

# NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPHERD  
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## Bad dentist

In February, a Mississippi judge released two convicted child-rapists, who had each been in prison for more than 12 years, based on DNA tests. The men had been convicted primarily by the "bite mark" analysis of since-discredited dentist Dr. Michael West, who used iridescent lights and yellow goggles to demonstrate that scratches on the victims were bites by the two men. Subsequent independent analysis identified the scratches

as scratches, perhaps even made by West himself, according to a director of the Innocence Project. West is a favorite colleague of medical examiner Steven Hayne, who seems always to find evidence of guilt of anyone charged by district attorney Forrest Allgood, according to a Reason magazine investigation. West's bite "technology," in particular, has been widely ridiculed by forensic professionals. ■

## Update

In February, televangelist Jim Bakker (who lost his Praise The Lord ministry in the 1980s in fraud convictions that led to a five-year prison stint) began broadcasting from Morningside, his new religious development in southern Missouri that bears a strong resemblance to PTL's Heritage USA project. According to a February report in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, "hundreds" of Heritage

contributors ponied up this time, too, and despite the fact that each lost 99 percent of the value of their \$1,000 investments, some even signed over their \$6.54 restitution checks (following the fraud settlement) to Bakker's new venture. The newspaper, observing Bakker's debut from the new studio, noted that the first appeal for donations did not come until 41 minutes into the show. ■

## The continuing crisis

- A 25-year-old woman was arrested for assault in Bremerton, Wash., in December after fighting with her boyfriend in the shower over whether the man's dog could join them. The woman objected and said the arrangement would be a deal-breaker for their relationship, to which the boyfriend replied that he hoped his next girlfriend would appreciate the dog more. At that, according to police, she punched him several times in the face, and in their struggle, he dislocated his shoulder.

- Female Muslim medical students at several hospitals in Britain are objecting to a campaign that demands more rigorous hand-washing (to stop the spread of dangerous bacteria), complaining that being forced to bare their forearms above the wrist is immodesty prohibited by their religion. Doctors cited in a February Daily Telegraph story said washing up to the elbow is crucial for safety. Some women at Birmingham University said they would change careers rather than comply. ■

## Yikes!

- In early January, when a national deep freeze extended even to the Florida Keys, iguanas fell into their natural hibernation-like torpor, and some compassionate Floridians, unaccustomed to seeing iguanas that appeared nearly dead, took them indoors to warm them up, which is a mistake. The owner of the veterinary clinic in Marathon said one "sweet lady" called him about the five-footer she had dragged inside. "When it woke up," said the vet, "she couldn't understand why it seemed to be coming after her." "When they warm up, they go back to being a wild animal."
- Construction worker Brian Persaud's malpractice lawsuit is scheduled for trial in March against the New York-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Hospital based on a 2003 incident in which he was taken there (after being clobbered on the head by a plank at work) and given a rectal exam. Persaud was alert

when informed of the imminent exam, but then went nuts, resisting the doctor and was sedated so that the test could be performed. The doctor defended the exam, citing the need to check for spinal cord injury.

- Since at least the early 1990s, trillions of discarded plastic items have converged, held together by swirling currents, to form the Great Pacific Ocean Garbage Patch that now covers an area twice the size of the United States and weighs about 100 million tons. "Every little piece of plastic manufactured in the past 50 years that made it into the ocean is still out there," said one researcher quoted in a February dispatch in London's The Independent. An oceanographer predicted that the Patch would double in size in just the next decade. A 2006 United Nations office estimated that every square mile of ocean contains, on average, 46,000 pieces of floating plastic. ■

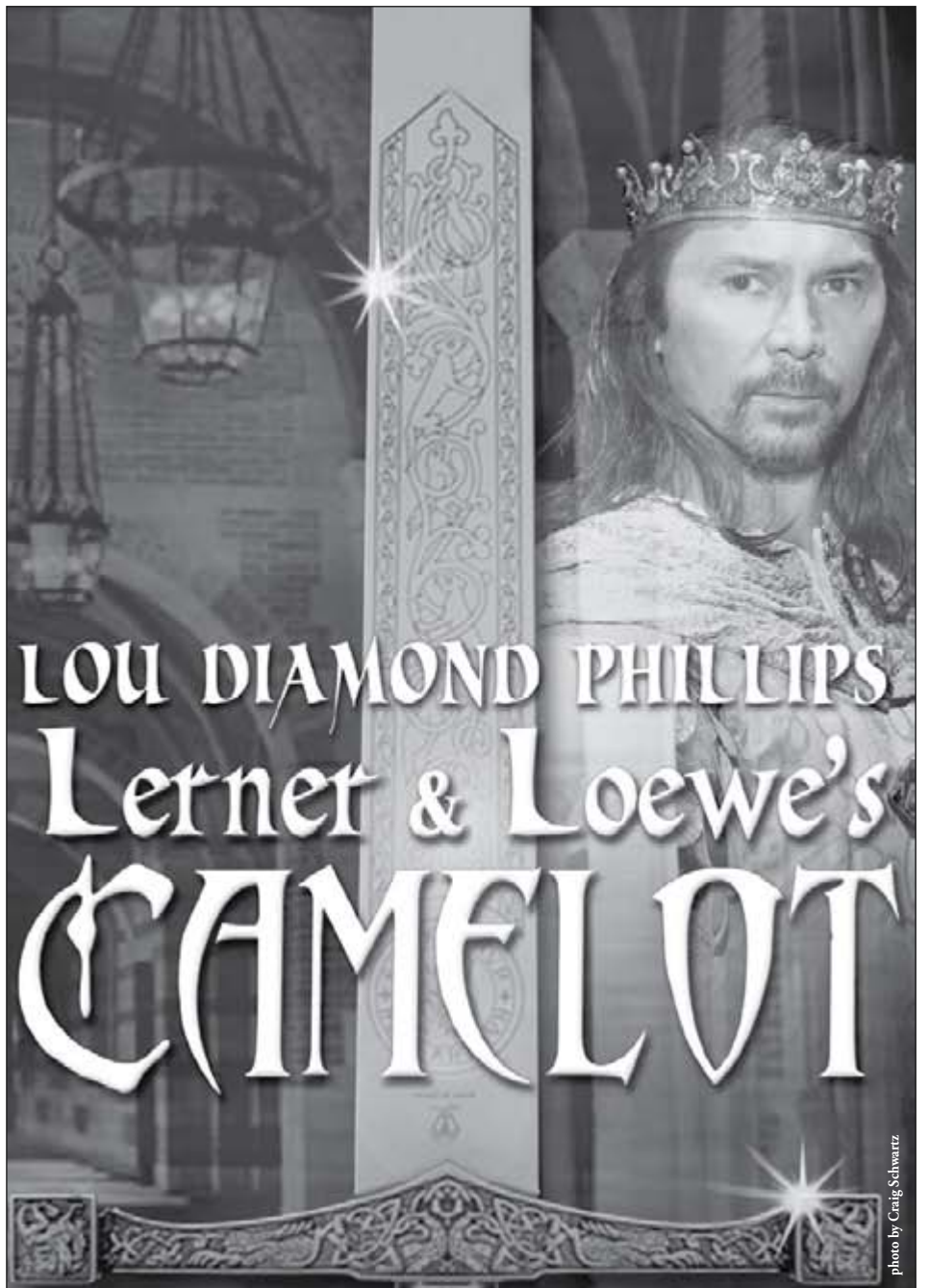


Photo by Craig Schwartz

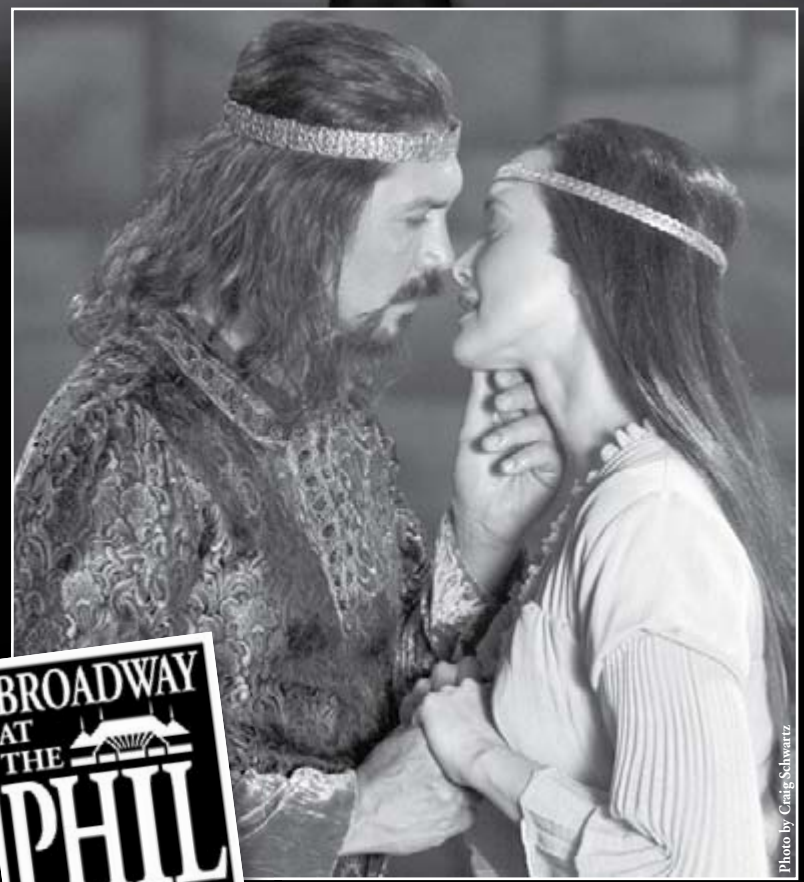


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