

# Odd Jobs

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SOUTHWESTERN SALESMEN—1903. The caption on this old photo reads, "Comprising three young doctors, two young lawyers, one miner, one newspaper reporter and one professional bookman."

## How did you get that job?

A student in a class at a university where I was interviewing asked me that question when I described working at the Stennis Institute of Government at Mississippi State. It's a long story...

Along the way, I painted schools for the Brenham Independent School District, loaded trucks for Brenham Coca-Cola, moved to Houston and worked for Brown & Root Construction, working on high-steel jackets for off-shore oil rigs, then spent a few months taking classes at Texas A&M, where I started working at Reagan's Department Store in College Station, doing inventory, lay-away, and engraving. That spring, I worked for Phil Gramm for Congress - polling and the following summer for The Southwestern Company, selling books door-to-door in North Carolina. In the fall of 1982, jobs were scarce, but I started at Cenare' Italian Cuisine in College Station, as dishwasher and then as cook for the next three years. I graduated and spent the following summer, working cattle, moving hay, and fencing at the K-K Longhorn Ranch in Buffalo, Texas. After my first year of graduate school, I spent the summer waiting tables at the Holiday Inn and shucking oysters and cooking at Gigi's Oyster Bar in Nacogdoches, Texas. In 1991 I realized that my day job would never allow me the time to finish my dissertation, so I quit and worked part-time at Edward Blank Telemarketing in Arlington, and temping at Trammel Crow Residential in Las Colinas, Texas, as well as doing some consulting for the Grapevine-Collierville Independent School District. I left Dallas to take a job at Auburn University, where I taught for two years on a visiting appointment, then began an eight year career in state government, first in Tennessee, then in Texas. I got a job at Mississippi State University where I sat on 15 doctoral dissertation committees. Since then, I've worked on state integrity investigations for a media consortium dealing with transparency, reviewed journal articles, did some volunteer work as I made my way.

And I read a lot.

I guess that's how you get this job.