

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

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Competitive facial hair

At the biennial World Beard and Moustache Championships in May in Anchorage, Alaska, four local heroes "defeated" the usually dominant German contingent in the 18-category pageant, including overall champ David Traver of Girdwood, Alaska, whose woven chin hair suggests a long potholder. Said Traver, of the Germans, "They were humble, and you have

to respect that." One defending champ, Jack Passion of Los Angeles, fell short with his navel-length red hair, despite having authored "The Facial Hair Handbook" after his 2007 victory. Traver acknowledged that no money was at stake (only trophies and "bragging rights"), but added that there are "a lot of ladies" who fawn over men's facial hair. "Seriously, they exist." ■

Men who get around

► Thomas Frazier, 42, was jailed in Flint, Mich., in April after his unpaid child-support tab reached \$530,000 (14 children with 13 women). He told the judge that he was only trying "to find someone who would love me for me."

► The total tab of Desmond Hatchell,

29, of Knoxville, Tenn., was not reported at his May court appearance, but the judge questioned him sharply about payments from his minimum-wage job. Hatchell has 21 kids by 11 women, but told WLVT-TV, "I didn't intend to have this many." ■

Leading Economic Indicators

► Bloomberg News reported in April that among the assets for sell-off by Lehman Brothers Holdings (liquidating following its September 2008 collapse) is a "matured commodities contract" for enough uranium cake to make a nuclear bomb. Administrators are awaiting a

rebound in its market price.

► Among the assets for sell-off listed in the May bankruptcy filing of Innovative Spinal Technologies of Mansfield, Mass., were nine human cadavers (eight of which had already been used for research). ■

More Fallout From the Recession

► In May, Mitsubishi Motors of New Zealand, to spark sales of its Triton compact pickup trucks as "hardy, versatile units," began offering farmers a companion "hardy, versatile" premium with each truck: a goat.

► In May, Ichiro Saito, a professor of

dentistry at Tsurumi University, publicly warned that as many as 30 million Japanese workers overstressed by the economy are suffering from such severe dry mouth that the country might be experiencing epic halitosis. ■

People different from us

When Christina Vanderclip dropped by the house of her former boyfriend, Travis Schneller, in Greeley, Colo., in June, they soon began to argue. According to police, Travis hit her and pulled her hair, then Travis' mother jumped on Christina's back and pulled her hair,

then Travis' younger brother Michael and father, Robert, jumped on Christina, too, hitting and choking her. Christina managed to escape, and police, after a 10-hour standoff, entered the home and arrested the entire Schneller family. ■

Bad sci-fi movies come to life

► The head of Florida's Department of Corrections admitted in May that at least 43 children (including a 5-year-old), who observed their parents' prison jobs as part of "Take Your Sons and Daughters to Work Day" in April, were playfully zapped by 50,000-volt stun guns. DOC Secretary Walt McNeil said the demonstrations (in three of the state's 55 prisons) even included one warden's kid, but that only 14 children were individually shot (with the rest part of hand-holding circles feeling a passing current). Twenty-one employees were disciplined.

► A portion of downtown Rotterdam, Netherlands, was blanketed in gluey white "silk" in May, from a six-week-long invasion of caterpillars that strip trees and cover them with gooey larvae.

► Nicola Bruce and her two toddlers, who live in government-assisted housing in Stoke-on-Trent, England, have awakened nearly every morning for two years to a fresh invasion of about 50 slugs, despite 30 attempts by contractors to find their source (in addition to the remodeling of the kitchen and bath and the bleaching of floors). ■

They actually pay people to do this research

► Two scientists from Britain's University of Oxford, on a three-year study costing the equivalent of nearly \$500,000, found that ducks may be even more comfortable standing under a sprinkler than paddling around in a pond. Lead researcher Marian Stamp Dawkins concluded that

ducks basically just like water.

► According to research announced in May by pediatrics professor Jennie Noll of the University of Cincinnati, the more often that teenage girls tart themselves up in online presentations, the greater the sexual interest they provoke. ■

Not what they were looking for

► Los Angeles Police detectives, frustrated that a 1980s-era South Los Angeles serial rapist-killer is still at large, set out recently to painstakingly trawl for DNA from all unregistered sex offenders who have come through the system since then. They came up with nothing on him, but in late March, they inadvertently matched

DNA to a different cold-case serial killer, the "Westside Rapist" from the 1970s and arrested John Floyd Thomas Jr., now 72.

► Rescuers searching for a missing tourist on China's Taishan Mountain in April failed to find him but inadvertently discovered the corpses of seven other people. ■

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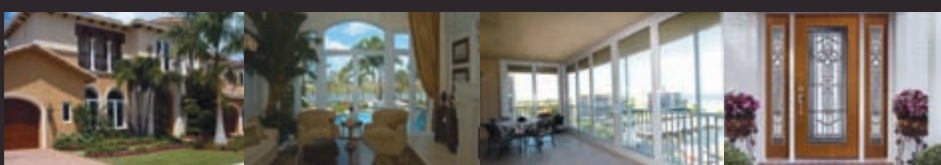
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