

## NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPHERD

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## Drug testing for crickets

China's historical fascination with crickets has recently been exhibited in cricket beauty contests, singing competitions and prizefights, according to a January Los Angeles Times dispatch. It has even led to increasing vigilance about crickets cheating with performance-enhancing drugs. The fighters duel in terrarium-sized containers, and, according to the Times, "Overhead cameras (project) the action onto

large screens," allowing spectators close-ups of crickets tossing each other around with their powerful jaws. The best fighters may sell for the equivalent of \$10,000, are raised on vegetables and calcium supplements, and are sexually active before fights. The doping issue mostly involves the "singers"; slowing the vibration of the cricket's wings produces an attractively lower pitch. ■

## Our litigious society

- In October, Korie Hoke filed a \$1.6 million lawsuit against the Tempe, Ariz., police, claiming that it was actually an officer's fault that she, after a New Year's Eve bender, crashed into a cement wall and suffered serious injuries. Hoke had called police to a party, distraught that she had caught her boyfriend cheating on her, and the officer summoned her parents to pick her up. (Hoke was cited only for underage drinking, but she later tested above the blood-alcohol legal limit.) The officer, after obtaining Hoke's assurance that she would await her parents and after searching Hoke and her car and finding no car key (Hoke had hidden it), left the scene. Hoke then drove away and crashed, and now claims it was the officer's fault for not staying with her.

- Scott Anthony Gomez Jr. filed a lawsuit in January against jail officials in Pueblo County, Colo., alleging among other things that they failed to take security precautions to prevent him from escaping. He seriously injured him-

self last year when he fell 40 feet while scaling a wall in his second escape attempt. He said that, after his first escape, he had told then-sheriff Dan Corsentino how lax security was, but that no "improvements" had been made.

- In August 2004, business executive Tomas Delgado, driving 100 mph in a 55 mph zone, fatally smashed into a 17-year-old bicyclist near Haro, Spain. In 2006, Delgado sued the boy's family for the equivalent of about \$29,000 for damage to his car, and the lawsuit languished until January 2008, when, perhaps shamed by worldwide publicity, Delgado dropped it.

- In December, the New Jersey Turnpike Authority filed a lawsuit demanding payment from the families of four people killed by an out-of-control tractor-trailer in 2006 (presumably to recoup clean-up costs and damage to the roadway). However, after the New York Post asked NJTA lawyer William Ziff for a comment, he rushed to the Union County courthouse and withdrew the lawsuit. ■

## Compelling explanations

- As the home-mortgage industry continued to reel in January from the Countrywide Financial Corp. debacle, a federal bankruptcy judge learned that the company, in at least one case (with others suspected), had not only backdated crucial documents but also fabricated them altogether and then told the judge the company was merely trying to be "efficient." A court had approved the recasting of a client's debt to Countrywide in March 2007, closing the case, but the next month, Countrywide "discovered" a way to get extra money and thus created three letters supposedly sent to that client before March 2007. However, Countrywide later acknowledged that the letters were actually

written after March 2007 but that making up documents was merely "an efficient way to convey" information.

- A prize-winning paper from a Hebrew University researcher, seeking to explain the paucity of rapes by Israeli soldiers of Palestinian women, concluded that the soldiers were merely using a "strategy" of non-rape, according to a December report on Arutz Sheva. Such a hands-off policy "strengthens the ethnic boundaries," wrote Ms. Tal Nitzan, seemingly suggesting that Israeli soldiers primarily feared increasing the Palestinian population. Nowhere, critics pointed out, did Nitzan suggest that rape is rare because Israeli culture condemns it. ■

## Energetic Pervert

Elementary school principal John Stelmack, 60, was arrested in Bartow, Fla., in December and accused by prosecutors of innocently photographing young girls but

then using a computer software program to place their heads on photos of nude women (which may not even be illegal, according to a 2002 U.S. Supreme Court decision). ■



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