

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPHERD

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Literary expression

► Twelve local poets jumped into the frigid Green Lake in Seattle in December, just because they thought it would be a good way to publicize their art. "It's not enough to write," said one. "You need that audience."

► The Ontario Court of Appeal overturned the conviction of Antonio Batista in November, declaring that his "death threat" against a Mississauga city coun-

cil member, in the form of a sonnet on long-neglected potholes, was more likely literary expression.

► Jose Gouveia, 45, recently published "Rubber Side Down," a book of poems by bikers about the open road (including 17-syllable "baiku"), some from the educationally upscale Highway Poets Motorcycle Club of Cambridge, Mass. ■

Can't possibly be true

► An Oregon district attorney's office set out two years ago to prosecute David Simmons for having sex the year before with his girlfriend, then 14, while he was 17. A grand jury in Jefferson County refused to indict Mr. Simmons, but the prosecutor acted exactly like the indictment had gone through, and no one, even Mr. Simmons, noticed the mistake. Only when Mr. Simmons agreed to plead guilty in exchange for a 30-day sentence in October 2006 did the news

finally reach the foreman of the grand jury that had "no-billed" Simmons, and the foreman's complaint caused the judge to dismiss the conviction. However, in December 2008, prosecutors in neighboring Lane County charged Mr. Simmons anew for that 2005 tryst, claiming that "double jeopardy" does not apply because the Jefferson County case never legally happened (in that Mr. Simmons was never really indicted). ■

Inexplicable

► Police in New Britain, Conn., arrested Joel Rubin, 42, in January and charged him with using a stolen credit card. But what went unanswered was why he also tried to use his own store discount card to get a lower price on the merchandise. It was Mr. Rubin's name on the discount card that tipped off police. It was not immediately clear why he wanted to save a few bucks off

a bill that would be sent to someone else.

► In Plant City, Fla., in December, Robert Thompson and Taurus Morris were charged with armed burglary after taking a woman's eggbeater from her at knifepoint. It was not reported why they wanted the eggbeater or why the victim had to be threatened at knifepoint to get it. ■

Unclear on the concept

► In November, some African-American leaders in Danville, Ill., complained when eight black players were cut from the Danville High School basketball team at once, charging that the coach was engaging in "racial profiling" by, in the words of a black pastor, "(taking) a look at the way the young men wore their hair." The coach pointed out that though all the dismissed players are black, so are all eight retained players, and that two of the retained players wore the same style braids to which the pastor was referring.

► The December student rioting in Athens, Greece (triggered by a police

officer's shooting of an unarmed 15-year-old boy), was so intensive that the police department quickly ran through its arsenal of tear gas and was forced to use supplies that were 25 years old. One demonstrator told a Times of London reporter that it was unfair for police to use canisters that old because they contained dangerous chemicals that caused rioters to get "sick" and to "have trouble breathing."

► On the South Boulder (Colo.) Creek Trail in January, as a woman was standing beside her bicycle, a cow wandered by and tipped her over (and then stepped on her legs before meandering off). ■

People with issues

► "I take (my baby) to the park ... maybe put it in its stroller, or put it in its sling, or hold it in a blanket," the 49-year-old "mother" told ABC News reporters in January, lovingly describing her play-like infant. She is of the "reborn" community of women whose maternal instinct leads them to mother fake babies as they would real ones (which they choose not to have, or cannot have). Reborn dolls are exqui-

sitely manufactured, selling for \$500 and up, and require real baby clothes rather than doll suits. In addition to the obvious benefits (no diapers, no college fund), reborns will always be infants and never bratty adolescents. A psychiatrist told the reporters that she would not be surprised to find that the "mother" of a reborn would "have the same chemical, hormonal reactions as if she was holding a real baby." ■

No time for rehab

► Katherine Kelly, 76, was arrested in November for stealing a wallet from a supermarket basket in New York City. It was her 73rd arrest, at least, with 16 convictions, but police say it could be more, in that they've found 36 aliases so far.

► Henry Earl, 58, of Lexington, Ky., gave rehab one more try in October after his arrest number 1,333 (according to TheSmokingGun.com's public-records search), almost all for public intoxication. ■



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