

## NEWS OF THE WEIRD

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### Don't tell the Taliban

In a nondescript building next to a mosque in downtown Karachi, Pakistan, the Qadeer brothers discreetly make and market a million dollars' worth of fetish and bondage products a year for Americans and Europeans (through sales to stores and on eBay). In fact, if the radical Islamic office down the street knew about the Qadeers' work, they might be in trouble, according to an April *New York Times* dispatch, but

fortunately, the gag balls, corsets and whips such as the "Mistress Flogger" are so odd for Pakistan that even the veiled women who sew them for the Qadeers do not understand that Americans use them for sex play. Customs officials, for example, were puzzled about how to categorize the items for tax purposes. "If our mom knew (the nature of our business)," said brother Adnan, "she would disown us." ■

### Leading economic indicators

In April, a manager at a Dean Health System clinic in Madison, Wis., received corporate instructions to "immediately" lay off 50 listed employees, and the manager (a 30-year nursing veteran) decided that that included pulling one RN out

of a room in which she was assisting with surgery, leaving just a physician and lower-level staff members present. A clinic executive later called the manager's timing an error, but said there were no adverse consequences to the patient. ■

### Least competent criminals

First-time bank robber (according to police) Jason Durant, 32, reported to the hospital in New Milford, Conn., shortly after knocking off the National Iron Bank in April. As he fled the crime scene, he accidentally tumbled down a steep hill behind the bank, losing control of his stash, and his gun, during the fall.

He broke his leg in several places (saying later that he heard snapping sounds). At the bottom of the hill, he crashed into a plow blade, slashing himself before dragging his bleeding, broken body to his getaway car (with only \$2 left from the robbery). Suspicious hospital staff members notified police. ■

### The entrepreneurial spirit

► Physician Geoffrey Hart, working with a grant from the National Institutes of Health, recently developed the Pedi-Sedate headgear to trick waiting-room kids into inhaling nitrous oxide while playing video games, thus knocking themselves out. According to Hart's company, it is "dramatically improv(ing) the hospital or dental experience for the child, parents and healthcare providers." The helmet contains sophisticated sensors to monitor the dosages and effects on the child.

► The Redneck Yacht Club opened in February near Naples, Fla., consisting of an 800-acre carefully designed mud pit that drivers pay \$30 to frolic in with their own customized off-road vehicles. One mechanic told the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* in April that he had spent \$15,000 fixing up his rig, with 6-foot-high tires and a skull ornament. His review: "This place is

kick-butt."

► For Germany's Fathers' Day in May, the Panzer Fun Driving School in Germany's Brandenburg state suggested sending men off to drive one of its 13 Soviet armored vehicles (following a short class on the controls), and for an extra fee, patrons can ram their tanks over an old car.

► Britons Sam Bompas and Harry Parr are revered chef-artists whose medium is the gelatin mold. They have created jelly models of, for example, London's St. Paul's Cathedral and a Madrid airport terminal, and who, for a New York customer, recently created orange-juice jelly inside some Compari jelly to produce a Compari-and-soda jelly. In April, the pair also opened a London bar, Alcoholic Architecture, in which vaporized gin and tonic saturate the air in equivalent strength of one gin-and-tonic drink for every 40 minutes of exposure. ■

### Confusing business model

Patrick Ellison and Frank Mack, along with Edie Wells, were arrested in Dalton, Ga., in April after what police said was a joint venture in which alleged prostitute Wells knocked on a man's door

and offered him sex, and when the man declined, Ellison and Mack arrived and forced the man to accept Wells' services. Following the sex, the three departed with the man's money and credit cards. ■

### Weird science

In a recent journal article, researchers from the University of Whitwatersrand (South Africa) and the University of Sydney (Australia) reported that young male Augrabies lizards avoid older predatory males by, basically, cross-dressing (pretending to be female by suppressing their extravagant male coloration until

they are fully developed and able to defend themselves). Thus, they avoid being attacked and, at the same time, increase their own freedom to hit on females. (They must still be careful, say the researchers, because the older males might whiff their male scent, which cannot be suppressed.) ■



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