

# NEWS OF THE WEIRD

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## News that sounds like a joke

• In July, National Hockey League player Derek Boogaard, an "enforcer" known for his willingness to brawl, opened the Derek and Aaron Boogaard Fighting Camp in Regina, Saskatchewan, to train teenage hockey players in that highly essential skill.

• Iran's state-sponsored news agency IRNA announced in July that its agents had broken up a Western countries' "spy ring" that employed more than a dozen squirrels trying to bring "spy gear" of foreign agencies into the country. ■

## The continuing crisis

• Modernizations: (1) Congregants of Rev. Tom Ambrose, of St. Mary and St. Michael Church in Trumpington, England, met in September to complain of several things about their vicar, most notably that he delivered the Christmas sermon last year (and several since then) using Microsoft PowerPoint. (2) George Zokos is a professional shepherd in Tyrnavos, Greece, but due to health problems three years ago (according to an August Agence France-Presse dispatch), he now herds the sheep from his car.

• One priority of President Vladimir Putin's

Nashi national youth movement is procreation to build up Russia's declining population, according to a July report in London's Daily Mail (which also charged the Nashi with inculcating authoritarianism). Its two-week convention in July (with 10,000 in attendance) featured on-site sexual encouragements with not a condom in sight. And in Russia's Ulyanovsk province, the government again this year promoted Sept. 12 as a patriotic conception day, featuring SUVs and other prizes to couples who manage to time their blessed events for June 12, which is Russia's Constitution Day. ■

## Civilization in decline

• Sweden's English-language Internet news site, The Local, reported in August that a couple in Kinda Municipality had just been denied generous welfare benefits because they object to the government's work requirements. The husband wanted the payments even though, he wrote, "Conventional work is out of the question for me, both in terms of my conscience and on an intellectual level, as it seems objectionable with regard to both my personal well-being and the well-being of society as a whole. Emotionally, too, (conventional work) creates unbearable pain and dejection."

• Video nation: (1) A 38-year-old man drowned off Ocean City, Md., in July, trying to save his two sons from a rip current. Two men from a nearby parasailing boat had jumped in to help and could have used more assistance, one said, except that the boat's passengers declined, with several more concerned with video-recording the drowning. (2) As a 27-year-old woman lay dying from a stab wound incurred at a Wichita, Kan., convenience store, in June, at least five customers stepped over her to enter the store, including one who stopped to photograph her on a cell phone camera. ■

## Everyone has a button waiting to be pushed

• In August, employees at the bar Changes, in Seattle, had to break up a karaoke-night attack by a woman on a man who was singing the Coldplay song "Yellow." The woman had shouted, "Oh, no, not that song. I can't stand that song." She charged the stage, screamed at the man and shoved him (and it eventually

took four men to hold her for police).

• Megan Conroy, 18, pleaded guilty in Brisbane, Australia, in September, to assaulting a 40-year-old man in May (by kicking him in the testicles) because he had mispronounced her first name. (And if you ever meet her, it's "mee-gan," not "may-gun.") ■

## Least competent people

Quinton Thomas, 22, inadvertently strengthened the murder charge against him in April when he mailed a letter from the jail in Rockville, Md., believing that jail officials would not read the contents. However, Thomas had gotten the recipient's address wrong, causing the post office to "return to sender," and, as longstanding policy, officials inspect all incoming mail (for con-

triband). According to an August Washington Post report, Thomas characterized his emerging alibis and also wrote about a witness, "This white (expletive) can't make it to court on May 7 through May 12, ya feel me. I don't care what you gotta do, you don't even gotta stink the cracker, he just cant make it to Rockville that whole week, Homie." ■

## Update

News of the weird reported in February that Estrella Benavides had been sued by the city of San Mateo, Calif., for refusing to clean off the words that she had written in big lettering all over the outside of her house, even though she said those messages had been dictated by God. In August, she similarly

wrote all over a second home she owns, in Belmont, Calif. (For those readers seeking the word of God: "Help worse crime ever; evil + out of mind: from Bush to neighbors using witchcraft + technology against people not belong to their religious group.") ■

## Yikes!

Australian rugby league player Ben Czislowski, 24, complaining of an eye infection and pain in July, was found by doctors to have, embedded in his head, a tooth belong-

ing to opponent Matt Austin, with whom he had violently collided in an April match. Austin also lost several other teeth in the collision. ■

## Undignified deaths

• A Lake Charles, La., man was killed in August by a single gunshot, which was explained by Sheriff Tony Mancuso: "(The man and his girlfriend) were engaged in consensual sexual behavior involving a firearm when the firearm was discharged, resulting in his death."

• A 60-year-old female rancher was killed

in August in Mitchell, Australia, when a 10-month-old male camel (recently arrived as a birthday gift for the woman) apparently mistook her for a female camel, knocked her to the ground, and lay on top of her in what one camel expert said "no doubt" was "sexual" behavior, crushing her with his 330 pounds. ■

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