

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPHERD

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Americans' special relationship with taxes

It is not just that the secretary of the Treasury owed back taxes for years, or that two other presidential cabinet-level nominees owed back taxes. In January, federal prosecutors revealed that District of Columbia Council member Marion Barry, who was already on probation after a 2005 conviction for failing to file tax returns for the years 1999 through 2004, and subsequently almost tauntingly failed to file a return for 2006, has now doubled-

down the taunt by failing to file for 2007. And in March, a Georgia state senator proposed punishment for the 22 members of the legislature who either owed back taxes or had failed to file returns for at least one year since 2002. The 22 were not identified, in compliance with privacy laws, but the Senate's Democratic leader, Robert Brown, outed himself as one of the 22 in the course of calling his scolding colleague a "bloodsucker." ■

Prodigies

► Pet rescuer Judy Walker of Oviedo, Fla., and Oklahoman Jude Stringfellow are battling over custody of Ms. Walker's two-legged puppy, which Ms. Walker believes has special needs but which Ms. Stringfellow is seeking to adopt, in part to portray Ms. Stringfellow's own famous, hind-legs-walking dog "Faith" as a puppy in a movie she is working on. Ms. Stringfellow said Ms. Walker had reneged on a firm Feb. 2 adoption date

and implied that she had hired celebrity attorney Mark Geragos to get the puppy.

► Michelito Peniche, 11, killed six young bulls in a single fight before 3,500 spectators in Merida, Mexico, in January, despite the mayor's ban on the event as a child-labor violation (but which was allowed to proceed after Michelito's father appealed to a state prosecutor). Michelito began his career in the ring at age 4. ■

Can't possibly be true

► Gildazio Costa, 54, was arrested in Framingham, Mass., in February and charged with kidnapping and beating his girlfriend following a five-hour-long argument they were having about what the operating hours are for the local library.

► Tennessee anesthesiologist Visuvalingam Vilvarajah was arrested in February in Kentucky and charged with providing controlled-substance prescriptions (Oxy-Contin, methadone) to as many as 350

non-patients. However, the more basic question is why Tennessee licensed Dr. Vilvarajah in the first place, since he had been approved by the state Department of Health even though officials knew that he was on parole at the time after serving a sentence for murdering his wife and mother-in-law. A department spokeswoman told The Tennessean newspaper that no law prevented Dr. Vilvarajah's licensing. ■

Inexplicable

► A 25-year-old man was arrested in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., in February after an apparent suicide attempt. According to police, the man tried to gas himself inside his car in a closed garage, but apparently did not have a garage himself, and was arrested for trespass when he drove into a stranger's garage for the attempt, causing about \$1,000 damage.

► Total nudity is prohibited during Brazil's annual Carnival, as immoral and, especially, artistically tacky, but samba dancer Dani Sperle appeared in the street parade in Rio de Janeiro in February wearing a headdress, necklace, matching armbands and nothing else except a patch three centimeters long (1.2 inches) covering an intimate area. ■

Recurring themes

Once again, a man was found to have climbed into the waste tank of an outdoor toilet, but according to a March report in the Twin Falls (Idaho) Times-News, the emergency crew seemed to accept his story that it was all a mistake and not a manifestation of perversion. Rescuers from the town of Filer, Idaho, said the man told them he was just look-

ing for his keys that he had accidentally dropped and had been in the tank for 15 minutes before help arrived. The man declined to identify himself, and no official report was required, but after the man was hosed off by a fire truck, he "discovered" that his keys had been in his pocket all along, and he drove away. ■



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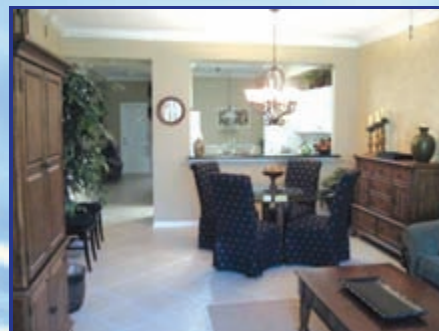
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