotter. Good Grief! Now he's really done it. I was a little provoked at the doctor for not being able to keep a better check on his temper. So
when he came to work I asked him if he felt like a really BIG MAN. He was not even vaguely aware of what he had done. I explained the situation from her viewpoint. It had been a complete misunderstanding. We called and told her how desperately she was needed and wanted. Fortunately, she came back to work the next day.

My first try at modifying the doctor's behavior using his principles was a complete failure. I wanted several pages, the very last pages needed to complete a manuscript. At that time anything the editor didn't feel like doing or neglected to do, the kind doctor delegated to me. The doctor wanted a lavalier microphone. The microphone came in and I decided to use a behavior seal to get the last few pages dictated. The seal, a piece of tape, was applied.

I stated on it that he could have the microphone when he gave me the pages. I was very confident that this would do the trick. Surely he practiced what he preached.

The next morning, I came to work and found the seal broken. As usual, he was on a business trip, but he did call me from the airport that morning. I asked him, "Why don't you follow your own advice?" Only to find out that I had not applied the K. The next time around I would be a lot smarter.

Christmas came and Santa himself was sitting on top of the xerox, with wreaths on the doors and candles on the desks. The house had a very festive aire. Our Christmas tree in the front lobby was a conversation piece for everyone that came in - an angel and the Star of David on the same tree. There did seem to be a bit of a problem with
Santa though -- every time I went into the xerox room his nose was in the corner. Who kept turning him? Was it Mr. Scrooge himself or maybe even Mrs. Scrooge?

Staff meetings were scheduled every Monday morning at 9:00. If I was really living right -- we might possibly have one! This particular day I must have been living right. At staff meeting we discussed the personal rights of every individual in an office. It was the consensus of opinion that the most important thing is to have a desk, and an area to call your own. This right is entitled even to the person at the bottom of the totem pole. This area is to be respected as belonging to that individual.

My vacation began that afternoon at 4:30. Apparently I was not expected back in the office for the full three weeks. I came the next day to have lunch with a visitor from the University of Florida only to find my office completely rearranged. Three typing stands, it seemed like ten waste baskets, and stacks and stacks of paper to be collated all over the room, on the desk, the working areas, the couch, and all of the chairs. What a mess for me to walk into let alone the impression it would make on visiting firemen! I threw a temper tantrum beyond description. The editor refused to listen. So I decided to write him a note that he could not possibly ignore. I went upstairs, rumaged through one of the storage closets and found a piece of poster board approximately 6 x 4 feet. I literally drug it downstairs. I cleared my desk and began writing.
Dear Mr. [Name]:

1. My office is to be put back - just as I left it by 1:00p today. I will be back to check it.

2. It is to stay that way until I return from vacation. I gave no one permission to use it.

3. The collating is to be done in the kitchen where facilities are provided for such.

4. You are to be at the office every morning by 8:00a not 8:01 or 8:05, but 8:00a. If you are not your secretary has been instructed to work for one of the graduate students.

5. You are to supervise the youth corps girls in my absence without discrimination.

6. If I receive reports that the above statements are not observed in my absence, then I will take your secretary away when I return!

Mrs. Fisher
Administrator

I propped it up on his desk thinking the evidence of my temper tantrum would immediately be destroyed. How could I be so wrong? He moved this monstrosity of a note to his large red arm chair in front of his office door for all to read as they went by. There the note remained, until I returned from vacation and finally the janitorial staff picked it up.

Our first bubble gum chewing graduate student had gotten his Ed.D. and gone on to make his name and fortune in Bloomington. His thesis was completed and submitted for publication.

The doctor was leaving on another business trip. His last instructions to me were to get the next thesis into shape and out of the office that next day. It was going to take more than a miracle to
accomplish this. I even considered taking up witchcraft!

I informed the editor that the office hours were 8:00 to 4:30. I would expect him at 8:00 a.m. to work on the thesis. I was there at 7:30 a.m. and at 8:00 a.m. still no editor. Okay - if I must suffer, so will others. This was one of the days that I went across the street to share a tin can of worms with a friend.

There was a two hour time difference (6:00 a.m. there) but I called the doctor anyway. Now what am I supposed to do? I'm certainly not going to put this thesis out by myself. The doctor instructed me to call the editor at home. Nine-o'clock, the editor finally made it to the office. After forty minutes he managed to get his coat hung up and his brief case on his desk.

Then it took another thirty minutes to use the bathroom one block away. We only have two baths at the house! I'm not sure just what's wrong with the bathrooms. Everyone else uses them without complaint.

After several long distance calls that day to Eugene, Oregon and several more calls the next day, I'm sure this was the most expensive thesis so far. My friend had also exhausted her supply of worms in the lower right file drawer of her desk.

The graduate students more or less went their own way and left me to my thing. That is with a few exceptions. Housekeeping was refusing to clean the upstairs. They complained it was unsanitary and a fire hazard. To prove their point -- the fire inspector came by and ordered me to have it cleaned that week. I asked some of the
students to please clean their working areas enough so that housekeeping would consent to clean. The fact that I was making noises was acknowledged. They brought the subject up at their weekly student meeting. A big burly character, the largest of them all, was sent as their representative to tell me in no uncertain terms, that I wasn't telling anyone what to keep in or on his desk.

Okay, that was fine by me. There would be no further cleaning in the students areas, unless they met the requirements of housekeeping. If the area is cluttered then housekeeping will clean around it. By the end of two months housekeeping was cleaning the entire upstairs. Natural consequences!

One of the bare faced graduate students began to grow a beard, ekk - I tried to discourage him, but the beard was here to stay. One afternoon I walked into the data department only to find him all decked out like the doctor himself leaving on a business trip. The sight was hysterical - I started laughing. All I could see was a junior ORL. He had two camera bags over one arm and a case in each hand. So nicknamed, we will call him Junior ORL.

Columbus, Ohio - I almost never want to hear the name of that town again. It was bad enough that I had to grow up in Ohio! The doctor had committed himself to writing two chapters for a book. Great! Have you ever tried to get seven stinky little graphs from him? I wish you all the luck in the world. I tried everything I could possibly think of. Nothing produced the graphs. Just seven graphs, that was all I wanted. Not that I cared if he wrote the chapters,
all I wanted was to decelerate the phone
calls from Columbus, Ohio. It was getting
to the point where I hated to pick up the
phone when the operator said long distance
for -------------. Days, weeks, months
passed, they were still calling me and
reminding me that the deadline was five
months ago and they desperately needed the
graphs. What could I do? My Alladin's
lamp was out of commission and I had not
taken up witchcraft afterall. I tried
spreading the necessary graph making materials
on his desk, turning on the lights, putting
a sign on the door "doctor is making graphs,
do not disturb" thinking that when he came
into the office he might get the hint. I
tried my hand at lettering and made a sign
to hang on his office door. He completely
ignored it. Then Junior ORL and I had a
conference. I suggested putting a large
brown mailing paper seal over his entire
door so that he couldn't possibly ignore it.
(Interesting note: Both of us had been
without sleep for almost 24 hours and were
still plugging away. It was now time to
go home and change clothes for the next
days work.) He suggested that I put the
seal over the most important thing which
the doctor was doing. Well -- that was
a tall order. How do you judge what is the
most important thing to seal up on a desk
that looks like you've dumped the waste
basket on it. So we proceeded to compromise
and seal his entire desk with a behavior
seal. I labeled it - The World's Largest
Behavior Seal. And learning from my last
experience I announced the K. The seal
stayed on for over a month. I did not
receive the graphs, nor have the chapters
gone to press. The people in Columbus, Ohio are still calling me from time to time.
And I'm still open for suggestions. However, my friendly conspirator and I have been successful on other behaviors. Construction starts on our 'Fort Knocks' for brownie points this fall.

Two in the afternoon, seven people waiting to see me about something, the doctor wanting some ledgers, the receptionist bussing me for a phone call, what next? I felt as if I was going around in circles on a rubber raft at the end of a kite string! The youth corps counselor was calling. He wanted to see me. Couldn't it wait until tomorrow or the next day. Things are frantic here. It couldn't and he would be right out. He arrived with the director of the youth corps. I knew something was up. But what? They had a seat and proceeded to tell me that they had received a call reporting that the trainees were not getting adequate secretarial training or supervision. I couldn't believe it. They went on to say that it would work best, if each girl was assigned to a separate supervisor. My defenses were up. Who had called? The editor! That was the straw that broke the camel's back! They wanted me to call the editor out to my office to discuss the situation. Nope - I wasn't discussing it with anyone as long as I was administrator. Either my way or no way at all. However, to please them, I called the editor out and repeated at the top of my lungs, for all to hear, "As long as I'm running this show the youth corps trainees will be under my supervision or there won't
be any to supervise. Take it or leave it. I’m busy!” The editor immediately began apologizing for not having talked with the doctor prior to their arrival on the scene. I said there was nothing to speak with the doctor about. He kept on mumbling. I informed them that they should wait one minute and I would have the doctor tell them the facts of life, since they seemed to doubt my word. The doctor was in a conference. I walked in without knocking and announced that he had better do something quick. I don’t remember who was in conference with the doctor. Whoever it was just seemed to have disappeared. (My apologies to that person for being so rude.) The doctor then called us all into his office and we discussed the matter at length. The girls were called in and they discussed the matter. It was finally resolved. I had won another battle. This editor was on his way out – fast! We thought we had heard and seen the last of him only to find out he had called the top people connected with the Neighborhood Youth Corps and reported that the doctor was mad and that I was a crazy woman! The saying, "still waters run deep" sure had some basis.

One of the graduate students had a very grave problem according to a short little secretary at CRU. Everyone knows that graduate students have very little to live on, but it would seem that he could afford a safety pin for his zipper! The secretary reported that it wouldn’t have been so bad, if she were only a little taller. The way it was now, sitting at her typewriter when he came in, all was directly at eye level!
To avoid such embarrassing situations in the future, we have started a trust fund to buy safety pins for graduate students with similar problems. To apply, you only need an open fly.

Now we had the problem of finding another editor. Ads were placed with all the local personnel agencies and in the newspaper. Success the second week. Everyone at the house interviewed the prospective new editor and made their recommendations except me. I interviewed, but refused to commit myself to a recommendation after the last fiasco! She was hired. Our post-doctoral student was to train the editor.

The Kennedy Science Foundation was requesting papers. The top award was $500.00 plus travel and expenses to Chicago for the international convention. It was the last day, the manuscript had to be postmarked by midnight. The new editor and our hermit from the basement were busily trying to meet the deadline. They made it. Several days later the post card came back marked manuscript received. The days passed and then the telegram came. Our red bearded hermit had won first prize! Great day in the basement, it was really happening!

At one of the few but badly needed staff meetings, I reported that we would be $8000.00 overspent by the end of the fiscal year providing we continued to spend at our current rate. I immediately cut all spending. Our post-doctoral student was delegated the responsibility of writing two grants under the doctor's direction. When I got around to figuring out how much we were overspent at the end of the fiscal year,
it was only $3000.00 in the supply category. I told the doctor I had saved him $5000.00 and deserved a bonus. He laughed his funny little laugh!

Preparation for the short course was coming along fine. My friendly little conspirator was in the doctor's office discussing some of the things that needed to be done. Without consulting me, they were deciding that the name tags for the faculty and trainees would be typed on a primary manual typewriter. Unrealistic - absolutely and totally unrealistic. We had enough things left to do without wasting time on a manual typewriter. I proceeded to tell them both that I thought it to be absolutely ridiculous. My own friendly little conspirator had turned traitor! I had news for them! I was not going to type five hundred name tags on any manual for anyone. Not when I had a good IBM electric executive model typewriter. Ohhh no! They knew best. I was out in left field somewhere without the faintest notion of what a baseball looked like. So I took the name tags and made a sample of each style of typing. Then asked for an honest appraisal of which name tag looked the most professional. Together in complete silence they studied them at length. Finally, the doctor announced, "Well, you know which one it is." I kept saying to myself, you're out of your mind, you're both out of your minds. It would have been just fine had they said okay you can do it your way. But what does the doctor say, "Well, the little broad is right again!" I almost screamed. I hate the word B R O A D with a passion.
I pouted for two days about that one. The name tags were typed on the electric typewriter.

We needed to make question cards for each individual attending the short course. I wanted to run them on regular xerox paper. The file clerk wanted to run them on card stock. Junior ORL wanted to run them on light weight colored paper. We decided to humor him and try it his way. The xerox immediately caught fire. We put it out. Junior ORL cleaned the inside of the xerox. This happened two or three more times. By now the downstairs was filled with smoke. I was going around opening windows and doors. The file clerk kept trying to run card stock through the xerox. It caught on fire again and really burned. The upstairs filled with smoke. The graduate student working upstairs at that time came down and wanted to call the fire department to help find the fire. We could hardly see each other standing in the same room. We were choking and crying from the smoke. The doctor came out of his smoke filled office coughing and yelled into the kitchen to the file clerk, "Hey, I think you'd better try a different deodorant!" The situation was immediately funny and not such a fiasco after all.

The short course went off very well. Besides my regular hours, I had worked fifty-six hours overtime in the past week. Would it never end? It did. What a let down!

This has been only the beginning. I'm sure there will be many many more laughs and opportunities to eat worms. It's amazing how we can all be so very different,
work in such small quarters for so many long hours and have only a minimum of differences of opinion. We have talked about this quite often. One night, sitting in bed talking to one of the graduate students on the phone, she asked me if I knew what it was all about. Well, sort of, but not really. Anyway I didn't have a word for it. She replied, "It's all about love that's what the doctor told me once and I believe him." Life -- yes, that is what it's all about. LOVE!!!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to everyone connected with the environment that enabled me to write this book. It is impossible to recall every event over the last year and a half. I apologize for leaving them out.

My sincerest gratitude to Carl Koenig for his help not only with the book, but as my friendly little conspirator, and to my husband, Jim, for being ever loving, kind and patient.