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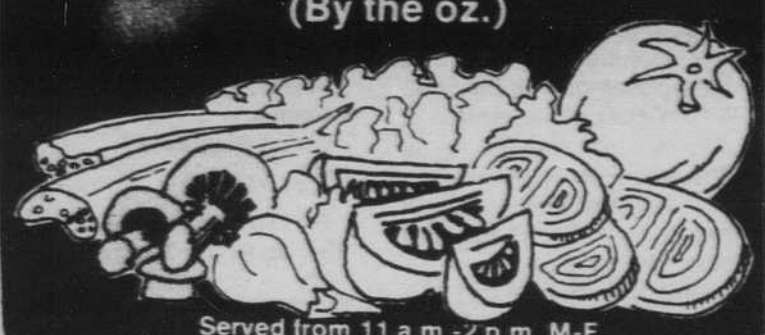

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# Lesson one in interviews: Research your employer

## Be prepared, stay relaxed

Dress conservatively. Wear deodorant. Lie.

Expect a lot of advice like this right before an important job interview, but don't depend on it. It's what you do a few weeks *before* the interview that makes the difference between a successful interview and an embarrassing disappointment, says a University psychology research associate.

"Interviews are very stressful situations," says Harold Hawkins, who gives a series of lectures on job interviewing. The more prepared an applicant is, the easier it is to relax and respond to questions with informed answers, he says.

The first step in preparing for an interview is research, Hawkins says. Find out a lot about the company granting the interview. Trade journals, the company's annual reports, in-house newsletters and product information brochures are the best sources. Visit the library or write the company to get the information.

Know what business the company is in. Determine what kinds of skills appear to be needed. Know what kind of problems the company faces.

This kind of research is "very, very valuable," Hawkins says. "If you walk in prepared, you're way ahead of everybody else."

Once in the interview, making an impression on a potential employer is the goal.

Some people swear by Hollywood's "casting couch" style, a subtle method designed to capture the employer first and then the job. Others prefer the razzle-dazzle approach that includes "creative" resumes and an overly firm handshake.

Hawkins' advice falls somewhere in between. Again, rely on preparation, he says.

A confident, relaxed air is best for answering questions. The way to stay relaxed is knowing what to say beforehand and having a good idea of what questions the interviewer is going to ask. Then practice, Hawkins says.

"If you don't have these ideas rehearsed and well in mind, you may find yourself going blank. Write them down. Rehearse them."

These are the six most often asked questions, according to Hawkins:

- What are your strongest abilities?
- How do your skills relate to our needs?
- What are you looking for in a job?
- What would you like to know about us?
- Why should we hire you?
- What are your salary expectations?

The right answers and the proper conduct during the interview could make all the difference, Hawkins says.

**By Harry Esteve**

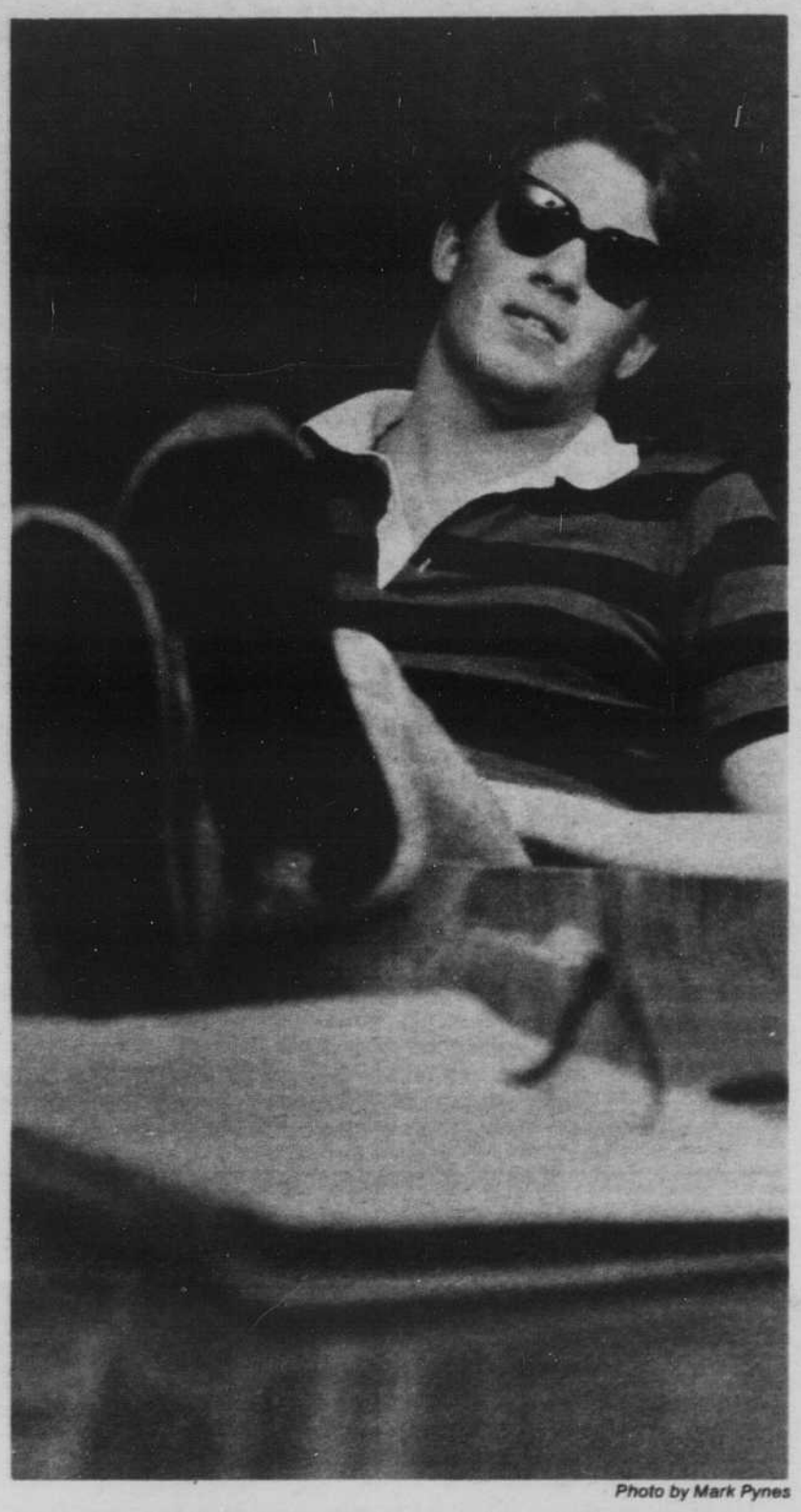

Photo by Mark Pynes

***A relaxed air is best for answering questions, but appearance and approach weigh heavily too.***

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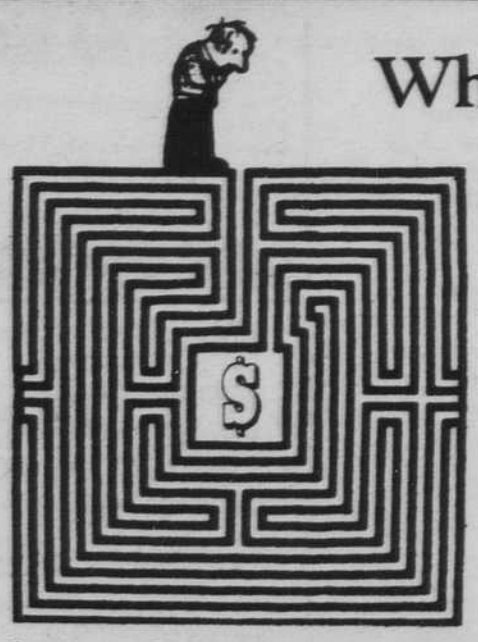

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