

# NEWS OF THE WEIRD

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## Wrestling with the truth

Brian Blair, now a county commissioner in Tampa, asserted in a 2002 lawsuit that he had been forced into retirement from his previous career as a professional wrestler after he tripped over a tray of dishes and hurt himself at a Carrabba's restaurant. Blair announced last month that a settlement had been reached with Carrabba's, and thus he would not explain (according to a deposition cited by Carrabba's attorneys) how the "career-ending" injury al-

lowed him to keep lucrative wrestling dates in Japan months after he fell, or how he registered a .089 blood-alcohol reading that evening even though he admitted to only one sip of wine, or how a sober professional wrestler accustomed to being thrown across a ring could be hurt so badly by a simple fall, or how a politician who generally abides a pro-business, anti-lawsuit philosophy could have initiated such litigation. ■

## Can't possibly be true

• In July, the Houston School District, citing student privacy laws, declined to release last season's Bellaire High School baseball statistics (such as batting averages), even though requested by a player's parent.

• The Perth, Australia, construction materials company GMA Garnet recently closed a deal to sell sand to Saudi Arabia, and shipments began in June.

• Army officer Bryan Hilferty, a volunteer Little League umpire in Alexandria, Va., complained to The Washington Post in July that when he requested a copy of the League rulebook (to help him be a better umpire), he was turned down. Hilferty, who has ac-

cess to classified information in his job at the Pentagon, was told that the Little League restricts its rulebooks, on a "need to know" basis, so as not to invite litigation, and that Hilferty did not qualify.

• Norwegian Correctional Services revealed in August that 20 percent of convicted criminals who are given reporting dates to begin their sentences (a total of 1,799 last year) simply do not show up. The problem is compounded by the fact that Norway has no separate law requiring them to report. Said a regional prison director, "It's difficult to make plans for the prison terms when we have no idea who will show up and who won't." ■

## Unclear on the concept

Serena Yen, a member of the 24 Hour Fitness gym in Houston complained to KTRK-TV in July that she had been inadvertently shut inside recently at about midnight while using an upstairs exercise machine, when employees locked up for the night. A spokesman at the company's headquarters said that "24 Hour" does not refer to the hours of operation.

The government of China, which claims control of Tibet despite the region's vigorous culture of independence, announced in August that it would henceforth require Tibet's "living Buddhas" (special clergy believed to be continuously reincarnated) to get permission from China's religious affairs officials before submitting their souls to be embodied in the future. The government acted, it said, because the reincarnation process needed to be managed better.

As urban sprawl gobbles up land that previously surrounded farms and ranches, some new homeowners are getting feistier about rural noises and smells that disturb their enjoyment of country life. Kimber Johnson paid an extra \$80,000 to get the premium view for her land near Phoenix, but complained in July about a farm's routine summer build-up of manure 300 feet away, lasting until the corn crop is picked. The problem also exists in the French village of Cesny-aux-Vignes, where in August the mayor simply banned all complaints from urban newcomers about braying donkeys and loud farm equipment. (Occasionally, the newcomers win, as in Washington County, Minn., in June when the sheriff cited farmer Karyl Hylie for having a cow guilty of "excessive mooing.") ■

## The continuing crisis

Just before Patricia Nilsen committed suicide last year, she cashed out her estate and left the money (about \$300,000 in CDs) to famous 1960s singer Connie Francis, a move that was, said Nilsen's relatives, an abrupt departure from her previous plans. The relatives accuse Francis of manipulating Nilsen, but Francis said she hardly ever spoke to or wrote her. Francis described Nilsen as a huge fan

who wrote to her frequently, perhaps giving Nilsen, said a relative, "the insane delusion" that Francis was her best friend (though there was no formal evidence of mental illness). Francis offered to split the proceeds with the family and to donate to Nilsen's favorite charity, but the family said no, and Francis recently filed a lawsuit in Palm Beach, Fla., to prevent the family from holding up her money. ■

## Least competent criminals

Jazmine Roberts, 19, was apprehended by a Neiman Marcus security guard in White Plains, N.Y., in August and held for police after she allegedly walked out of the store with a \$250 pair of jeans and raged against

the guard. According to a police report, Roberts was under the impression that once she walked out the door, she was immune from arrest, telling the guard, "It's too late. I already left the store." ■

## Recurring themes

Occasionally, motorists who are involved in collisions (especially inebriated ones) continue to drive on, claiming not to have realized for a while that their victim is dead and stuck in the car's windshield. In July in Green Bay, Wis., Steve Warrichaiet, 50, was arrested on several charges in the injuring of one pe-

destrian (found on the street) and the death of another (lodged in the windshield as Warrichaiet drove home). In August, Tony Martinez, 54, was arrested in Perris, Calif., on several charges in connection with the death of a motorcyclist, whose body was lodged in Martinez's rear window as he drove home. ■

## The classic middle name

Arrested recently for murder and awaiting trial: Earl Wayne Reynolds (Spotsylvania County, Va., August); Donald Wayne Booth (Austin, Texas, August); Dustin Wayne Nall (Arlington, Texas, August); Christopher Wayne Hudson (Melbourne, Australia, June); Earl Wayne Flowers (Taylorsville, N.C., April);

Randall Wayne Mays (Payne Springs, Texas, May). Suspected by police of murder but still on the loose at press time: David Wayne French (Portland, Ore., May). Convicted of murder: Randy Wayne Seal (Florahome, Fla., May). Sentenced for murder: Patrick Wayne Schroeder (Pawnee City, Neb., August). ■

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