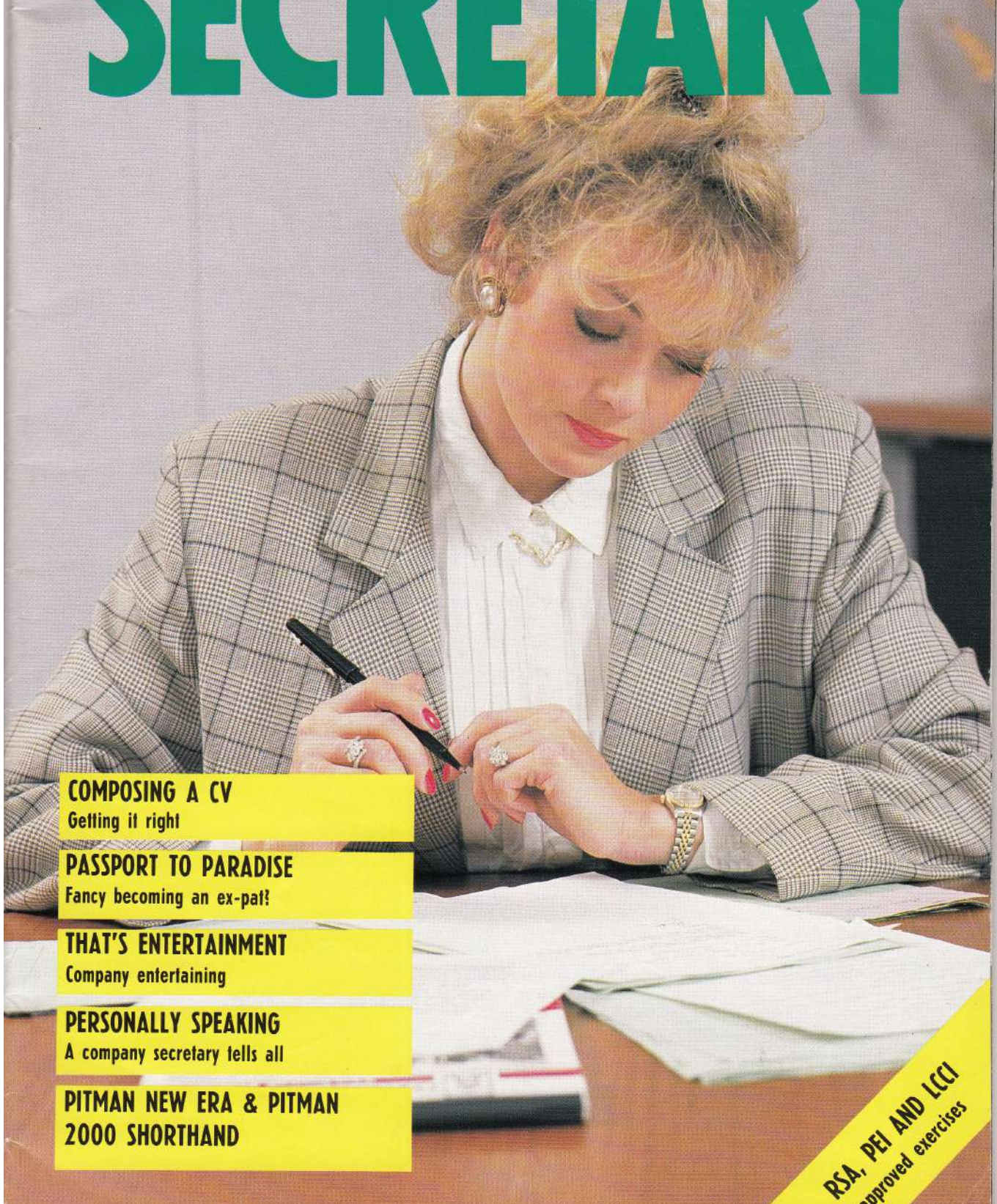


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ON THE HOOF

Alexander Baron looks at feet, their needs and remedies for problems.

However well dressed we are, we invariably pay less attention to footwear than to anything else, but good, sensible shoes and boots are more than wearing the correct tie or the "in" blouse. Back in the late 60's, early 70's, high heels and platforms were all the rage. High heels are like doughnuts; now and again is okay. Eat sticky sweets everyday and you'll soon get fat; wear the wrong shoes constantly and you'll end up with backache and serious problems lower down.

"Never be afraid to pay slightly more for better quality."

Perfect fit

The ideal shoe for the office worker should be supportive and the correct size. Although we stop growing roughly after the age of 18-21 we still change shape, this applies particularly to our feet. A size 5B at 18 can become a 5½E 10 or 12 years later, so it is important to check your foot size regularly. Shoes should always be long enough and bend in the right places, ie where your foot bends. Width and depth are important too. Only you will be able to tell if a shoe is deep enough for you; ideally the toes should not press against the top. A shoe which is too narrow will cause ridges of hard skin around your feet. Courts are a good office shoe, but as with all pull ons they must be tight enough to prevent them slipping or blisters will result. Although lace ups are not particularly fashionable for women, there is no reason why they should not be worn in this day and age.

Rough trade

If your office is located in a factory, or if your work involves roughing it in a portacabin office on a building site, from time to time, you should invest in a pair of safety shoes or boots. Before you throw up your hands in horror, this does not mean you will have to wear navvies' boots. There are several companies which manufacture fashionable safety footwear. At the



Safety & Health at Work Exhibition held earlier this year a company displayed its "Toe Tectors" range. These showed that steel toe caps are, for the most part, indiscernable from ordinary ladies' boots; some are also heat and chemical resistant. You might even be able to get your employer to foot the bill; Health & Safety regulations are very strict, and employers are obliged by law to provide adequate protective clothing, hard hats on a building site, for example, for their employees.

"High heels are like doughnuts, now and again is okay."

Easy life

For the more humdrum office, anything comfortable and hard wearing is suitable. Shoes with leather uppers are still the best because they allow the feet to breathe, though with an open shoe like a court this is not quite so important. For the soles, many synthetic materials are just as good.

Tights and socks

Natural fibres are to be preferred, so if you wear socks, cotton or wool is best. Acrylic is really the most awful material. Tights, of course, are made principally from nylon, but never be afraid to pay slightly more for better quality.

"Shoes with leather uppers are still the best because they allow the feet to breathe."

Healthy hoofs

The subjects of sweaty feet and smelly feet tend to give rise to laughter, but like slipping on a banana skin they're only funny when they happen to someone else. Sweaty feet, known medically as Hyperhidrosis are caused by changing hormone levels in adolescents or by over-active sweat glands. (There are more sweat glands per square centimetre on the foot than anywhere else on the body). Fortunately this is a problem which affects mostly men. Smelly feet or Bromidrosis is a bacterial or fungal complaint and can be very embarrassing as well as very unpleasant.

The treatment for both is bathing the feet in a 3% formalin solution or

applying surgical spirit daily. An antiperspirant or odour eaters should also help; ask your chemist. It may be your shoes that are at fault, so change them and see what happens. As always, prevention is better than cure; needless to say you should take a bath or a shower daily regardless, preferably at night.

The other common complaint is Athlete's Foot; your pharmacist will be able to advise you on this, but for anything more serious you should really consult your GP or a qualified chiropodist.

Foot cream plus

A cream that can be used on the feet, hands and anywhere the skin is subjected to rough treatment is PR2000. It is a remoisturising agent which should be applied after showering, washing etc. If your secretarial skills extend to washing up, maintaining your typewriter, coming into contact with oil, grease, etc, there are two other creams useful for both the office and the home. PR99 is a water insoluble cream which should be applied prior to washing up.

The real miracle agent though has to be PR88, otherwise known as "the invisible glove". If you have to handle oil or anything water insoluble, just rub this well into the hands, including behind the nails, leave to dry for a minute, and you can handle anything from paint to heavy engineering grease. Afterwards, simply wash off with cold water.

All three creams are cheap, environment friendly and offer some protection against dermatitis. PR creams are distributed in the UK by Radpin & Company, 40 Williams Way, Radlet, Herts. Tel: (0923) 852698.

Feet treat

Go on, give your feet a break, look after them, and look out for shoes that are both suitable and comfortable.

Shoes should be:

- The correct size
- Long enough to bend in the right places
- Tight enough to prevent them slipping
- Comfortable and hardwearing



High quality tights - music to your legs!