

Appendix 2

The Scrapbook of Unusual Issues

This section includes a number of items from here and there, mainly from newspapers, that struck us as amusing, out of the ordinary, or just plain weird. All of them involve issues that can make for interesting discussions or subjects for writing assignments. (There's no reason critical thinking subjects have to be dull.) Like the essays in Appendix 1, these present opportunities to exercise your critical thinking skills.

Pig Mistreated by Pig-Sitter

In a disturbing sign that the nation's obesity epidemic has now spread to pigs, a woman wants abuse charges filed against an acquaintance who was pet-sitting for her potbellied pig and allowed the animal to get fat.

Michelle Schmitz said her pig, Alaina Templeton, weighed 50 pounds when Schmitz left her with a co-worker in Winona, Minn., who offered to care for the animal in February, when Schmitz went on medical leave to recover from ankle surgeries.

Nine months later, the pig weighed 150 pounds. It took veterinarians 4½ hours to surgically remove the pig's collar, the Winona *Daily News* reported. Officers are investigating whether Alaina was abused by the sitter's neglect and overfeeding.

Investigator Jeff Mueller of the Winona County Sheriff's Department said Tuesday that no charges had been filed against the pig-sitter, whose name was not released.

Schmitz, 22, said she bottle-fed Alaina when she was just 11 days old and kept her on a strict diet to keep her weight at about 50 pounds. When she tried to recover the pig in April, Schmitz said the co-worker wouldn't return her calls. She said that she didn't know where the woman lived and that when she finally found the woman's farm on Saturday, she discovered Alaina's neck had grown around her collar and the pig had trouble breathing.

The pig now wears bandages and is healing from a pressure wound and neck infection.

Schmitz said she cried for three days after discovering her pet's weight problem. "That pig is my life," said Schmitz, who has a tattoo of Alaina's name.

Ghost Mystery Debugged

Albuquerque, N.M.—Those seeking evidence of a deeper and more profound reality underlying our everyday world will apparently not find it at the Santa Fe, N.M., courthouse.

An investigator specializing in all things bizarre has debugged the mystery of the Santa Fe Courthouse Ghost—a specter captured on a flurry surveillance videotape.

"In the end, it was in fact a bug or insect of some sort that was on the lens of the surveillance camera," said Benjamin Radford, a paranormal investigator and managing editor of *Skeptical Inquirer* magazine.

The image—a glowing spot drifting in front of a patrol car parked beneath some trees—generated more than 132,000 hits on YouTube since Santa Fe County Deputy Alfred Arana first noticed the image June 15.

Radford drove to Santa Fe to watch the original video, ruling out a couple of theories. After various tests, Radford shelled out \$9 for 1,750 ladybugs and put the bugs on the camera casing. "Sure enough, we got the ghost," he said.

Traffic-Stopping Chilies

London—Super spicy chili sauce sparked road closures and evacuations in central London after passers-by complained that a chemical emanating from a Thai restaurant was burning their throats, police said.

Reports of a strong smell wafting from a restaurant in the heart of London's bustling Soho district this week prompted the Londond Fire Brigade to send a chemical response team, a Metropolitan Police spokesman said.

Smashing down the door of the suspected source—the Thai Cottage restaurant—they seized the culprit: extra-hot bird's eye chilies that had been left dry-frying. They were being prepared for a batch of *nam prik pao*, a spicy Thai sauce, restaurant owner Sue Wasboonma said.

"The smoke didn't go up into the sky because of the rain and the heavy air," she said. "It's the hottest thing we make."

—Compiled from the Associated Press
October 5 and November 2, 2007

Bling on Bride's Finger Causes Husband Unease

DEAR ABBY: I was married a year ago. During our honeymoon, my husband started telling me I could not wear my wedding band and engagement ring together—they were "too flashy," and he didn't want people to think he had money. . . . Being a brand-new bride, and excited about being able to wear both my rings, I refused his request.

Over the past year he has brought it up again often, saying I should wear only my wedding band. I love my rings and want to wear both. He selected my engagement ring himself, and we picked out my wedding band together, so I don't understand why he didn't buy me a smaller engagement ring or suggest that I get a simpler wedding band. I wouldn't have cared if my rings were smaller, but now that I have them, I love wearing them, and I don't want to stop.

I always take my rings off when I'm in the shower. Three weeks ago, while I was taking my shower, my husband took my engagement ring. Now he refuses to give it back to me. Every time I look at my hand and see my lonely wedding band,

I wish I had my engagement ring. I miss wearing it, and I'm beginning to resent my husband over this.

Please tell me, Abby, am I being petty and materialistic, or does my husband have no right to keep the ring from me?

—*Ringless in Indiana*

DEAR RINGLESS: Your husband had no right to take the ring. It was given to you with the promise of marriage, and you have kept your part of the bargain. Is he controlling? Does he owe people money? Could that be why he wants you to appear less affluent than you are? If he didn't want you to enjoy it, why would he buy it for you in the first place?

Your letter set off alarm bells. If you're smart, you'll start looking closely at all financial records. Something is up, and your husband is not being open about it. His behavior was reprehensible. If I were you, I'd be suspicious—very suspicious.

—September 13, 2007

Binge Drinking on Campus Is Cause for Parents' Concern

DEAR ABBY: Our daughter "Jill" is a 19-year-old college freshman. She recently revealed in a friend's Web diary that she had "chugged" an entire pitcher of beer and had to be carried to her dorm room, where her roommate (also drunk) made her drink water until she threw up. "First time drunk," she wrote—then ended with the chilling words, ". . . and I can't wait to do it again."

Needless to say, my wife and I are extremely worried about Jill's binge drinking. Our problem is that the diary is supposed to be off-limits for my wife and me.

As I see it, her mother and I have three options: (1) Wait and say nothing, but continue to monitor the situation to see if the "first drunk" was a one-time occurrence; (2) call the college and express concern that they're not doing enough to keep alcohol off campus and away from underage drinkers; or (3) speak directly to Jill, admit we're guilty of reading her diary, and try to discuss the danger of binge drinking (knowing that such a discussion may not be well received).

Abby, our daughter has always been close to us and generally shared her thoughts and feelings. She's our oldest and has usually shown good judgment. Any help you can offer would be greatly appreciated.

—*Concerned Parents in New York*

DEAR PARENTS: You cannot ignore this and hope it will go away. Speak to your daughter and don't apologize. I'm sad to say that binge drinking is a real problem on many college campuses. Let Jill know the alarm that her disclosure has caused you. Assure her of your love and support, and inform her in a nonjudgmental and

nonthreatening way that you expect her to obey the law and protect her own safety and well-being.

Binge drinking among college students has very serious health and safety implications. Alcohol poisoning can be fatal, and girls who get blind drunk make themselves vulnerable to sexual assault. Your daughter is on the verge of adulthood, and she needs to be equipped to make mature, responsible decisions about things that could affect her health and her future.

—*June 13, 2003*

Strange Stuff: News Out of the Ordinary

Golf-Ball Retriever's Jail Term Tees Off Public

London—For 10 years John Collinson made a modest living diving for lost golf balls and selling them for 20 cents each. But after police caught him on a midnight expedition, a court frowned on his unusual job and jailed him for six months for theft.

The sentence provoked a public outcry, made the 36-year-old father of two a cause célèbre and prompted lawmakers, celebrities and the British media to campaign for this release.

Police arrested Collinson in August at Whetstone Golf Course in Leicester, central England. He and a colleague had fished 1,158 balls from Lily Pond, the bane of hundreds of golfers playing the difficult par 3 fifth hole.

Collinson, who made roughly \$21,500 a year collecting balls at courses throughout the country, claimed in his defense they didn't belong to anyone. He told a jury at Leicester Crown Court last week he even filled out tax returns on his earnings. But the judge jailed him, saying, "It is obvious you show no remorse and no intention of quitting."

Gavin Dunnett, managing director of UK Lakeballs—a firm that buys balls from hundreds of divers and sells more than a million worldwide every year via the Internet—said Thursday that recovered balls are not stolen, but are abandoned property. He said more than 2,000 people

had signed his online petition to "Free the Whetstone One."

Doodle Crosses the Line

Mount Lebanon, Pa. — A school suspended an 11-year-old girl for drawing two teachers with arrows through their heads, saying the stick figures were more death threat than doodle.

Becca Johnson, an honor-roll sixth grader at Mellon Middle School, drew the picture on the back of a vocabulary test on which she had gotten a D.

"That's my way of saying I'm angry," Becca said, adding she meant no harm to the teachers.

The stick figures, on a crudely drawn gallows with arrows in their heads, had the names of Becca's teacher and a substitute teacher written underneath. Another teacher spotted the doodle in the girl's binder Tuesday and reported it, prompting the three-day suspension.

Becca's parents, Philip and Barbara Johnson, denied the school's contention the drawings were "terrorist threats."

"She had done poorly on a test that was handed back to her. We've always told her that you can't take your feelings out on your teacher, so write about it or draw it, as a catharsis," Barbara Johnson said.

Brief Lapse in Judgment?

Poway — A high school vice principal was placed on leave Wednesday after she allegedly lifted girls' skirts—in front of

male students and adults—to make sure they weren't wearing thong underwear at a dance.

"Everyone saw everything," said Kim Teal, whose 15-year-old daughter attended the dance but was not checked. "It was a big peep show."

Rita Wilson was placed on administrative leave Wednesday while the school

district investigates the allegations concerning the dance last Friday for students at Rancho Bernardo High School.

Girls said they were told to line up outside the gym before entering the dance so Wilson could check their underwear. Those wearing thongs were turned away.

Cities Give Psychics License to Entertain, Not Exorcise

Believers in the occult and thrill-seekers are the bread and butter of psychic parlors.

For a few dollars, psychics foretell a client's future by gazing into a crystal ball or reading a palm.

Such transactions are legal entertainment, said Detective Jan Cater of the Sacramento County Sheriff's Department.

What is illegal, she said, is when clients are led to believe that they are cursed and must pay large sums of money to purge the evil.

"So-called psychics terrify people into believing that awful things will happen to them . . . unless they pay to have the curses removed, Cater said.

Sacramento and other cities require that psychics and others in the "seer" trades undergo background checks before receiving a license issued by the police department.

But other communities, including unincorporated sections of Sacramento County, have no requirements—a situation that, according to Cater, can lead to big-time swindles.

"Psychic fraud isn't a major problem in the unincorporated areas (of the county), but it has the potential to be," Cater said.

In the city of Sacramento, the safeguards in place for several years are working, officials said. . . .

In San Francisco and other cities without license laws, psychic swindles are on the rise, authorities said.

One of Cater's biggest cases involved Ingrid, a Sonoma County woman who said she paid more than \$265,000 over five years to "psychics" Louie Stevens and Nancy Uwnawich. The couple convinced Ingrid, 66, that she had a curse that had to be removed by them—or she would suffer, Ingrid said.

After wiping out her savings, Ingrid told the pair she had no more cash—except for \$2,000 in her son's college trust fund.

"What's more important—your health or your son?" Uwnawich shouted, according to Ingrid.

Ingrid said she gave them the \$2,000. . . .

An arrest warrant has been issued for Uwnawich, who remains at large.

—By Edgar Sanchez
BEE STAFF WRITER

Monogamy? Don't Cheat Yourself

DEAR ANN: Why do you come down so hard on married men who cheat? I don't understand why you believe monogamy is the only "right" way when it comes to marriage. If monogamy works so well, how come so many men cheat and so many women want divorces?

Many other cultures openly accept polygamy. Even the Bible says a man can have more than one wife. And in

many countries, adultery is accepted and shrugged off as nothing to get excited about. The wife gets the financial support and social position, and the mistress gets the sex. This sounds like a fair exchange to me.

The truth is, there is not a woman on the planet who can fully satisfy the needs of a powerful male. When women quit asking men to make them the center

of their universe and learn to accept a strong man's desire for more than one female companion, families will live together longer, more happily and with less rancor.

—*Truth Hurts In Texas*

DEAR AUSTIN: Men in biblical times had multiple wives in order to ensure an abundance of offspring because so many women died in childbirth. It was not a license to cheat.

I am sure your approach appeals to a lot of men, but I doubt that the women

in your life would go for it. And without their cooperation, you're not going to get very far. Of course, if you would like to live in one of those foreign countries that condones adultery, be my guest. Most women would be delighted to see you go. A few might even be willing to buy you a ticket.

—*Ann Landers (By permission of Esther P. Lederer and Creators Syndicate, Inc.)*

Writer to “Dear Abby” Faces Child-Porn Counts

MILWAUKEE—A man who wrote to “Dear Abby” for advice on how to handle his fantasies about having sex with young girls was charged Wednesday with possessing child pornography after the columnist turned him in, authorities say.

Paul Weiser, 28, was charged with three counts of possession of child pornography. He was ordered released on \$10,000 bail on condition he avoid computers and contact with anyone under 18.

Police said 40 pornographic photographs of children were found in his computer after his arrest Monday.

“He acknowledges he needs help and denies ever acting upon any desires,” said prosecutor Paul Tiffin.

“Dear Abby” columnist Jeanne Phillips, daughter of column founder Pauline Phillips, called police after receiving the letter.

Jeanne Phillips, who shares her mother's pen name, Abigail Van Buren, told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel she

agonized over whether to report Weiser, since the column's credibility is based on anonymity given those seeking advice.

“I lost sleep. Didn't sleep for days, because I really believe this man wrote to me genuinely seeking help,” she said. “I was torn, because my readers do turn to me for help, yet there was the priority of the safety of those young girls.”

She was said to be traveling on Wednesday and did not return a call seeking comment.

Weiser could get up to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine on each count, if convicted.

He did not speak during Wednesday's court hearing except to answer “yes” when asked if he understood the proceedings.

A preliminary hearing was set for March 25.

—*Associated Press*

Strange Stuff: News Out of the Ordinary

“Whites” Send a Message

GREELEY, Colo. — Unable to persuade a local school to change a mascot name that offends them, some students at the University of Northern Colorado have named their intramural basketball team “The Fighting Whites.”

The students are upset with Eaton High School for using an American Indian

caricature on the team logo. The team is called the Reds.

The university team said it chose a white man as its mascot to try to raise awareness of stereotypes that some cultures endure.

“The message is ‘Let's do something that will let people see the other side of what it's like to be a mascot,’” said Solomon Little Owl, a team member

and director of Native American Student Services at the university.

The team, made up of American Indians, Latinos and Anglos, wears jerseys that say, "Every thanks going to be all white."

"It's not meant to be vicious. It is meant to be humorous," said Ray White, a Mohawk American Indian on the team.

No "ATHEISTS" Allowed

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Steven Miles has tooled around Gainesville, Fla., for 16 years with a license plate that says "ATHEIST."

To Miles, it is a form of self-expression, one he is happy to spend a few extra dollars every year to keep.

But to the state of Florida now, the tag is "obscene or objectionable," according to a letter Miles received last month from the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

"The plate must be canceled," the department ordered.

Miles said he is incensed and that giving up his tag is out of the question.

The vice president of Atheists of Florida said he intends to fight and is in

touch with the American Civil Liberties Union.

Dummy Is No Woman

RENTON, Wash. — A woman with a full-size mannequin buckled into the front seat of her minivan tried to sneak into the car pool lane on Interstate 405 and became involved in a chain of crashes that backed up traffic for hours Tuesday morning, according to the Washington State Patrol.

Susan Aeschliman-Hill, 59, of Kent, Wash., acknowledged using the dummy—complete with a woman's sweater, make-up and wig—to drive illegally in the car pool lane. "When traffic gets real bad, I sometimes use (the mannequin)," she said.

State Patrol Trooper Monica Hunter said the woman likely will be cited for driving in the high-occupancy vehicle lane and making an unsafe lane change.

"Her passenger wasn't breathing, and that's one of our requirements," Hunter said.

— *By Rick Nelson, compiled from the Associated Press*

Christian School Expels Nude Dancer's Daughter

A Sacramento private school has expelled a kindergarten student three weeks before the end of the school year, saying her mother's work as a nude dancer clashes with its Christian philosophy.

Christina Silvas, 24, of Rancho Cordova said one reason she took the job as a dancer at Gold Club Centerfolds off Highway 50 was so she could afford the \$400 monthly tuition at Capital Christian School.

"If you choose to do the wrong thing willfully, then God's word instructs me as to what my responsibility is," said Rick Cole, head pastor of Capital Christian Center. "I need to be faithful to my calling."

Silvas, who previously worked at the church as a Sunday school teacher, has a different view.

"I thought the church was supposed to accept everybody," she said. "That's my understanding of what God is about. My

daughter is the one who goes to school there, not me, and they're turning her away."

Silvas, who is single, said school administrators telephoned her last week and told her that in response to persistent rumors, a parent went to the strip club's Web site, downloaded pictures of Silvas and brought them to school staff. Silvas told them she does dance at the all-nude bar, which doesn't serve alcohol, and subsequently met with Cole.

As head pastor of Capital Christian, which at 4,000 members is one of the largest Assemblies of God churches in the country, Cole had final say on the matter.

Silvas said Cole told her not only will her 5-year-old daughter be expelled, but as long as she keeps her job at the club, neither she nor her daughter can attend church there.

Silvas said her daughter enjoys the school's daily worship sessions and was

looking forward to the end-of-the-year pool party and graduation ceremony. She hasn't told the girl why she won't be able to go to school next week.

"I'm still trying to figure out what I'm going to tell her," she said.

Silvas said that when she enrolled her daughter, she signed a statement that stipulated she would abide by the school's Christian commitment/philosophy and that "weekly church attendance is necessary for continued enrollment at CCS."

The statement also reads, in part, "CCS is interested in maintaining a partnership with our parents regarding the standards and criteria of a Christian learning structure that involves the entire family."

By working as an exotic dancer and refusing to change her vocation, Silvas violated the school's philosophy, Cole said.

"She was not in compliance with what she agreed to," he said. "There's a commitment form that parents sign. They agree to our Christian commitment and standard of living."

Seeking a resolution, Silvas and Cole met privately Tuesday. "I talked to her for over an hour, letting her know how much God cares about her and loves her and that he has a much better plan for her than what she is doing with her life right now," Cole said.

He promised that if Silvas quit her job, he and the church would forgive her,

help her and even waive tuition for the month of June.

"My understanding was she would come back to me after thinking about it and let me know her decision," Cole said. "It's very stunning to me to see it on the news. We've been thrust into this media craze, but not by our desire."

Silvas said the decision is not simple and couldn't be made that quickly.

"I have other expenses besides my daughter's tuition," she said. "I am also concerned with providing a comfortable life for my daughter."

Silvas said she feels she is being demonized.

"I'm trying to let them know we're not evil because of our work, and we do have an awareness of God. My job is legal, it's not illegal."

Though Silvas is considering legal action, experts in education law say that may not be a good option.

"In a private school, it's hard to make a breach of contract action because they have the right to kick a kid out at any time for any reason," said Michael Sorgen, an education lawyer in San Francisco.

Even though the school has the legal right to expel the child, that doesn't make it right, Sorgen said.

—By Erika Chavez
BEE STAFF WRITER

Ill Boy's New Hurdle: School Drug Rules

Life just got more complicated for an 8-year-old boy and his mother who's had great success battling his mental disorders with a doctor-approved marijuana therapy.

The youngster's medical condition has improved so dramatically that he can now attend public school, but school officials won't permit a school nurse to administer his cannabis capsules and won't let him take the pills himself on campus, the child's mother said Monday.

"Other kids get their medication," she complained. But the drug her son needs daily at 1 P.M. must be delivered by her

personally, off the school grounds, she said.

"It makes him feel he's not normal, that he's being treated differently. He wonders why he's being targeted. He just wants to be normal," she said.

She hopes to persuade school officials to change their minds and allow the capsules to be given on campus.

The woman, whose name is being withheld by *The Bee* to protect the boy's identity, has been treating her son with medical cannabis for the past year, at home and at the private school he had been attending.

But in April, they moved from Rocklin to El Dorado County. She presented her son's new school with the required permission slip for students who need medication at school, a form she and the boy's doctor signed.

The day before the boy was to report to his new school, however, a message left on the family answering machine informed the mother that her son's recommended medication could not be administered on campus.

So, she says, she's been forced to drive a round trip of 26 miles each noontime to remove him from the school grounds, give him his capsules, and return him to class.

Vicki L. Barber, superintendent of the El Dorado County Office of Education, said she could not comment on any specific case. But she said state law permits schools to dispense drugs only when they are formally "prescribed" by a physician. The boy's doctor made a "recommendation," and there is a difference, Barber added, between a "prescription" and a doctor's "recommendation."

Proposition 215, the Compassionate Use Act of 1996, permits the use of

medical marijuana and the possession of the drug by the patient or a primary caregiver.

A school district cannot be legally defined as a "primary caregiver," Barber said.

Because the district has a zero-tolerance policy, students are not permitted to have in their possession or to self-administer drugs of any kind, she said.

The boy's mother said the school district is relying on a technicality to dodge responsibility.

"There is no 'prescription' for 'oral cannabis,'" the capsule she prepares in a five-hour cooking and drying process at home, she said.

But it is a part of her son's "individual education plan" or IEP, the state's "prescription" for helping children with special needs, the mother said.

School district officials would not comment on the boy's specific IEP.

—By Wayne Wilson
BEE STAFF WRITER

A letter to the editor of the local paper by one of your authors:

5 Million Teenagers Perfect

You recently ran an Associated Press story that first appeared in the *New York Times* about a Port Orchard, Wash., Eagle Scout who was given a week to abandon his atheism or be kicked out of Boy Scouts of America. Boy Scout law requires scouts to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean and reverent. An atheist, of course, finds it difficult to be reverent in the intended sense of the term.

Unfortunately, you ended the article with a paraphrase from Gregg Shields, a Boy Scout spokesman: "Mr. Shields said for the Boy Scouts to insist on anything less would be unfair to the 5 million members."

But there were two more sentences in the *New York Times* article, and you

missed the best point of the piece by leaving them out. Shields said: "It would be a disservice to all the other members to allow someone to selectively obey or ignore our rules."

The *Times* piece then added, "As for the other 11 points of the Scout Law, Mr. Shields could not say whether anyone had been ejected for being untrustworthy, disloyal, unhelpful, unfriendly, discourteous, unkind, disobedient, cheerless, unthrifty, cowardly or sloppy."

I for one believe it is a credit to scouting that none of those 5 million teenage boys has ever been found guilty of any of those other 11 defects.

—Richard Parker, Chico

Strange Stuff: News Out of the Ordinary

As if the goings-on of government weren't scary enough, the state of North Carolina is calling in a Ghostbusters-like group to do a paranormal screening of the old state Capitol.

Although there have been no sightings of a huge marshmallow man, staffers at the Capitol say they have heard floorboards creak with invisible footsteps, keys jangle, and doors squeak open and shut.

"To be honest with you, I've always made it a rule to be out of the building at quitting time," said Raymond Beck, the Capitol historian. "I've had enough of those strange vibes here that I don't like sticking around after it gets dark."

Researchers from the Ghost Research Foundation will give the 162-year-old Raleigh landmark where the governor has his offices a "spectral inspection," using infrared cameras, electromagnetic field detectors and audio recorders.

The Capitol has gone through a number of night watchmen who begged off the duty after one night of creepy noises, Beck said.

But Owen J. Jackson, 84, managed the job for 12 years before retiring in 1990. He apparently never was slimed, and strains of gospel hymns, the thump-thump-thumps that followed him down stairs and the angry slams of doors never bothered him, Jackson said.

"You get used to something like that," Jackson said. "I think there's a couple (of) million dollars buried somewhere there, and they're just trying to tell us where it was."

It's Hormonal

A Harvard research team has found that married men, whether fathers or not, have significantly less testosterone than single men, regardless of age or overall health status.

Anthropology graduate student Peter Gray and his colleagues also found that men who spent lots of time with their wives had even lower testosterone levels than other married men. The team tested 58 men in the Boston area, according to an article in a recent Harvard University Gazette.

Gray suggests that married men don't produce as much testosterone after they shift from dating to parenting roles.

"Married men, particularly fathers, are less likely to engage in dominance interaction and aggression," he said. "That means less risk taking, less conflicts or other behaviors that could lead, for example, to death by homicide.

And couldn't it be Mother Nature's way of keeping men from straying? After all, other studies have found that men with high levels of testosterone were more likely to commit adultery than those with less of the stuff.

"That's an interesting question," Gray said. "That's a topic that will be harder to get at."

Is Skydiving Dog Cruelty?

Animal lovers are howling over a skydiving dog.

The parachuting dachshund, known as Brutus the Skydiving Dog, is set to perform at this weekend's Air and Space show at Vandenberg Air Force Base.

"What we feel is this is cruelty to animals," said Shirley Cram, shelter director and treasurer for the Volunteers for Inter-valley Animals. "It's exploiting the dog. It certainly isn't fun for that dog to jump out of the plane."

Brutus' skydiving partner disagrees.

"He gets all excited when I'm getting my gear ready," said Ron Sirull of Delray Beach, Fla., contending Brutus enjoys his aerial activities. He added, "He's totally up for it."

Sirull said his dog's veterinarian and the Arizona Humane Society have signed off the activity being safe for man's best friend.

Brutus is tucked into a special pouch affixed to his owner's chest for the jump and dons custom-made goggles for what Sirull calls his "fleafall." While Sirull has 1,000 jumps, Brutus has logged 100.

"That's equal to 700 jumps in dog years," his owner joked.

—Compiled by Caroline Liss from the Associated Press and Washington Post. In SAC BEE, 1 Nov. 2002.

10 Commandments Monument Must Go

MONTGOMERY, Ala.—A Ten Commandments monument in the rotunda of Alabama's judicial building violates the Constitution's ban on government promotion of religion, a federal judge ruled Monday.

U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson gave Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore, who had the 5,300-pound granite monument installed in the state building, 30 days to remove it.

Thompson said previous court rulings have allowed displays on government property if they have a secular purpose and do not foster "excessive government entanglement with religion." He said the Ten Commandments monument fails this test.

"His fundamental, if not sole, purpose in displaying the monument was non-secular; and the monument's primary effect advances religion," Thompson said.

Moore testified during the trial that the commandments are the moral foundation of American law. He said the monument acknowledges God, but does not force anyone to follow the justice's conservative Christian religious beliefs.

A lawsuit seeking removal of the monument argued that it promoted the judge's faith in violation of the Constitution.

Moore installed the monument after the building closed on the night of July 31, 2001, without telling any other justices.

"This monument was snuck in during the middle of the night, and they can sneak it out just as easily. It's a gross violation of the rights of the citizens of Alabama," said Morris Dees, lead counsel and co-founder of the Southern Poverty Law Center. He urged Moore to remove the monument immediately.

The monument, which features the King James Bible version of the Ten Commandments sitting on top of a

granite block, is one of the first things visitors see upon entering the building.

"Its sloping top and the religious air of the tablets unequivocally call to mind an open Bible resting on a podium," Thompson said.

In his ruling, Thompson said he found the monument to be more than just a display of the Ten Commandments.

"The court is impressed that the monument and its immediate surroundings are, in essence, a consecrated place, a religious sanctuary, within the walls of the courthouse," Thompson wrote.

An appeal is expected. Neither Moore nor his lead attorney, Stephen Melchior, had any immediate comment. An assistant to Melchior said they were reserving comment until they had read the opinion.

Moore fought to display a wooden plaque of the commandments on his courtroom wall in Etowah County before he won election as chief justice in November 2000.

"The basic issue is whether we will still be able to acknowledge God under the First Amendment, or whether we will not be able to acknowledge God," Moore testified.

The Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, call the ruling a setback for "Moore's religious crusade."

"It's high time Moore learned that the source of U.S. law is the Constitution and not the Bible," Lynn said.

One of Moore's supporters, Alabama Christian Coalition President John Giles, said he believes there may be a backlash against the ruling in Alabama.

"I am afraid the judge's order putting a 30-day limit on removal of the monument will lead to an uprising of citizens protesting removal of that monument," Giles said.

—Associated Press

Teen Claims Bias After School Bars Her Bid to Be Prom King

SACRAMENTO—An 18-year-old Encina High School senior is not being allowed to run for prom king because ... she is a female.

Kristine Lester said Thursday that school officials told her that her name would not be on the ballot because only

males can run for king and only females can run for queen.

"I just wanted to do something different," said Lester, who is openly gay and plans to wear a tuxedo at Saturday's prom. "I'm not the feminine type to run for queen."

Lester said she believes the school is discriminating against her because of her sexual orientation.

Officials with the San Juan Unified School District back Encina Principal Myrtle Berry's decision and denied that there was any discrimination involved.

"We don't discriminate," said district spokeswoman Deidra Powell.

—Sandy Louey

Point, Click . . . Fire!

According to a Knight-Ridder newspaper article, a gent from Texas has now made it possible to hunt pigs and kill them from anywhere you can carry your laptop. John Lockwood, who is a San Antonio body shop estimator, has set up a computer-directed firing range operated from a trailer installation on a 220-acre ranch 15 miles east of Boerne, Texas. Patrons can use their computers to sight, aim, and fire either a .22 caliber rifle (for target

practice) or a .30-06 caliber hunting rifle for the pigs that range on the ranch.

More than 350 people have signed up as members of Live-Shot.com. They come from as far away as Hong Kong, France, and Peru. But they'd better give it their best shot soon, as Representative Todd Smith, a Republican member of the state legislature, has introduced a bill that would prohibit remote control hunting in Texas.



■ Boerne, United States—The Latest Internet Craze . . . Hunting Wild Animals Online: John Lockwood, owner of the real-time, online hunting and shooting Web site Live-Shot.com, demonstrates how one can use the Internet to shoot targets on a ranch outside Boerne, Texas, 26 February, 2005. Now anyone with a computer and a modem can log on and fire real weapons, but the idea of Internet hunting has generated plenty of criticism. A Republican representative in the Texas Legislature, Todd Smith, himself an occasional hunter, has offered a bill to ban the practice. "I don't think we should be able to kill God's creatures with the click of a mouse," Smith said. "I think hunters are offended by the concept, much less non-hunters."

Marine General: “It’s Fun to Shoot Some People”

WASHINGTON—A decorated Marine Corps general said, “It’s fun to shoot some people” and poked fun at the manhood of some Afghans as he described the wars U.S. troops are fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His boss, the commandant of the Marine Corps, said Thursday that the comments reflected “the unfortunate and harsh realities of war” but that the general has been asked to watch his words in public.

Lt. Gen James Mattis, a career infantry officer who is now in charge of developing better ways to train and equip Marines, made the comments Tuesday while speaking to a forum in San Diego.

According to an audio recording, he said: “Actually, it’s a lot of fun to fight. You know, it’s a hell of a hoot. . . . It’s fun to shoot some people. I’ll be right upfront with you—I like brawling.”

He added: “You go into Afghanistan, you got guys who slap women around for five years because they didn’t wear a veil. You know, guys like that ain’t got no manhood left anyway. So it’s a hell of a lot of fun to shoot them.”

His comments were met with laughter and applause from the audience. Mattis was speaking during a panel discussion hosted by the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, a spokeswoman for the general said.

Thursday, Gen. Mike Hagee, Commandant of the Marine Corps, issued a statement saying: “Lt. Gen. Mattis often speaks with a great deal of candor. I have counseled him concerning his remarks, and he agrees he should have chosen his words more carefully.”

Hagee also said, “While I understand that some people may take issue with the comments made by him, I also know he intended to reflect the unfortunate and harsh realities of war.”

Among Marines, Mattis is regarded as a fighting general and an expert in the art of warfare. Among his decorations are the Bronze Star with a combat distinguishing device and a combat action ribbon, awarded for close-quarters fighting.

He is the commanding general of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command in Quantico, Va., and deputy commandant for combat development.

The Council on American Islamic Relations, a Muslim civil liberties group, called on the Pentagon to discipline Mattis for the remarks.

“We do not need generals who treat the grim business of war as a sporting event,” said the council’s executive director, Nihad Awad. “These disturbing remarks are indicative of an apparent indifference to the value of human life.”

—By John J. Lumpkin
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Women’s Affair Not Adultery, Court Rules

CONCORD, N.H. — If a married woman has sex with another woman, is that adultery? The New Hampshire Supreme Court, ruling in a divorce case, says no.

The court was asked to review a case in which a husband accused his wife of adultery after she had a sexual relationship with another woman. Robin Mayer of Brownsville, Vt., was named in the divorce proceedings of David and Sian Blanchflower of Hanover.

A Family Court judge decided Mayer and Sian Blanchflower’s relationship did constitute adultery, but Mayer appealed to the Supreme Court, arguing that gay sex is not adultery under New Hampshire divorce law.

Three of the five justices agreed. Two others—generally considered the court’s more conservative members—did not.

Part of the problem is that New Hampshire’s divorce laws do not define

adultery. So the court looked up “adultery” in Webster’s dictionary and found that it mentions intercourse. And it found an 1878 case that referred to adultery as “intercourse from which spurious issue may arise.”

Other states have defined adultery in broader terms—beyond intercourse—to include gay sex.

Marcus Hurn, a professor at Franklin Pierce Law Center, suggested that the

New Hampshire court’s majority opinion is unintentionally trivializing same-sex relations and violating modern notions of the sanctity of marriage.

A sexual relationship, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is “exactly an equivalent betrayal and that, I think, is the ordinary meaning most people would give,” he said.

—*Associated Press*

In Short . . .

She is Barbie’s oldest friend, happily married and visibly pregnant with her second child—and some parents think she’s a little too real for children. The pregnant version of Midge, which pops out a curled-up baby when her belly is opened, has been pulled from Wal-Mart

shelves across the nation following complaints from customers, a company spokeswoman said.

—*Associated Press; from The Sacramento Bee, December 26, 2002*