

LEAD STORY

Leonard Brown, 47, sentenced in 1982 to 99 years in prison in Florida for armed robbery, was released in April after a fellow inmate (having looked over Brown's records) pointed out to officials that Brown's sentence was illegally long and that 15 years was the maximum time he could have been kept behind bars. The probable explanation, according to sources cited by *The Tampa Tribune*, was that Brown's judge (now deceased) misinterpreted whether Brown was ever armed. Thus, but for the fortuitous discovery of that eagle-eyed inmate, Brown would have spent his entire post-teenage life in prison.

COMPELLING EXPLANATIONS

• Houston police officials started an investigation in March into whether Lt. Joseph Buttitta had sexually harassed a female officer. KPRC-TV reported that the female at first described a consensual relationship that she should have broken off sooner, but then "accidentally" (in a reporter's word) told Buttitta she loved him when she really meant to say goodbye.

• Honesty Is the Best Policy: 1) Caught by police with illegal emergency lights on his car, Bradenton, Fla., restaurant manager Kenneth Holmes, 26, said at his February sentencing for impersonating a police officer that he did it "to get home quicker," and that the flashers were "cool" and a "fantastic time-saver" that enabled him to drive through red lights. 2) According to a February police report on the Arizona State University student newspaper's Web site, an 18-year-old student, arrested at Hayden Library for masturbating openly while watching Internet porn, explained to police, "To be honest, the Internet connection at my dorm isn't good enough."

THE LITIGIOUS SOCIETY

1) Michael Oddenino, a lawyer in Arcadia, Calif., filed a lawsuit in March against the coach of his daughter's high school softball team for \$3 million for her emotional distress from the coach's calling her a "2-year-old" and calling the players in general "idiots" for making insignificant mistakes. (A judge rejected it.) 2) In Cardiff, Wales, in March, Sabrina Pace, 26, sued the manager of the car rental firm where she works because, following her breast-augmentation surgery, she couldn't get the manager to stop paying attention to her breasts.

NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPHERD



Kuwait Times reported in April that food inspectors shut down the Hawally bakery in Kuwait City after finding dough stored in a toilet, which the owner explained was so that the humidity would keep it moist.

QUESTIONABLE JUDGMENTS

• In February, several patients at an unlicensed mental health facility in Columbus, Ga., told the local *Ledger-Enquirer* newspaper that they had recently worked security at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta during football games of the University of Georgia and the Atlanta Falcons. The facility, the Greater Grace Community Center, has recently been shut down, but the newspaper was able to verify much of the patients' story. Among the facility's patients are those diagnosed with anti-social personalities or bipolar disorder or homicidal tendencies.

• *The Seattle Times* reported in February that Edith Macefield, 84, living in a tiny, rundown, 106-year-old house in an industrial neighborhood across from a chemical plant, had rejected a final buyout offer from developers amounting to nearly \$750,000. "I don't care about money," she said. "It's (been) my home (for 54 years now)." ... "What would I do with that kind of money anyway?" The developer has purchased the rest of the block and will build around her tiny lot, boxing her in with walls 60 feet high.

LATEST RELIGIOUS MESSAGES

• In March, Fredericton, New Brunswick, anti-abortion activist David Little, 60, resisting his upcoming trial for tax evasion, informed the judge that he would need an indefinite postponement because his wife and stepdaughter are possessed by Satan and require exorcism. He told the judge that some exorcisms work quickly but that he knows of one that has lasted 16 years. The judge told Little to bring in some evidence of the possession. (Little has openly refused to pay taxes because some government money funds abortions.)

• More Religious Messages: 1) Stan and Stella Hagarty began an Internet business recently as the Wholly Love shop from Bridgend, Wales, specializing in sex products for Christians "to enhance your sex life with your spouse," including Pure Arousal Super Stretch Rings, Silver Clitoral Charms, and the Snail Trail Vibrating Tickler (but no pornography or bondage or anal-use items). 2) Convicted Iowa sex offender Scott Smith petitioned a judge in February not to make him wear the electronic

ankle monitor as part of his five-year probation because his Brotherhood of Christ sect regards electricity as one cause of people's disobeying God. (The judge's decision was not reported.)

SHANIA TWAIN IS NOTHING BUT TROUBLE

1) Matt Brownlee, 33, with a long record as a drunken driver, was acquitted of criminal DUI charges in Ottawa, Ontario, after psychiatrists concluded that his latest accident was the result of a sincere belief that singer Shania Twain was helping him drive the car. (A 1996 brain injury might have given him a disorder in which he believes that celebrities communicate with him telepathically.) 2) Following a hung jury in England's Winchester Crown Court in April, Linda West faces retrial in the 2005 death of her husband, which she said was accidental, in that her gun slipped while she was energetically performing a Shania Twain number ("Man! I Feel Like a Woman") in what she described as the couple's sex game.

WORST LAWYERS' STRATEGIES

• Madison County, Ill., lawyer Gary Peel, 62, who was battling an ex-wife over alimony, filed for bankruptcy to reduce her chances of getting anything, and then when she challenged his filing, he allegedly tried to blackmail her into silence. According to federal charges against him in March, he told his ex-wife that, unless she relented, he would shock her elderly parents by giving them decades-old nude photos of him with the ex-wife's younger sister. However, Peel perhaps forgot that the sister was allegedly only 16 when the photos were taken, and he has been charged with possessing child pornography.

• Waco, Texas, attorney Paula Allen personally agreed to bond in October on behalf of client Rolando Castelan (accused of drug offenses), but when Castelan skipped a court date, she was charged the \$5,000. According to prosecutors, Allen, with three men, then picked up Castelan against his will at his wedding in December and detained him, while forcing him to telephone his friends for loans to pay her the \$5,000. Eventually, Castelan's ex-wife (one of the call recipients) helped him escape from Allen and her cohorts, and Allen was charged with kidnapping.

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