

Out To Lunch

Introduction:

This is a story of how two peons made a decision management could not make. The decision resulted in a forty plus year tradition and friendship and nobody had to beg forgiveness.

Out To Lunch

The agony for department heads was National Secretaries Day. That day of recognition for the girls that keep the office humming was created in 1952. The big green tractor company we worked for was very conservative and very traditional. You had a job and you got paid regularly. What other recognition could you possibly want? This explains why it was the 1970s before National Secretaries Day was even talked about in our office.

The office rumor mill always precedes official announcements by several weeks. National Secretaries Day would be acknowledged and celebrated. Rumors abounded that department heads were going to buy flowers or take the secretaries to lunch on the last Tuesday of April. Remember these were the 1970s. The only computers were main frames that took up an entire room and were only used for complex engineering calculations. The highest tech thing on the secretary's desk was the spinning ball on the IBM electric typewriter. We used white, pink, and yellow paper to distinguish the importance and priority of documents. All of our memo's, reports, etc. were hand written and given to the secretary to type. Copy machines were just becoming wide spread. Cost per copy was high. Only secretaries were allowed to use them. She typed our memos. We revised them. She retyped them. She was an expert with white out, pink out, and yellow out. When a document was complete our hand written signature was applied to the master copy. The secretary copied them, delivered them to the office mail room, and filed the master copy in the rows of four drawer file cabinets. She also did all the scheduling for meetings and supplier visits. She answered the phone for the department head, for anyone absent from the office, and performed all the other duties it takes to make an office function. She also had to act like our mother and put up with all our whining, bellyaching, and complaining that our wives wouldn't put up with. When the secretary was on vacation or sick, office productivity came to a halt. She was the single most important person in the department.

Well, Secretary's Day came and we all waited to see if it would be flowers or lunch. The morning dragged on and as lunch time neared we decided it must be an OTL. Lunch time came and went. None of the department heads had taken a secretary to lunch. No one had taken a secretary to lunch. I'm sure the secretaries were disappointed but the engineers were outraged. How could these department heads continue to ignore recognition for the most important person in the department? Soon the rumor mill responded.

Department heads had decided not to do anything. They were afraid of setting a precedent, offending someone with small flower arrangements, and taking time out of their busy day for an OTL. The engineers were flabbergasted. This sucked. Department heads excelled at non-productive work. They had time for an OTL.

The last week of April was also the week for my birthday and Jerry's birthday. Our secretary, Linda, deserved recognition. Jerry and I decided what the hell, we'll take Linda to lunch. So we did and made sure people knew why. We took a long lunch and celebrated Linda's work to keep our department on the straight and narrow as well as our birthdays. We didn't even have to ask

forgiveness when we got back to the office. It was so much fun we decided to make it an annual event.

The outrage of the engineers did have an effect. The next year the bosses did start providing some recognition to the secretaries on National Secretaries Day. The three of us continued our annual OTL the last week of April. In the 1980s a lot of reorganization occurred and the three of us ended up in different departments. We continued our OTL but not always the last week of April. Later we ended up in different facilities scattered all over the county. Sometimes it was April; sometimes it was October; sometimes it was whenever; but we always managed an OTL once a year.

We frequented a variety of restaurants. Jerry and I did some traveling and learned to enjoy Mexican food. Eventually we landed at the Steamboat (<https://www.facebook.com/steamboatgardens>) to dine on the Deluxe Burrito. Each order was slightly different. Linda wanted no jalapeños or sour cream, Jerry wanted sour cream and no jalapeños, and I wanted jalapeños and no sour cream. The term Deluxe was an understatement. The deep fried Burrito was covered with lettuce, chili, and cheese and filled the entire platter. Just finishing it was an accomplishment that we pursued with vigor. We were so consistent that who ever got to the Steamboat first could order for all three of us. This went on for years until Jerry retired. When Jerry retired it became apparent we weren't youngsters any more. It also became apparent we no longer had the vigor to consume a Deluxe Burrito. We decided to move to Rudy's.

Rudy's (<http://www.rudystacos.com/Waterloo/wl-menu.html>) was a Mexican restaurant where we could order A la carte. We were slow to accept reality that we couldn't eat like we used to. The first time or two at Rudy's we ordered like we were youngsters and agonized about not being able to eat it all. Gradually we have downsized our orders and each of us found a favorite entree. For me it used to be three enchiladas, rice and beans. Next was two enchiladas, rice and beans. Now it's one enchilada and beans and cross my fingers I can finish it. Linda and Jerry have also downsized to reflect their maturity.

After Jerry retired he spent part of the winter in Texas. We changed our schedule to an annual OTL in the spring and a bon voyage OTL before Jerry went south in for the winter. Some years, just because, we threw in another OTL.

I have moved away from Iowa but we continue our almost annual OTL when I get back to Iowa. Technology is great because Facebook keeps us in touch. Who knows, maybe we will be able to continue this until we get to the point the three of us split one enchilada.