

WAR ON CULTURE L A G

Battle P3: Professin' Yer Profession

An original radio drama by

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CAST

ANNOUNCER	Episode titles, and other important stuff.
HOST	Segment host.
AL DUNBAR	Roving reporter; slick, but not too.
LOU Q	Clipped, unemotional-efficient, to a fault.
MEL PARCEL	(Accent on the first syllable of surname, as in "parcel of land.")
H. MELTON KEYS	A bit dim, rural; no appreciation of humor or irony.
MIKE KEYNES	Young entrepreneur, remarkably normal.

RUNDOWN

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INTRO -- UNUSUAL MODERN CAREERS

1. MUSIC: PROGRAM THEME--UP. ESTABLISH. FADE UNDER.

2. ANNOUNCER: And now...Infinity Limited, L-T-D vacillates on whether to present another battle in the continuing...

3. SFX: (ECHO ON)

4. ANNOUNCER: War...on...Culture.....Lag....

5. MUSIC: THEME SWELLS, PETERS OUT AFTER ENDING CHORD. CUT TO SOMETHING MORE PASTORAL.

6. ANNOUNCER: Sociologists, theologians, fiction writers, and outpatients have observed that our society is failing to keep its mores and folkways in harmony with the exponentially increasing body of scientific and technical knowledge available to us. Once we figured out what this meant, a hardy band of us have been inspired to do something about this crisis, this "culture lag."

While few understand the menace, we all understand "war" as a means of "combating" threats. Thus, this "battle." But now, on with the show--there's a big lag out there!

7. MUSIC: UP, ENDS ON TRIUMPHAL CHORD, THEN OUT.

8. ANNOUNCER: Today's battle: "Professin' Yer Profession." And it's brought to you by Sonny's Seasoned Firewood--now featuring "Nacho Cheese." But now, let "hostilities" commence.

9. HOST: Hello again, fellow travellers. I'm your host, Waldo Emerson, hoping we can transcend

the mundane for a few moments, and together become better individuals.

First, the answers to last week's Culture Quiz: 42, The Clissold Saga, Marty Feldman, and petit four (we'll also accept "petit five").

Now to business. How we get ourselves into the careers we do seems as random as our choices of mates. For much of human history, one was bound to same the job as your father; your surname came to reflect your craft, your master, or your location. It was perhaps too confusing to have a Miller fix shoes, or a Baker shoe horses. At least *male* offspring had a *few* choices.

In our time, boys *and* girls can aspire to anything—and many have gotten rich marketing to those dreams. There are a bewildering number of jobs now—the flip side being whole professions come and go in a matter of years.

If you haven't looked for work lately—you're lucky. But do take a gander every so often at what is out there—this ain't your parents' economy. Finding something *between* CEO and Burger Engineer is tough.

Perhaps our guests today can broaden our perspective. We've sent our roving reporter Al Dunbar out to find folks in non-traditional lines of work, to explore the edges of that strange new world that is our market....

Our remote segments today are sponsored by the Allan-Hayden Employment Workshops. A-H-E-W-nothing to sneeze at if you need a job.

EFFICIENCY EXPERT

10. SOUND: WAR ON CULTURE LAG STANDARD TRANSITION (TANK TREAD ROLLS FROM RIGHT TO LEFT CHANNEL, OVER CLASSICAL MUSIC AND PUNCTUATED BY SILLY NOISES).

11. AL: Al Dunbar here, with another Culture Lag exclusive. It's not just the stuff of 1920's widget factories, ladies and gents—there really are "efficiency experts" alive and working. Let's learn more about this waning career from our guest, Mr., uh, Mr. "Lou Q." Welcome, Lou!

12. LOU: (MONOSYLLABIC ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.) Umm.

13. AL: Tell us a bit about yourself, Mr. Q—where you hail from, what you do, what your passions are....

14. LOU: I analyze actions, then suggest ways to do more in less time. Good day....

15. SOUND: LOU RISING TO LEAVE.

16. AL: Lou, Lou, hold on a sec....

17. SOUND: PULLING LOU BACK DOWN INTO CHAIR.

18. AL: Surely there's more to your story....

19. LOU: I communicated what I do. I see no need for further conversation.

20. AL: (CHUCKLES.) Well, I think my producer would beg to differ. Please tell us more.

(SILENCE.) Please?

Lou, help me out here. Like—oh! Your name; that seems a bit odd. Is "Q" your full surname?

21. LOU: (SIGH.) Yes. I legally shortened it, for signatures.
22. AL: And what was it originally?
23. LOU: Louisiana Alexander Ignatius Quartermandanpounder.
24. AL: Wow, that *would* make signing checks rough. High school must have been a nightmare....
25. LOU: Let's not go there, Al.
26. AL: Right. So how *does* one get into the efficiency game?
27. LOU: (WARMING TO THE SUBJECT.) Harder than you might think, Al. When I matriculated to Monkville JC, I was shocked to find no curricula for my intended major, Mid-Level Bureaucracy. Instead, I had to settle for an Business degree. Every semester, though, I came down with one debilitating ailment after another: hives, shingles, psoriasis, planters' warts.
- In my senior year I was on my way to yet another specialist's office when I got the wrong address. I ended up at a holistic healer, a woman who—after much prodding and needless conversation—came up with a strange diagnosis: I was allergic to Accounting.
28. AL: You don't say!
29. LOU: No, I don't—she did.
30. AL: Of course, of course; go on.
31. LOU: Thank you. I will. Her thought was that the endless permutations of simple math were so offending my inner sense of order that my

body was trying to "reject" this entire pursuit.

At her direction, I spent my last semester just taking macrame, yoga, and computer science. Amazingly, my symptoms diminished.

32. AL: So where did you go from there?
33. LOU: I felt great calm working with computers. Things were very logical there, yet not too obvious, and I didn't have to deal with many people. This trained efficient thought. Giddy, perhaps, from my new-found peace, I found myself correcting others more and more, as I could see them wasting time and money on countless frivolities.
34. AL: You must not have a large Christmas card list.
35. LOU: No, I do not, but I don't know where you'd get that. Anyway, I bounced around for a few years until the uncle I was living with gave me a job in his business.
36. AL: And that's where you first did your efficiency thing? What sort of business was it?
37. LOU: SitCo, a major supplier of office furniture to the government.
38. AL: I'll bet that was a ripe area for efficiency. So you made the business more lucrative?
39. LOU: Gradually. First, it was just omitting a few bolts here and there. A little more profit on initial sales, but big increase in service

revenue. Over time, though, I've had a real impact. Let's just say privacy panels have been very good to us....

40. AL: So what's hot in the efficiency game these days, Lou?

41. LOU: (CHUCKLES.) Well, it's all about outsourcing, Al. That's why my uncle's in a facility in Florida.

42. AL: You mean....

43. LOU: Well, sure, you know, it's all about costs, and people are expensive! First it was manufacturing, then support, then accounting...Kumar was a natural to run the company.

44. AL: Don't you find an empty factory kinda creepy?

45. LOU: Oh no—but we're based out of the Motel 6, now. You see, it's just me here on the domestic side.

46. SOUND: CELL PHONE RINGING.

47. LOU: Sorry, I've got to take this, it's Kumar.

48. SOUND: LOU HAVING A PHONE CONVERSATION IN THE BACKGROUND.

49. AL: Well folks, there's another tale of how one man makes a living. Who knew the modern science of efficiency could be so, uh, interesting?

50. LOU: (OFF-MIKE.) What? *ME!*?
But...but...but...well sure, *efficient*,
but....

51. AL: Just not, perhaps, a job of the future. And now back to the studio....

COMMERCIAL: SEASONED FIREWOOD

52. SOUND: WOCL STANDARD TRANSITION.

53. ANNOUNCER: And now a word from our sponsor....

Friends, we all know it's the fuel that makes the fire. Whether in the fanciest chalet hearth or the meanest Skid Row oil drum, your fire burns best with properly dried wood. Sonny's Seasoned Firewood knows this, and goes the industry one better. Not only do they have the best *cured* kindling and logs, but now it's the best smelling. That's right, Sonny's is infused with all your favorite scents. No more need for expensive incense, room fresheners, or body washes—just burn Sonny's!

Select your wood (say, oak, ash, or walnut), then select your scent! Sonny's Seasoned Firewood has everything from patchouli to potpurri, pine to popcorn. Check our stores for your scratch-and-sniff tester strips, and pick up a cord today! That's Sonny's Seasoned Firewood—this month's special, "Doritos."

54. SOUND: WOCL STANDARD TRANSITION.

MEL PARCEL, STREET NAMER

56. HOST: Let's go back to Al Dunbar with another interesting job-holder....

57. SOUND: OFFICE SOUNDS IN BACKGROUND, THROUGHOUT.

58. AL: (OFF-MIKE.) Fascinating stuff. (NORMAL.) I've met a charming gentleman here at the Clerk/Recorder's office, a Mister....

59. MEL: Mel Parcel, Al.

60. AL: Great. And tell the people what you do?

61. MEL: I'm a street namer, Al.

62. AL: A street *namer*, you say. Can't say as I've heard of that specialty before.

63. MEL: My consulting firm, Parcel Titles, helps developers or municipalities when they're stumped. As you may know, a developer usually names any new streets within his subdivision, and it can be a surprisingly difficult process.

64. AL: Especially if you come from a small family.

65. MEL: (CHUCKLES, NOT ATTRACTIVELY.) That's right, Al, the first choices for street names are usually relatives' names. Trees, Presidents, and geographic features follow, although these are usually already taken in a mature community.

66. AL: So they don't call you for "First" or "A," I suppose.

67. MEL: Not in *this* country, no, but they're considered surprisingly exotic in certain foreign countries....
68. AL: So what's your specialty?
69. MEL: Well, I can't divulge trade secrets, but I can tell you it's all about the combos. Take an obvious one that I haven't used since the 80's: girl's name plus gemstone. "Rose Opal Drive," that sort of thing. We also consult on mall naming, but there's very little room for artistic expression there.
70. AL: Has the prevalence of GPS affected business?
71. MEL: For clients requesting truly *unique* names, you bet. Before you could get away with reuse within a county or two, since staff would never pore over that many paper maps or records. Now, everybody at the first meeting can instantly second-guess you with their smartphone.
72. AL: Are you ever affected by political renamings for national heroes and the like?
73. MEL: Rarely. They usually do that to what we in the biz call a "legacy" name, an old street in the city core. They get me once in awhile, though, and I don't mind telling you it hurts—it's like losing a pet.
74. AL: I hate to be crass, but I have no idea; how are you paid for your services?
75. MEL: Flat fee, usually, calculated from the street length and width, city size, etc. I get residuals from some deals, owing to the difficulty—and the desperation of the client.

Let's just say I'm especially proud of "Milky Way" in a certain Wisconsin city.

76. AL: What are you working on now?

77. MEL: Today I'm just here on private business.

78. AL: Oh?

79. MEL: If you must know, I'm petitioning to have my own street renamed. It's at the end of a huge subdivision, and a harried developer turned the job over to his teenage nephew.

80. AL: Dare I ask?

81. MEL: (SIGHS.) Festering Boil Place.

My latest commission, though, is for the last street in a Western-themed gated community in Arizona. All the obvious ones have been used, of course: Cattle Drive, Boot Hill Place, OK Corral Circle.

82. AL: Handlebar Mustache Avenue?

83. MEL: Taken. Like I say, a real stumper.

84. AL: Maybe you'll have to go ethnic, like Chinese Way, or Indian-

85. MEL: (INTERRUPTS.) Let me stop you right there, Al; my firm takes no chances on anything that could potentially be the least bit offensive to any social group.

86. AL: Ah, c'mon, it's Arizona.... So, no "Little Big Horn Rim"?

87. MEL: Not so easy, is it Al-say, wait! That could work. We've got a road running across the side of hills...I could use that there, and move Mexicali Rose Avenue to my blank....

Say, Al, you could have a future in this business!

88. AL: Thanks just the same, I'd best stick to my day job. Speaking of which—back to the studio!

89. SOUND: WOCL STANDARD TRANSITION.

H. MELTON KEYS, KEEPER OF BEES

90. HOST: Not to steal Al's thunder, but I've literally found a man in the street who has a job you don't see every day, so I've asked him in to share with us. I see by your card, sir, that you are H. Melton Keys; and what do you do?
91. KEYS: I'm a keeper of bees.
92. HOST: Commonly known as a "beekeeper," I believe.
93. KEYS: Well, I've never heard it put that way, but yeah, I suppose.
94. HOST: Is this your company?
95. KEYS: Amalgamated Bees LLC—yep, that's my card.
96. HOST: Tell me—how's business?
97. KEYS: Well, I tell ya—I don't get many calls.
98. HOST: Hmmm. Seems odd, since we've all heard how their seems to be a shortage.... Getting back to your card: your logo is just a couple giant letter "B's"....
99. KEYS: Sure; what else would it be?
100. HOST: ...and your web site is "B-B-Kings-dot-com"?
101. KEYS: Yep, got all the bases covered, but I don't think that internet mess works.
102. HOST: I suspect there may be a spelling issue, but tell me—do you have this info on your truck?
103. KEYS: Truck?
104. HOST: I assume you carry the bees to the fields in a truck?

105. KEYS: Oh, well shore, only we don't get that much call for 'em outside'a town.
106. HOST: Far be it from me to tell you your business, but I think I can suggest some improvements.
107. KEYS: Oh? Do tell.
108. HOST: First, the *name* of the business. I think you're missing a bet right away by not having something a bit snappier. "Keys' Bees" is obvious, maybe you could play off of "Bees Knees" somehow....
109. KEYS: (CHUCKLES.) Boy, Mister, I don't know how you come up with this stuff.
110. HOST: Then you'll change it?
111. KEYS: No way—you know how much it costs to file them papers?
112. HOST: Then your logo. Why don't you have cute little bumblebees on your card?
113. KEYS: Well, I suppose I *could*, but it'd be kinda deceptive-like.
114. HOST: Now you've really lost me. Bees are your business, right?
115. KEYS: Yep.
116. HOST: You raise them, you sell their honey, you smoke them when you're in your beekeeping suit?
117. KEYS: (LAUGHS.) Boy, you city folk sure have some funny ideas. I guess I "raise" 'em, all right, when I put 'em up with a ladder. But I don't think they have girlfriends, an' even if they did I wouldn't think 'a selling one.

I don't know what you been smokin', but I don't got no special suit, and I ain't gonna get no cancer from the plastic an' such.

118. HOST:

(THOROUGHLY CONFUSED.)

Well...I...you...but.... Can I see these bees of yours? Maybe we can go out to your truck....

119. KEYS:

No need fer all that; got some flat ones right here in my case.

120. HOST:

Flat! You barbarian! Crushing the poor insects is just wrong....

121. KEYS:

(AMUSED.) You slay me. Ain't no flat insects in here...take that back, there's that one little moth, but he's been in there a coon's age. Here's my book—some nice samples in here....

122. HOST:

(REALIZATION DAWNS.) OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOHHHHHH!
B's! The letter!

123. KEYS:

Shore. What'd you think it was? Here's a nice one, all gold-like, lots a little squiggles on it.

124. HOST:

Your sample case is full of the letter B, from various posters and signs.

125. KEYS:

I got some of them thick ones in the truck; what'a they call 'em, 3-D?

126. HOST:

And you *sell* these?

127. KEYS:

Tell ya the truth, nary a one *these* days. Mainly I just keep an eye on 'em for my cousin Virgil. See he runs that printin' museum back home? He don't trust me with money an' such, but he says I'm just the man

to keep these B's, that's why he put me in charge of 'em. If I find somebody that needs one, I usually just give 'em away. Virgil handles all the other letters. (NOT-SO-SOTTO VOCE.) Sometimes I think he just wants me out of his hair. 'Course he don't *have* much hair no more....

128. HOST:

(FLUSTERED, ANXIOUS TO GET AWAY.) Just the man, indeed. I think I'd best leave this work to Al, so let's go back to him.

(OFF-MIKE.) Ralph? Ralph! Where did you *find* this guy....

129. SOUND: WOCL STANDARD TRANSITION.

MONKEY BUSINESS

130. AL:

No mention of modern business would be complete without addressing that most fabled of creatures, the entrepreneur. One faction or another periodically holds up the "self-made business man" as the ultimate paragon of virtue, one to whom we should supplicate for answers on life, the universe, and everything. So, we sought out such an oracle for views on the macro economy.

While whole networks discuss this mythic creature 24 hours a day, there are far fewer of them in the wild than one might be led to believe. Simply being self-employed isn't quite the same, though that role is increasingly forced upon more and more of us.

Desperate, we turned to the Chamber of Commerce. They came back with the usual champions of local industry. Perhaps we're growing skeptical after decades of the same old platitudes and truisms, but we were underwhelmed by their list. We poked a bit deeper to learn the realities of their businesses, and found some less than inspiring tendencies.

Folks who inherited businesses or money—and managed not to lose it all—didn't seem to have the level of insight one would hope for. Also, we didn't want to encourage those whose fortunes came from products that essentially preyed on others' weaknesses or fears. Then there are those who basically just had lucky

timing, the beneficiaries of fads and appealing to the lowest common denominator at one historical moment; rarely have such people ever duplicated their success or had anything accurate to say about anything else. And of course, many of our titans of industry gained their market strangleholds through dubious ethics and/or monopolistic behaviors.

None of these seemed appropriate role models for our little family show, and one that hopes to encourage *new* models. Then, at the twelfth hour (literally—midnight last night), we ran into our next guest. The noise from a party at our downstairs neighbor was about to shatter my last nerve, so I went down to complain. Long story short, I met the owner of the company who supplied some of the unique entertainers for that soiree.

More on that later, but here now is what I would call a truly representative modern businessman. Ladies and gents, meet Mike Keynes.

131. MIKE: Hiya.
132. AL: So, Mike, did you dream of entrepreneurship as a child?
133. MIKE: Nah, I wanted to be a ballplayer, stuff like that.
134. AL: Well then, how did your career start?
135. MIKE: I dunno about "career," but I started working in high school. I wanted to make a little money so I could entertain girls. I was real fortunate to get a job at Monk's Keys.

Maynard Monk was a guy who ran one of those kiosks in the shopping center that makes keys. I just worked a few hours a week, covering so Mr. Monk could get out and run some errands, go vote, stuff like that.

136. AL: Typical job for a kid, good for a little pocket money.

137: MIKE: Exactly. I was pretty dependable and stuff, so I continued on there as I started college.

138: AL: Where you studied Business?

139: MIKE: (SHEEPISHLY.) No, not really. I was an Anthropology major, but I took a few Biz classes.

140. AL: So you started dreaming of starting a huge company.

141. MIKE: Heck no. The more I knew about multi-national corp.s, the more I wanted to join the *Peace Corps!*

142. AL: I'm a little lost; so what got your business career going?

143. MIKE: Well, *luck*, I guess. I didn't think it was good fortune at the time, but Mr. Monk came in one day, had me sign a couple papers, tossed me some keys, then said the place was mine. "I'm not spending my last years cooped up in this box," he said. Last I heard, he was chasing sheep in New Zealand.

144. AL: Ah, I see it now—young blood gets injected into the business and the company skyrockets.

145: MIKE: Well-l-l, no, I mean, it's just the key business. Average profit per sale is only a

couple bucks. Plus stuff was all going digital....

146. AL: I'm confused....

147. MIKE: On TV they'd cut about here to me sitting in a mansion, flashing a Rolex or a gold tooth to scantily-clad babes, but reality is hard.

Say, I don't get all those business shows. They're never really right, especially ahead of time—when it might be of value. Listening to them just seems a lot like going to a chain-smoking doctor with fifty-percent body fat: I might listen, but I wouldn't take his advice too seriously....

148. AL: Yes, well, I'll make a note of that for future topics. But please tell us more about how you proceeded.

149. MIKE: OK, so the novelty wore off pretty quickly. The profit versus tedium ratio was not good. I tried employing friends, but that never worked. They'd take advantage of the situation one way or another, either making pocketfuls of keys for everyone but paying customers, or using the kiosk for questionable rendezvous.

150. AL: So hard to get good help these days, eh?

151. MIKE: How about *any* help. I tried the business seminars, tapes, and such. Again, the guys selling the stuff seemed to be doing well, but I never found any *advisees* with any sustained improvement.

In all the palaver about "branding," however, I discovered one nugget I could use:

"Monk's Keys" had a really good reputation in the community. It was nothing to do with me—Maynard had been a longtime supporter of Little League and softball teams, Girl Scouts, and the like.

So I'm looking for multiple income streams, and I had a good name. Well, there wasn't much more I could do with merchandising in the "lock" market, so I thought about other "keys."

I teamed up with an out-of-work piano tuner on another "Monk's Keys," a keyboard service shop. It made a modest living for *him*, but not much for me.

152. AL: What about internet ventures?

153. MIKE: Yeah, I wanted to have a go there, too, so I started another Monk's Keys. I gathered some local gamer nerds and made a website to sell clues. So, if you were stuck in the latest shoot-'em-up video game but didn't want to appear clueless to your friends, you could get a hint for a few bucks and go on. Again, just a few dollars per sale, but we made a bit.

Then I was approached to use Monk's Keys by a budding "personal power" seminar guy, but I nixed that idea.

154. AL: What, the split not good enough?

155. MIKE: No, it was just too cheesy a business for my taste. I mean, how often has it been done: getting rich by selling platitudes on how to get rich.

156. AL: (CHUCKLES.) Without preying on people's weaknesses, fears, and vanity—where would our economy be?

157. MIKE: Well, one thing is true: you have to have multiple sources of income. So I powered ahead; I mean, there's no future in being a wage-slave in this country.

I tried being creative around my base brand. "Monk's Keys" seemed a natural for selling real estate on Florida islands, but too impractical; however, "Monk's Antique Keys" seemed doable as an internet-based boutique business.

158. AL: Antique locksets, skeleton keys, that sort of thing?

159. MIKE: Right. But again, not much in the way of "real" money.

About that time I went to a high school reunion. At some point a well-served old "frenemy" and some hangers-on cornered me and started gloating about his life. Long past the point my eyes glazed over he finally came up for air and asked what I was doing. I told him about taking over the Monk's Keys business.

Suddenly, he does this whole nudge-nudge wink-wink thing for his buddies, and goes all Sgt. Schultz—you know, the guy from Hogan's Heroes?—and says, "I'll bet: mon-key biz-ness."

At that point they wash back to the bar, but I find myself livid. I'm frustrated

enough with my life without commentary from the pinhead contingent.

But darned if the next day I don't start researching on a whole different tack. And that's when Monk's Monkey Business started.

160. AL: Amazing. Who knew there was demand for literal monkeys in a typical American city.

161. MIKE: Right? I started with a couple old chimps from a bankrupt circus' auction. I bought an old farm outside fo town—another distress sale—to house them. By the time we had some crude enclosures up, visitors were stopping to see what was going on. Pretty soon I was able to charge a few bucks. That led to food and souvenir stands, and within a couple of years we had a decent little business going. That attracted the interest of more creative friends, who got us going on internet marketing and merchandise.

162. AL: Meanwhile, more monkeys?

163. MIKE: Indeed. We picked up an orang here, a chimp there. As it started getting crowded, we were able to branch into "personal appearances," bringing primates on-site for parties of all sorts. It meant jobs for wranglers, and changes of scene for the animals.

164. AL: Of course, I could see some people having concerns about misuse....

165. MIKE: Sure, no, we do our best not to be exploitive or anthropomorphize. But some of the guys really are quite extroverted. We don't *dress*

them or anything, but we do give them a box of props to play with at appearances. We've got a couple of real improv masters.

166. AL:

Well, Mike, it sure seems like you've made something of the Monkey business!

167. MIKE:

We try to let our charges do anything they're comfortable with. I've been approached repeatedly to supply subjects for a new medical lab in the area, but I'll have none of that.

I dunno, I think it works best to treat employees—no matter what their DNA—as *collaborators* as much as possible. After all, a happy worker is just another salesman for the company, don't you think?

168. AL:

Well, you just may have something there. We've been speaking with Mike Keynes, who's busy with his Monkey business—and yes, he has some bananas.

169. SOUND: WOCL STANDARD TRANSITION.

OUTRO

170. ANNOUNCER: Well, that's our look at the whole subject of business, from unusual perspectives. Hopefully, we're left with something more than a throbbing headache.

A big salute to Bob & Ray from all us 'Laggers. And Marty Feldman—please check in with the Office.

Be sure to be with us the next time we get around to fighting inertia, when we launch another battle in the continuing
(ECHO) WAR...ON...CULTURE.....LAG....

171. MUSIC: THEME UP, THEN FADE OUT.

THE END.

Writer/Director's notes for Battle P3: Professin' Yer Profession