NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPHERD
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It’s Facebook’s world now

¦ Up-and-coming Sicilian mobster Domenico Palazzotto, 28, was outed in August by Italy’s L’Espresso magazine as the owner of an ineffectively pseudonymous Facebook page showing off his muscled, bare-chested body and perhaps recruiting members. One fan asked, “Do I need to send a (resume)?” “Yes, brother,” came the reply. “We need to consider your criminal record. We do not take people with clean records.” Mr. Palazzotto operates out of Palermo and listed among his “likes” the singer Kenny Loggins.

¦ Young, body-obsessed Egyptian jihadist/ gym member Islam Yaken, according to his postings on Facebook-type social media, is a law school graduate fluent in English, French and Arabic, allowing him to describe the particular viciousness that he and his brothers and will wreak upon infidels.

Can’t possibly be true

¦ A jury’s murder conviction, and the 15-to-life sentence it carried, against Daniel Floyd in Brooklyn, N.Y., for a 2008 killing went for naught in July when the Brooklyn Supreme Court ordered a retrial (with witnesses forced to testify all over again). The sole reason the court cited was a decision by the trial judge on the first day — to seat the potential jury pool and not Floyd’s mother, who, because she was temporarily left standing that first day, argued successfully that her son’s right to a “public” trial had been violated.

¦ Two age-30ish men knocked on the door of a Sebastian, Texas, woman at 12:30 a.m. on Aug. 3, asking for water and if they could please come inside to charge their cellphone — and the woman...
apparently cheerfully invited them in, later offering them use of her backyard shed to grab some sleep. She did not learn until a short time later, when a law enforcement manhunt widened into her neighborhood, that they were wanted for murdering a U.S. Border Patrol agent. Officers arrested the pair inside the shed.

A team of researchers from the University of Texas at Arlington announced recently that they had developed a prototype of a wind turbine that might deliver electricity in tiny bursts to devices like smartphones — since it is about half the size of a grain of rice. (Tiny solar backpacks already exist.)

The new normal

The ubiquitous “sexting” phenomenon continues to flourish. A Washington state agency suspended the license of anesthesiologist Arthur Zilberstein in June after finding that he had exchanged sexually explicit text messages — during surgeries.

One of the emerging occupational skills for emergency medical technicians, according to first responders interviewed in a June Wall Street Journal feature, is merely holding up blankets at accident scenes — to block onlookers from their apparently uncontrollable urge to take gruesome photos to send to their friends.

Anger management needed

A 40-year-old man’s throat was fatally slashed in August in Laurel, Mont., in a fight with an acquaintance over which military service — Army or Marines — is better. (News reports failed to identify the “winning” branch.)

A 37-year-old man survived, but with multiple bullet wounds, in New York City in August after a 1 a.m. dispute during the making of a rap music video. (The dispute was over who, exactly, would be the “star.”)

Roger Harris, 63, and Bryan Bandes, 42, brawled in August on the 7th tee at the Springdale Golf Course near Uniontown, Pa., while arguing the rule for playing a ball in a rain puddle. Mr. Harris apparently 3-wooded Mr. Bandes in the head; Mr. Bandes landed punches causing a swollen jaw, a fat lip and a scratched eye.

Wait — what?

In Multnomah County, Oregon, in July, a Romanian princess pleaded guilty to cockfighting. Irina Walker, 61, was born in Switzerland where her father, King Michael I, lived after abdicating the throne. She came to Oregon in 1983, where, in a second marriage in 2007, she fell in with former deputy sheriff John Walker, who had moved on to the gambling and cockfighting business, and, according to a USA Today report, she was assisting him.

Solutions to non-problems
Chung-Ang University in South Korea announced in April that its traditional-sport Department of Sport Science would begin accepting — as legitimate “student athletes” — video gamers.

Also in April, Berlin’s Lutheran Georgen Parochial cemetery inaugurated a 4,300-square-foot area of its grounds as reserved exclusively for lesbians — for women who, said a spokesman, “want to be buried among other lesbians.”

New world order

Japan is noted (as News of the Weird has reported in 1997 and 2008) for several traditional fertility festivals and theme parks at which explicit, oversized male genitalia are revered by joyous visitors, including children. In July, on the other hand, police quickly arrested the artist Megumi Igarashi after she scanned her vulva and then distributed the data online to allow others to create 3-D printed reproductions. That effort was the most conspicuous of several attempts she has made as an artist/designer to call attention, she said, to the underrepresentation of female genitals in Japanese society compared to males.

Researchers from England’s University of Lincoln revealed in July that red-footed tortoises are not only “inquisitive” but make decisions. The tortoises pecked-out (and learned) touch-screen decisions (for strawberries), and in fact, learned as quickly as rats and pigeons and faster than dogs.

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