

OCCUPATIONAL AVOIDANCE

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Readers of John Fuller's Games For Insomniacs (Doubleday, 1966) may recall the chapter on Occupational Hazards, which gives a compendium of ways people get fired from their occupations (orchestra leaders are disbanded, electricians are discharged, postmen are unzipped, and so on). More recently, readers of Herb Caen's column in the San Francisco Chronicle have been playing the analogous game of I Could Have Been (a telephone operator but I had a bad hang-up, a mountaineer but I wasn't so inclined). Next time your mother-in-law asks you why you can't hold down a steady job, you can give her one of the following snappy comebacks:

I COULD HAVE BEEN . . .

a psychiatrist, but my phrases were improperly couched
a coal miner, but the subject was too deep for me
a proctologist, but I could never get to the bottom of things
a faith healer, but I hated to prey on people
a women's libber, but I could never speak freely
a dermatologist, but I was too thin-skinned
a nun, but I had sworn to kick the habit
a railroad builder, but I couldn't make tracks fast enough
a librarian, but I was booked solid
the belle of the ball, but I was a dead-ringer

a sidewalk Santa, but I'm claustrophobic
a floorwalker, but my mother would hit the ceiling
a watch repairman, but I was too run down
a finger man for the Mafia, but I was all thumbs
a member of Zero Population Growth, but I was too overbearing
a Mother Superior, but I had an inconceivable inferiority complex
the city executioner, but I didn't feel like hanging about town
a masseur, but I didn't have the feel for it
a photographer, but I couldn't develop any interest
a smuggler, but I didn't have the cache

an archbishop, but I just couldn't see it
a farmer, but that wasn't my field
a prostitute, but I couldn't get together with anybody on a price
an electrician, but the working conditions were shocking
a baker, but there was no dough in it
a fortune teller, but I was too much behind the times
a historian, but I was ahead of my time
a laundress, but I was all washed up and couldn't iron out problems

a marriage counselor, but I couldn't reconcile myself to it
 an orchestra leader, but I couldn't face the music
 a rabbi, but there was too much ham in me
 an army chaplain, but government surplisce didn't interest me
 a policeman, but I didn't want to make a pig of myself
 a playwright, but I had to split the scene
 a luggage salesman, but it wasn't my bag
 an army post commander, but it wasn't my forte
 a magazine salesman, but I couldn't find time
 William Buckley's assistant, but I wasn't right for the job

an arctic explorer, but the idea left me cold
 a roving country minstrel, but I didn't like the lay of the land
 a woodworker, but it went against my grain
 a wall paperer, but I couldn't get the hang of it
 a Buckingham Palace guard, but I couldn't stand for the working hours
 a tailor, but I wasn't cut out for it (not suited for the job)
 a mattress tester, but my father said never lie down on the job
 a settler of insurance claims, but I couldn't adjust
 a Geisha girl, but I was too disoriented
 a shoemaker, but I just couldn't last

a drama critic, but things didn't pan out
 a travel agent, but it didn't send me
 a white collar worker, but it made me all choked up
 a topless waitress, but the whole idea was a big bust
 an opera singer, but it was out of my range
 a strip tease artist, but the job had no appeal
 a jazz musician, but I couldn't drum up any interest
 a violin stringer, but I didn't have the guts
 a doctor, but I didn't want to make a practice of it
 a dentist, but I didn't want to always be down in the mouth

an accordion player, but I squeezed out of it
 a locksmith, but I was too keyed up
 a tour guide, but I didn't know where it would lead
 a draftsman, but I drew the line
 a Rugby player, but I didn't think it was cricket
 an astronaut, but it wasn't in the stars
 U.S. President, but the requirements weren't perfectly clear
 a dope pusher, but I didn't want to go to pot
 a tightrope walker, but I got off on the wrong foot
 a trapeze artist, but I couldn't get into the swing of it

a comedian, but I took my job too seriously
 a Boy Scout leader, but I wasn't prepared
 a cardiologist, but my heart wasn't in it
 an R. T. French employee, but I couldn't cut the mustard
 a NASA technician, but they couldn't find space for me
 a sewer cleaner, but the work was beneath me
 a steeplejack, but something told me it wasn't on the level
 a mathematician, but things didn't add up right
 a race car driver, but I couldn't get myself in gear

a muleskinner, but I kept horsing around on the job
 a flea circus manager, but I wasn't feeling up to scratch
 an accountant, but I kept seeing red
 an answering service, but it was out of the question
 an undertaker, but I didn't dig such a grave situation
 a maple syrup maker, but it sapped all my energy
 a gas station operator, but I couldn't get the lead out
 a beekeeper, but I couldn't keep things humming
 a submarine crewman, but I like things open and aboveboard
 a Beatle, but my father said, "Bah, hum bug!"

an atomic physicist, but it didn't matter a particle to me
 an entomologist, but my office was bugged
 a civil rights leader, but I disintegrate under pressure
 a Senator, but I preferred to stay in the house
 a cosmetician, but I couldn't make up my mind
 a deep sea diver, but my friends threw cold water on the idea
 a blast furnace operator, but I couldn't get all fired up about it
 a diaper service manager, but I felt it was time for a change
 a breakfast cereal maker, but the pace was too gruelling
 a Greek scholar, but I discovered I didn't care one iota

a gold miner, but the prospects weren't bright
 a sword swallower, but I couldn't see the point of it
 a gunsmith, but I was the wrong caliber for such a boring job
 a bartender, but everything I did went on the rocks
 a sky diver, but my plans fell through
 a trombone player, but I let things slide
 a golfer, but I didn't follow through
 a tennis player, but I couldn't stand the racket
 a union leader, but the idea didn't strike me
 a dairy farmer, but I was cowed by the idea

an egg producer, but I chickened out
 a wine tester, but it left a bad taste in my mouth
 a lumberjack, but I was up a tree
 a worker in a glue factory, but I couldn't stick to it
 an auto transmission specialist, but I was too shiftless
 a weatherman, but I was always in a fog
 a synthetic organic chemist, but plans failed to crystallize
 a banker, but I lacked interest in my work
 Mrs. America, but I missed out
 a college grad, but I had too many failings

a gambler, but I was too sure of myself
 a contortionist, but I couldn't make ends meet
 a ballet dancer, but I couldn't keep on my toes
 a clockmaker, but my timing was poor
 Houdini's successor, but I was all tied up
 a weathervane maker, but I lacked direction
 a telegrapher, but I kept getting my wires crossed
 a pencil sharpener, but I could never make my point
 a card player, but I kept getting lost in the shuffle

a cook, but I was always in a stew
a road repairman, but I couldn't mend my ways
a postal worker, but I lacked zip
an after dinner speaker, but I couldn't rise to the occasion
a traffic cop, but I couldn't make a go of it
a football player, but I had the wrong goals
a German banker, but I kept missing the mark
a lion tamer, but I had no pride in my work
a zoo keeper, but there was too much monkey business involved
a fisherman, but people were always baiting me

a dictionary editor, but I could never find the right words
a pilot, but I was too down-to-earth about things
a member of the underground, but I had my head in the clouds
a sesquipedalian linguist, but I didn't care to work for such a
long spell