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5833 Pelican Bay Boulevard, Naples, FL 34108-2740

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPHERD

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When you care enough

Terrye Cheatham, a criminal defense lawyer and adviser to the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, has developed a line of greeting cards for a Hallmark-ignored demographic: the recently incarcerated. Among her selections are cards reading "Sorry to hear about your arrest," and "Honestly, I never knew anyone who was arrested before," and, sim-

ply, "Not You!" A remorseful correspondent could choose: "I know that I have not visited you. But I still care about you ... When are you getting out, anyway?"

Card sales are slow, according to an October Los Angeles Times story, and Cheatham acknowledges that people might prefer to ignore their connections to criminals. ■

Chutzpah

- Trial lawyer Gary Baise is also the "lower taxes, limited government ... less spending" candidate for chairman of the Fairfax County (Va.) Board of Supervisors, but an October Washington Post investigation revealed that he had collected nearly \$300,000 in federal subsidies between 1995 and 2005 on an already profitable farm he owns in Illinois. At first, he appeared outraged at himself: "There's no way you can justify this for guys like me. This is what's wrong with government." Nonetheless, he said, he'll continue to take the subsidies.

- The man who witnesses say robbed the Washington Mutual Bank in Miami Springs, in October was arrested outside the bank, but when he was brought back inside to be identified, he shouted at the employees (according to a Miami Herald report), "You ruined my life! I told you not to call (the) police!"

- Authorities in Concord, N.H., arrested Frank Drake, 37, in October, after finding him watering one of his several marijuana-plant gardens alongside Interstate 89. Police seized 44 plants on the southbound side and 88 on the northbound side. ■

Government in action

Three aldermen in Dover, N.J., seem exceptionally apprehensive that the town's gumball machines are easy targets for terrorists to poison their community and have been studying the issue zealously since April. The aldermen have checked all 800 gumball machines in the town of 18,000, gotten

rid of the 100 that were unlicensed, and will report to the mayor by Jan. 1 on the town's vulnerability. (The mayor has been mildly supportive of the project, as contrasted with the police chief, who said, "You'd probably win the lottery first" before being victimized by terrorists' gumballs.) ■

Least competent criminals

- Police in Pittsburgh arrested a man in October for, they said, trying to get change at a Giant Eagle store for the bogus \$1 million bill he was carrying (with a likeness of Grover Cleveland) and getting rowdy in the cashier's office when he was turned down. Also, in October, six men went on trial in England's Southwark Crown Court, charged with trying to get the Bank of England to exchange a large number of bills in the denominations of 1,000 pounds (currency which was discontinued in 1963) and 500,000 pounds (which never existed). (One British pound was worth about \$1.90 at the time.)
- The New York City Department of Education is currently paying 757 employees their

full salaries while they sit idle in nine "reassignment rooms" each day, awaiting hearings on alleged wrongdoing. Union contracts require the payments until final adjudication, yet the department fears that having the accused in the workplace would jeopardize students and the school system (according to a September New York Post report).

- The Lancashire (England) Police recently concluded its investigation of Constable Jayson Lobo, finding that he merely committed errors, and not fraud, in his expense account (with discrepancies totaling the equivalent of less than \$200). The Times of London reported that the investigation cost the equivalent of about \$1 million. ■

Great art

- Australian performance artist Stelios Arcadiou, 61, showed off the laboratory-grown ear that he had implanted in his arm in 2006 and which now fully resembles his other two ears, according to an October report in London's Daily Mail, reviewing his latest show at Britain's Newcastle Centre for Life. The next step, he said, is to implant a tiny microphone, connected to a Bluetooth transmitter, so that his audiences can hear what his third ear "hears."
- MIT sophomore Star Simpson, 19, was arrested at Logan International Airport in Boston in September when she walked by a security checkpoint wearing her own fashion creation of a hooded sweatshirt with a wired circuit board sewn onto the front, thus evoking the image of a suicide bomber. She compounded the problem by being un-

communicative, but shortly after her arrest, authorities determined that she is simply a bright but eccentric student who designs quixotic gadgets.

- Thirty contestants squared off in September at the Los Angeles County Fair's competitive dinner-table-setting contest, in which the entrants had not only to comply with formal etiquette rules (e.g., cutlery aligned properly; 24-inch distance from the center of one plate to the center of another), but to create artistic "tablescapes" (such as the Kentucky Derby table with a racetrack centerpiece or the James Bond table with martini glasses and a handgun). Next year, according to a Los Angeles Times report, judges will be required, for the first time, to consider whether settings are appetizing enough to actually eat from. ■

Different folks

"Over my dead body was I going to give the state another dollar for the tolls," said Thomas Jensen, 68, to the judge in Rochester, N.H., in September as he accepted the three-day jail sentence instead of a \$150 fine. He had been convicted of cheating the state for insisting on using

two discontinued 25-cent tokens to pay a 50-cent toll after he had failed to use the tokens up before their expiration. The toll road is a connector between the 50-cent-saving Jensen's main residence in Braintree, Mass., and his summer home in New Hampshire. ■

FLORIDA HEART

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