

GUM UP THE WORKS

By Carole L. Cooney

This expression was first used in the 1800s, when a lot of new machines were invented. Most machinery had to be oiled well to work properly. Sometimes the oil got so thick that instead of helping the machine run smoothly, it actually interfered with – or even stopped – the working of the machine. Today, anyone or anything that “gums up the works” ruins someone’s plans or spoils any kind of undertaking.

Setting: The Office

Characters:

Narrator

John

Judy

Josh

Voice of the answering machine

Narrator: It was a very busy day in the office. Judy was working furiously at her computer when everything stopped. She clicked the mouse and nothing happened. She tried typing to no avail. She sat looking at the clock wondering how she would get her work finished.

John: Judy, why are you sitting there staring at the wall? You know this is a rush order. It’s got to be sent in a half hour.

Judy: I know... I know! I told you last week something in this computer was gumming up the works but it *seems* nothing has been done, hum?

John: Who did you tell?

Judy: You.

John: Oh, well I didn’t know what you were talking about – why didn’t you explain exactly what was going on?

Judy: If I *knew* what was going on, I would’ve explained – BUT, I don’t know what’s wrong with this computer. I don’t want to turn it off because I’m afraid I’ll lose everything I’ve been working on. Do you have any suggestions?

John: Let’s get Josh in here. *He’s* the expert.

Narrator: Judy picks up the phone and calls Josh. She hears the answering machine voice.

Voice: Hi, all! This is Josh. Sorry I’m missing you but leave the info and I’ll call you back.

Judy: (calling and upset) John! John, he’s not there. *Now what?*

John: Calm down. Let me see if I can reach him.

Narrator: John dials Josh’s special number. After three rings, Josh answers.

Josh: Josh here.

John: Man, am I glad to hear your voice. We've got a big computer problem down here. The works are really gummed up! Can you come and try to fix it? Make it as fast as you can.

Josh: You know me. I'll be there in *no time*.

Narrator: John goes back to Judy's office to reassure her that the problem will be fixed when Josh get there.

Judy: Are you sure Josh is *the expert*? It seems to me he *gummed up* a lot of stuff last year. I don't know if I trust him.

Narrator: Just then, Josh runs into the room and makes a beeline for Judy's computer.

Judy: Josh, *please* don't lose anything. *Please*.

Narrator: Josh begins by unplugging some black connectors, then turns off the computer. The screen goes black.

Judy: (screams) *No!* You didn't! Now look what you've done. It's all ruined.

Josh: Wait a minute... wait a minute. Let's give this a try.

Narrator: Josh replugs the black connectors, then turns on the computer. The screen lights up with Judy's typing neatly spread across the page.

Judy: Oh, Josh. You are a miracle worker. I thought the computer was so gummed up that no one would be able to solve the problem. I can't thank you enough.

John: Good going, Josh. Thanks for getting here quickly, otherwise our business would be totally gummed up! You really saved the day!