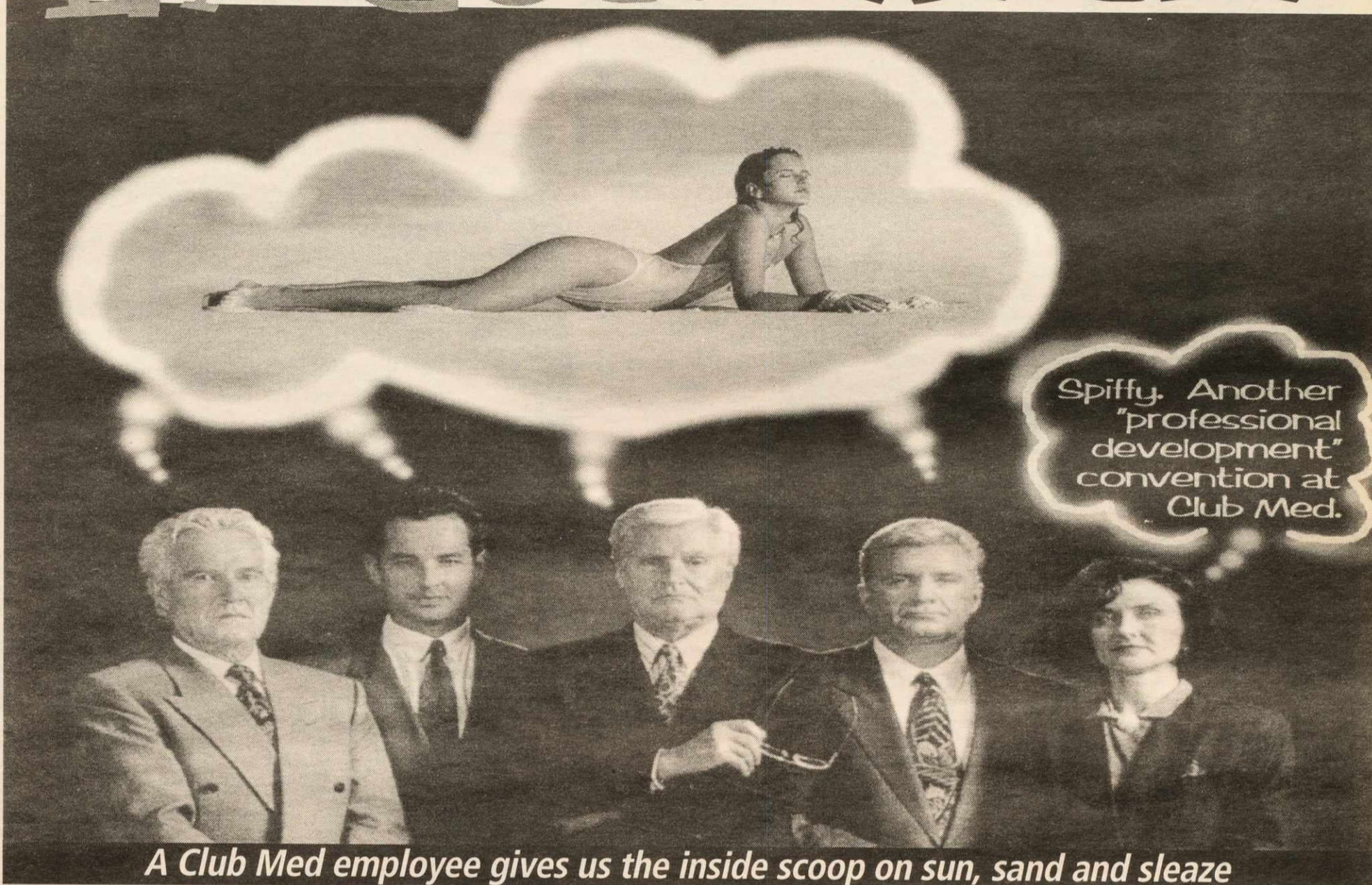


LA CUCU RACHA



A Club Med employee gives us the inside scoop on sun, sand and sleaze

BY REGAN MCPHEE

Picture spending day after day on sun-drenched, sandy beaches, frolicking in crystal blue waters and sipping fruity cocktails with little umbrellas.

Now envision working 12-hour days, seven days a week for six months, having no time to experience these simple pleasures. This is what my true experience as a Club Med GO (*Gentile Organisateur*) — someone who has to be nice all the time — was like.

I was filled with trepidation the moment my cab dropped me off.

With the meal I had just eaten on the plane slowly inching its way up the back of my throat, I realized that Club Med was not going to be as I imagined. What tipped me off was the throng of clapping, cheering, overzealous GOs dancing in front of a pastel-pink stucco building.

Along with having to greet all guests in the same over-the-top way as I was received, we were also responsible for helping guests check in to their rooms. Every week we would go through the same routine of showing the new guests the grounds, telling them about the restaurant's hours and explaining the activities offered.

But once the guests are settled in, the real work begins.

A typical day at a family Club Med starts at 7am with a breakfast buffet so loaded with fat that you may as well inject it directly into your arteries. And once you've finished wolfing down greasy eggs and fatty bacon, your 8-10 hour shift begins.

Imagine spending an entire day face-painting, singing camp songs and playing in the waves. Sound like fun?

If you're lucky, you don't have to work at night and when the activities shut down at 5pm you can actually relax for an hour or two before dinner.

7pm rolls around and off you go to fill your plate with that evening's meal — everyday of the week had a different theme. You now take your generic, MSG-laden plate of Chinese or Mexican food to your table and brace yourself for the unimaginative questions you'll inevitably be asked by the guests.

Apparently the evening entertainment took place not only on the stage, but in the bedroom as well. One night I witnessed a guest, who was at Club Med with her husband, creep into my next door neighbour's room and slither out a few hours later. The ten commandments were being broken left, right and centre.

If you're not so lucky and you do have to work, it's back to the trenches at 6:30pm.

This means you get to eat with the children (or should I say cater to the children). You have to fetch their drinks, fill their plate and carry out other slavish tasks. When supper is over it's story- or movie-time until 9pm.

Then comes the time of the day we relish — parents collect their kids.

All GOs must then report to the auditorium to do "signs", a funky-up version of line dancing. "Signs" is followed by the evening

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concert, which, if you don't have the apparent advantage of performing in, you have the gruelling task of watching.

Late night entertainment starts at 10:30pm. This is when the GOs have the ultimate pleasure of watching the guests embarrass themselves

while singing karaoke or participating in comedy sketches. This continues until 11pm and, unless you have to rehearse for the next night's show, you

are released from the responsibility of making the guests happy. That leaves you with an entire 7-8 hours of free time — and that's best spent sleeping.

When you wake up in the morning you do it all over again.

While I spent my free time sleeping, other employees spent their time doing other things. Apparently the evening entertainment took place not only

on the stage, but in the bedroom as well.

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husband, creep into my next door neighbour's room and slither out a few hours later.

The ten commandments were being broken left, right and centre.

But aside from the never-ending workday and extra-marital affairs, Club Med was alright. It afforded me many opportunities to experience things that I could never have done at home. While at Club Med I flew on a trapeze and even attempted a catch ("catch" being the operative word here). I saw an octopus, stingrays and barracudas. I'd only water-skied once before

working at Club Med. Now I can slalom. I performed in the Club's water-ski shows and was even asked to teach for a week. Weighing the pros and cons, I would have to say that working at Club Med was a positive experience.

Though hours were long and morality was forgotten, Club Med did have a positive side. During my six month contract I met many fascinating people, made numerous life-long friends and entertained the TV and movie stars that charm us every day.

Where else but an expensive, exclusive vacation spot like Club Med would I get chosen by a famous male model on the *Dating Game*? Sure, I was playing a character and, yeah, he bolted as soon as we left the stage — but I still got the hug and that still counts for something.

Doesn't it?



Another happy couple, but the wife and kids may be waiting at home.