

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

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Last wishes

As Denver's newsweekly Westword asked in a May 2009 story, "Where would you take a \$100,000 check that is also a suicide note, to the cops or to the bank?" In July 2008, John Francis Beech, a retired executive in Denver, sent a check for \$100,000 to a local charity, postdated to Aug. 1, accompanied by a sealed envelope reading "wait until you hear from coroner" and "everything is OK." The charity's direc-

tor, Annie Green, opened the envelope anyway on July 21, to find Beech's Last Will and Testament, leaving his entire estate to Green's organization for children with developmental disabilities. Green's choice: Put everything into the school's safe and await Aug. 1 (but she claimed to have left two voice-mail messages for Beech). On July 29, based on longstanding plans, Beech committed suicide. ■

Latest religious messages

Nour Hadad, 26, was arrested in Orland Park, Ill., in April and charged with (and, according to police, confessed to) beating her 2-year-old niece to death while baby-sitting, and, as usual, police publicly released her booking photo-

graph. However, Ms. Hadad's husband, Alaeddin, immediately complained that her photo, without her head scarf, was an "insult" to Islam. Said a Muslim activist, "They should respect the modesty of the accused." ■

Sci-fi movies come to life

► Entomologists in San Antonio said in May that the "Raspberry ant" (whose colonies produce billions and cover everything in sight) had migrated north to within 75 miles of the city and would arrive by year's end, posing, said one, a "potential ecological disaster."

► A University of Florida researcher found, for a recent journal article, that mockingbirds, among all animals, are skilled at identifying particular humans who have displeased them and whom they wish to attack (see last week's *Florida Weekly* for the story). ■

World's greatest lawyer

► Defense attorney John Garcia convinced a jury in Merced, Calif., in May that his client was not guilty of the "forcible rape with great bodily injury" of an 18-year-old woman in 2004, despite the fact that only his client's DNA-identified semen was present, mixed with the victim's blood, on the shorts she wore at the

crime scene. Client Daniel Saldana's story was that he had previously had sex with his own girlfriend in the house where the rape occurred and that the girlfriend might have left her shorts on the floor and that the rape victim might have mistakenly put them on after the "other" man raped her. ■

People different from us

► Nelson Blewett, 22, was treated for serious burns in Port Angeles, Wash., on May 18 after playing a game of TAG-tag with pals. They were spritzing each other with TAG body spray and then striking matches, creating mostly lower-risk flames. Then, perhaps inspired by too much beer, one friend added lighter fluid to the game. Blewett was afire for 30 to 45 seconds until he leaped from a second-story porch and rolled on the ground. (He survived but with "excruciating" second- and third-degree burns.)

Gretchen, 33, were arrested in Greenville, S.C., in April after a domestic dispute, culminating in a gunfight in which they shot each other.

► Charles Williams, 37, and his wife,

► Two fathers (Enrique Gonzalez, 26, in Fresno, Calif., in April and Eugene Ashley, 24, in Floyd County, Ga., in May) were charged with forcibly tattooing their young sons. Gonzalez allegedly held down his 7-year-old while a tattooist inked a gang symbol, and Ashley allegedly inked "DB" (for Daddy's Boy) personally on his 3-year-old's shoulder. ■

The right to remain silent:

► Timothy Williams' lawyer had a good defense worked out in Williams' May murder trial in Pittsburgh: When Williams fatally shot the "other" man in the love triangle with Williams' girlfriend, it was a "crime of passion," said the lawyer, befitting manslaughter rather than first-degree murder. But Williams insist-

ed on taking the stand, and by the time he was done, he had openly bragged that he was a "swinger" with many girlfriends, that this particular woman meant "nothing" to him, and that, though he killed the man, police had somehow "sabotaged" the surveillance video of the shooting. Verdict: first-degree murder. ■

Update

The long-running battle between Alan Davis, 53, and officials in Altamonte Springs, began anew in May, upon Davis' release from prison after serving a year for his latest defiance of court orders to clear the "junk" out of his yard ("felony littering"). It was his third prison stretch

in five years, and he said he is not done yet. Just before his latest stretch, he had placed a giant sculpted derriere in front of the Seminole County Courthouse. In May, he told reporters that he would rejoin the battle by ringing his yard with 42 smaller, similar sculptures. ■

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