

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPHERD

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If you can't do the time...

Convicted Oklahoma City bombing conspirator Terry Nichols, now serving a life sentence in the Florence, Colo., "Supermax" prison, filed a 39-page federal lawsuit in March alleging unconstitutional "cruel and unusual punishment" because the refined-food, low-fiber meals give him "chronic constipation (and) bleeding hemorrhoids." He demanded fresh raw vegetables

and other high-fiber foods, necessary to "keep one's body (i.e., God's holy temple) in good health." Nichols was joined in the lawsuit by fellow Supermax resident Eric Rudolph (the convicted abortion-clinic and Atlanta Olympics bomber), who claimed "gas and stomach cramps" and observed that "our bodies" are "sacred and should be treated as such." ■

Government in action

► Recently the Washington Supreme Court ruled that Seattle had for two years improperly charged water customers for servicing hydrants when the city should have covered the service from general tax funds. It ordered customer refunds averaging \$45. However, Seattle then discovered it had insufficient general funds to pay for hydrant service and thus imposed a water surcharge of \$59 per customer, according to a February KOMO-TV report. The most likely reason the surcharge was higher is that the city had to pay \$4.2 million to the attorneys who filed the account-shuffling lawsuit.

► After three years of providing work-

er-training grants to a San Francisco-area multimedia coalition that includes a maker of sexualized torture videos, the California Employment Training Panel cut off funding in April. It claimed that it had not realized the nature of what an outfit called "Kink.com" does. The coalition protested the panel's decision, pointing out that Kink is a law-abiding, tax-paying entity that employs 100 local people and keeps California adult video "competitive in the international marketplace" by training employees in video editing, Photoshop and other multimedia skills. A typical Kink.com production may feature paid, consenting women bound, gagged and supposedly electrically shocked. ■

Great art

► A pedestrian bridge over Interstate 80 in Berkeley, Calif., opened late last year, decorated with \$196,000 in public art by sculptor Scott Donahue. At each end of the bridge are 28-foot structures to honor the "history" and "daily life" of Berkeley, notably its tradition of citizen protests. Smaller sculpted medallions feature street scenes such as dogs romping playfully in city parks. However, as initially noted by a Fox News reporter in February, one of the medallions shows a dog defecating and another displays two dogs mating. Said a local art pro-

gram official, "I think they're just, you know, natural science ... what dogs really do."

► New York artist Ariana Page Russell has a dermatological disorder that makes her skin puff up immediately at the slightest scratch (which renders her, she says, the "human Etch A Sketch"). She now scratches herself in deliberate patterns, to create artistic designs, which she photographs and offers for sale. Russell says she must work quickly, for her skin usually returns to normal after about an hour. ■

Police report

East St. Louis, Ill., policeman Christopher Weston apprehended a murder suspect about 20 minutes after the crime in April, which was such a nice piece of police work that the mayor called Weston before the city council to commend him. Five minutes after

Weston left the room, the council got down to regular business, the first order of which was to approve a list of police and firefighter layoffs due to budget shortfalls, and on the list because of low seniority was Officer Christopher Weston. ■

Just can't stop themselves

► In March, a judge in Jefferson County, Texas, probated the 90-day DUI sentence for Jeffrey Latham, 37, on condition that he not drink alcohol, and he ordered Latham to report to the probation office. Two hours later, Latham showed up as scheduled, drunk, and was promptly shuttled back to court.

► A man and woman in their early 30s were arrested in April after they stripped naked and began having sex in front of tourists on the lawn at Britain's Windsor Castle. The queen was in residence, but her living quarters are at the opposite end of the castle, and she missed the spectacle. ■

Creme de la weird

Shreepriya Gopalan filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in San Diego in April against Microsoft, Google, Apple, Saks Fifth Avenue, McDonalds, Starbucks, Subway, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Chase Bank, Verizon, AT&T and 47 other U.S. corporations, claiming that he actually owns the companies based on the Chi-

nese divination system I Ching, which he said he invented when he was "15 or 16" years old. "These companies were I Chinged in through a metaphysical layer created and owned by me," he wrote, but he added that, "unfortunately," he lacks paperwork to document his claims and asks the court's help. ■



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