

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

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Somebody finally gets it

Australian Jeffrey Lee is the last surviving member of the clan that controls the Koon-garra uranium deposit near Kakadu National Park (east of Darwin). Australian law requires his permission for the French energy company Areva to extract the estimated 14,000 tons, perhaps worth the equivalent

of \$4.2 billion. But Lee vouches never to sell because "if you disturb that land, bad things will happen. He told the Sydney Morning Herald in July, "This is my country. I'm not interested in money. I've got a job. ... I can go fishing and hunting. That's all that matters to me." ■

The continuing crisis

- Widower Charlie Bonn Kemp, 77, of Vero Beach, took especially hard the loss of his wife, Lee, in 2006 because she was unquestionably the love of his life even though the couple stopped having sex even before they got married in 1978, according to a June St. Petersburg Times profile. Lee had been Charlie's gay lover for 26 years, until revealing in 1978 that he could no longer resist the urge to become a woman, and especially a housewife. Such was their attachment that, following Lee's full sex change, she and Charlie decided to take advantage of Lee's new status and legally marry and continue their devotion, even though Charlie remained sexually attracted only to men.

- Kenya, in addition to the usual problems of a developing African nation (poverty, tribal frictions), has recently endured the rise in power of the Mungiki, which is a secret society that is (according to a June New York Times dispatch) "part Sicilian Mafia, part Chicago street gang, with a little of the occult sprinkled in." Police say the members aim to

destabilize the country in the midst of the current political campaign by devil-worshipping acts of violence (skinning heads, drinking human blood). A district commissioner in Nairobi said the Mungiki had threatened her with genital mutilation. The gang originated in the 1990s much as organized crime in the U.S. did, by taking over such urban enterprises as bus transit and garbage collection.

- Latest in brain science: (1) French neurologists writing recently in the journal *The Lancet* described their surprise in finding, via brain scans, that a normally functioning 44-year-old man had a brain "more than 50 percent to 75 percent" smaller than average, consisting of little more than a thin sheet of brain material surrounding a large fluid buildup. (The man is employed as a French government bureaucrat.) (2) Researchers at the University of Calgary said in July that female mice in their study were not only sexually aroused by whiffs of male mouse pheromones but that the scent apparently made the females' brains grow larger. ■

The fine points of law

- The New Zealand Herald reported in June that a prostitute may be eligible for worker's compensation based on her having been injured when the car in which she was riding plunged down a hillside. Because the driver was a john who was taking her to a site he had chosen for their encounter, the Prostitutes Collective trade union said hers were "workplace" injuries.

Oops!

- A toddler broke from his mother's supervision in May at the Rhime Buddhist Center in Kansas City, Mo., and accidentally trampled the meticulously created colored-sand picture that eight monks had to that point spent two days creating, but the monks impressively responded with patience. "No problem," said one, from India's Geshe Lob-sang Sumdup monastery. We have three days more (before the show closes). So we will have to work harder."

- Inattentive drivers: Trucker Merv Bontrager accidentally crashed his 18-wheeler in Minot, N.D., in April when he looked away briefly to check the floor for the doughnuts he had tossed aside for later eating. Kris-

- Former Brooklyn Center, Minn., car-washer Douglas Williams, 56, was fired last year when, in response to the sales manager's requiring him to clean up litter, he refused, colorfully, by telling the manager to perform an anatomically impossible act. However, the state court of appeals ruled in June that Williams was nonetheless owed unemployment benefits. ■

topher Lind accidentally crashed his car in Vancouver, British Columbia, in March when he tried to open the tightly packaged sex toy he had bought earlier that day. Andrew Workman accidentally smashed his car into another in Shepley, England, after he lost control when a bee flew through the window and stung him in the crotch (according to the findings of an inquest in April).

- In June, a 17-year-old boy survived but was seriously injured when he fell about 75 feet onto some rocks at California's Mount Diablo State Park. He had climbed over a handrail in order to fake a fall so that his pals could capture the plunge on video to put on his MySpace Web page. ■

Lawyers

Wheaton, Ill., lawyer Donald Ramsell sued Geneva, Ill., lawyer Douglas Warlick in June, demanding that Warlick continue to sell him "his" two of the four season tickets to Chicago Bears games they had split since 1985 but which Ramsell suspected Warlick

might keep for himself this year. Warlick complained to the Chicago Tribune in June that Ramsell had never contacted him, but just filed his lawsuit out of the blue. Said Ramsell, "The courthouse is where you go when you have a dispute." ■

Thinning the herd

- A burglar was killed trying to sneak into the Maranatha Used Clothing store in Miami on May 31; police said the man had crawled between the blades of a large, idle ventilation fan but that before getting all the way through, he accidentally tripped the "on" switch.

- In Forst, Germany, in May, as a 43-year-old man and a 12-year-old boy vied in a spitting-for-distance contest from a second-story balcony, the grown-up, trying for extra momentum, thrust himself forcefully up to the railing, launched his saliva, and accidentally fell to his death. ■

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