

Talula Does the Hula From Hawaii

The title of this post reflects someone's actual given name at birth. Shame on everyone who ever gave flak about my cute little Disney – it could have been worse; much, much worse!

(CNN) – A New Zealand judge has made a 9-year-old girl a ward of the court so that her name can be changed from Talula Does the Hula From Hawaii, the country's national news agency reported Thursday.

Family Court Judge Rob Murfitt listed a series of unusual names that New Zealand parents had given their children, and said he was concerned that such strange monikers would create hurdles for them as they grew up.

"It makes a fool of the child and sets her up with a social disability and handicap," the New Zealand Press Association quoted the judge as saying.

Among the names Murfitt cited: twins named Benson and Hedges – after a brand of cigarettes; Violence; and Number 16 Bus Shelter.

Some parents had named children after six-cylinder Ford cars, the news agency reported.

The Registrar General of Births, Deaths and Marriages said in a statement that it had rejected names including Fish and Chips, Yeah Detroit, Stallion, Twisty Poi – a staple food in Polynesian cuisine – and Sex Fruit.

A lawyer for Talula Does the Hula From Hawaii said the girl is so embarrassed by her name that friends know her as "K."

Last month, a judge in the U.S. state of Illinois allowed a school bus driver to legally change his first name to "In God"

and his last name to “We Trust.”

But an appeals court in the state of New Mexico ruled against a man – named Variable – who wanted to change his name to a two-word phrase that contains a four-letter expletive and expresses opposition to censorship.

Bale Bails Out

I couldn't resist re-printing the following news item about the star of The Dark Knight, Christian Bale. Note the part about police not wanting to question him so they don't interfere with the premiere of the movie. Seems he took his Batman fight training a little too seriously?

LONDON, England (AP) – Batman star Christian Bale was arrested Tuesday over allegations of assaulting his mother and sister, police and British media said.

“Dark Knight” star Christian Bale pictured in London Sunday ahead of the movie’s European premiere

The 34-year-old actor spent four hours at a London police station before being released on bail.

British media had reported that Bale's mother and sister complained he had assaulted them at the Dorchester Hotel in London on Sunday night, a day before the European premiere of his latest film, “The Dark Knight.”

The Sun newspaper said police did not question the actor Monday because they did not want to interfere with the premiere of the movie.

Asked Tuesday whether Bale had been arrested, a London police spokesman did not refer to him by name but said: “A 34-year-

old man attended a central London police station this morning by appointment and was arrested in connection with an allegation of assault.”

The spokesman spoke on condition of anonymity because force policy did not authorize him to be identified. British police do not name suspects before they are formally charged.

The force later said in a statement that the man had been released on bail pending further inquiries and told to return on an unspecified date in September.

U.S.-based representatives for Bale didn’t immediately return messages seeking comment. Repeated phone calls to Bale’s London representative went unanswered.

Wales-born Bale first made a splash as the child star of Steven Spielberg’s “Empire of the Sun” in 1987. His screen credits also include “American Psycho,” “The Machinist” and “Batman Begins.”

In “The Dark Knight,” Bale reprises the role of wealthy playboy Bruce Wayne and his crime-fighting alter-ego Batman, a brooding vigilante superhero still scarred by the murder of his parents.

The Warner Bros. film, which stars the late Heath Ledger as Batman’s nemesis The Joker, took in a record \$158.4 million at the box office in its opening weekend in the U.S. last week.

A Teacher CANNOT...

...tape a student to a chair. That’s the lesson an Illinois man is learning after being sentenced to probation following an incident in a McHenry County classroom. Sorry Derek – this is

really a story for your blog... you have my permission to steal it. Hopefully they cover not taping kids, especially special education students, to their chairs in Substitute Teaching 101? Here is the full story:

Substitute Teacher Gets Probation For Taping Unruly Student To Seat

A substitute teacher who taped a pair of rambunctious 8-year-old special education students to their seats was spared forced confinement himself Tuesday when a judge sentenced him to probation instead of prison on a pair of felony convictions.

Matthew Konetski, 32, of South Beloit, Ill., must serve two years probation, pay a \$1,500 fine and perform 80 hours public service under the sentence handed down by a McHenry County judge.

The sentence comes about six weeks after a jury found Konetski guilty of aggravated battery and unlawful restraint for a March 2006 incident in which he taped one of his students at Harvard's Jefferson Elementary School to his seat, then put tape over the boy's mouth when the boy would not sit still.

The taping, according to trial testimony, lasted between two and five minutes.

Authorities initially charged Konetski with doing the same to a second student, but prosecutors opted not to go to trial on those allegations.

The mother of the boy whose case did go to trial said she is satisfied with the sentence.

"I never wanted to put him in jail," she said. "I just wanted him held accountable."

In a letter to the court, the mother said her son, who's been diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder, began acting

out after the incident. At one point, she writes, the boy was hospitalized for more than 30 days.

“(He), 26 months later, still wakes up screaming ‘Let me go!,’” the letter states.

During his trial, Konetski testified that he taped the boys as a last resort when they would not stop getting up in class. Although he was a first-year substitute with no special education training, Konetski was left alone with the special education students without two aides normally assigned to the class.

He apologized Tuesday for his actions, saying he never intended to harm or scare the boys.

“I was just trying to come up with a way to deal with a situation I didn’t know how to deal with,” he said.

County prosecutors had asked for a jail sentence along with the probation term, saying a stiff sentence would send a message to the public.

“(The victim) experienced being confined in his chair that day by this defendant,” Assistant McHenry County State’s Attorney Sharyl Eisenstein said. “We feel that he, in turn, should be confined in the McHenry County jail.”

Konetski will not have to register as a sex offender because, Judge Sharon Prather ruled, there is no evidence his actions were sexually motivated.

Pringles ≠ Potato Chips

I caught the tail-end of a news story the other day... something about a judge ruling that Pringles are not potato chips. What in the world? I wondered why a judge would be ruling on such a thing and also if they're not potato chips, what are they? Since I have limited time, I did limited research on the subject, and I found the answer to the first question; see below:

LONDON – Britain's High Court has ruled that Pringles are not a potato snack, and thus are not subject to value-added tax.

Friday's ruling by Justice Nicholas Warren is expected to save millions for the manufacturer, Procter & Gamble Co.

Warren overruled a VAT Tribunal decision that Pringles should be subject to the 17.5-percent tax because it met the definition of "potato crisps, potato sticks, potato puffs and similar products made from the potato, or from potato flour, or from potato starch."

The judge found that Pringles were only 42 percent potato, and thus exempt.

P&G spokeswoman Marina Barker says the company is pleased with the ruling.

Umm... so what else is in Pringles besides potato? Do we really want to know? And while searching for this tidbit of info, I came across another interesting article about my favorite potato chip, er, potato-ish snack food, though maybe I should have posted a link on JustJ's recent morbid post about the discarding of human bodies... Ahh, the Internet. Everything you ever wanted to know and some things you didn't – all at your fingertips!

Cincinnati, OH – Dr. Fredric J. Baur was so proud of having

designed the container for Pringles potato crisps that he asked his family to bury him in one.

His children honored his request. Part of his remains was buried in a Pringles can – along with a regular urn containing the rest – in his grave at Arlington Memorial Gardens in Springfield Township.

Dr. Baur, a retired organic chemist and food storage technician who specialized in research and development and quality control for Procter & Gamble, died May 4 at Vitas Hospice. The College Hill resident was 89.

Tim McGraw – Country Singer, Actor, Vigilante?

Being a country music fan, a recent news item caught my attention. Seems country superstar Tim McGraw had to step in to perform security duties at his own concert. He spotted a large man in the front row roughing up a female concert-goer, and since security wasn't close to the guy, McGraw grabbed him up on stage to intervene in the situation. I don't know why security wasn't anywhere near the front row at the time, but it seems McGraw can add something else to his list of accomplishments. The guy already has an pretty interesting biography... He believed his step-father was his biological father until the age of 11 when he accidentally discovered his step-father was not listed on his birth certificate. His mother took him to see his real father, baseball superstar Tug McGraw, who denied him until Tim was 18 and he realized how much they looked alike. They remained close until Tug's death in 2004. He met fellow country singer Faith Hill – a country

superstar in her own right – when they toured together, and they married and have 3 daughters. He is one of the most talented and successful country singers of our time and has been in the headlines for a few bizarre incidents, including a run-in involving a police horse (his friend [Kenny Chesney](#), a huge country star himself, was accused of stealing the horse and McGraw was accused of shoving an officer during the melee. The two were later acquitted of all charges after it was proven that Chesney had permission to ride the horse and McGraw was trying to keep his friend from being thrown off the horse). And now this. What a way to get on stage to meet your favorite country singer. And throughout the entire incident, the band played on and McGraw didn't miss a lyric. I really have to get to a country music concert; it's been awhile! Check it all out here:

Leaking Trains

Recently there was a news item about a train that spilled its cargo – with a twist. Instead of the usual hazardous chemicals that spill from trains like hydrochloric and phosphoric acid, acetone, liquid soap, antifreeze, fuel, coal, and herbicide; this particular train spilled its contents of tallow, also known as animal fat. Unlike other hazardous spills, this one was dangerous in a different way than possible human ingestion of chemicals. The fat on the roadway caused it to be slippery which led to numerous car crashes. To make matters worse, apparently the rush-hour vehicles got the tallow on their tires and tracked it around the entire area, causing more complications in cleanup. And you thought rush-hour traffic was aggravating enough all by itself!

Animal Fat Leak Wreaks Havoc For Commuters

ELMHURST, Illinois – An eastbound Union Pacific freight train carrying a load of animal fat sprung a leak as it passed through DuPage County Friday, dousing intersections between Elmhurst and Lombard with the slippery goo.

Police departments in the area reported numerous crashes that occurred as a result of the substance, also called tallow.

Tallow is the rendered form of beef or lamb fat. It is used for soap, cooking and bird feed.

Hazardous materials teams from various fire departments were sent to numerous sites trying to determine the best method to deal with the spill, said Union Pacific spokeswoman Donna Kush.

“We’re incredibly sorry for the trouble this has caused, but more importantly we’re working on a cleanup solution and we’re

working as quickly as we can,” she said. “The hazmat officials are out there to ensure it’s handled correctly.”

What seemed to work the best for roads where the fat had spilled was sand to soak up the goo and provide motorists with traction, said Metra spokeswoman Judy Pardonnet.

Crews continued to add sand to the roads throughout the evening, she said.

Kush said there appeared to be a “heavy concentration” of the spilled fat in the Lombard area. Police officials in Elmhurst said they were working on several accidents as a result of the leak as well. Kush said the leak spanned miles.

Because cars carried the fat over all three sets of tracks, all trains were running at walking speed between Elmhurst and Lombard, Pardonnet said.

Commuter trains were running about 30 minutes late at the start of the evening rush hour.

Some trains were delayed as much as two hours initially, she said.

Saturday train traffic was expected to be normal, she said.

“New” Kids on the Block?

Does everyone remember this boy band from the 80’s? I remember them well because being a young preteen girl at the height of their popularity meant that their marketing was pointed directly my way. I went to 3 of their concerts, had my bedroom wallpapered in New Kids posters, and had everything from tapes (for younger readers – that’s what we played

music on in those days), buttons, t-shirts, books, magazines, and stickers to trading cards, shoelaces, and even a Joey McIntire doll. Yes, it was ridiculous and more than a little embarrassing. But girls will be girls, and the group had a clean-cut, boy band image, so my parents willingly obliged my fanfare.

You may have heard that the band has reunited. Yes, I'm serious, and yes, I'm talking about now, in 2008, when the members of the group are over the age of 30 and some are pushing 40. Why now, you ask? Probably because pop culture has a way of recycling itself. They often resurrect fads decades later when people who were kids at the time of the fad can now enjoy them again as adults (now that they have their own money to spend) and share them with their own kids. They did this with a number of fads from the '80's – My Little Pony, Cabbage Patch Kids, Strawberry Shortcake, Transformers, Star Wars, Indiana Jones, and now, The New Kids on the Block. What perplexes me most of all about this whole thing, is that they didn't change the group at all. They are out there, singing the same songs they sang as teens and early twenty somethings, about dating girls and "Hangin' Tough". They are attempting to perform the same dance moves they made popular decades ago, and results are not pretty. I was one of the biggest fans of the group way back when, and now I say they're terrible. I don't like the music anymore (it was of a genre they used to call bubblegum pop – and it's definitely the type of music you grow out of), they sound terrible singing it, the lyrics are ridiculous, if not downright creepy, coming from near-middle-aged men, and the dance moves are horrible. They are actually going to tour this (circus) act come fall.

So why now? Why do we need an updated version of New Kids on the Block? Actually that's not even right. There's nothing updated about this group except their ages. Everything else is EXACTLY the same! An updated version would be better musically and probably make a whole lot more sense. There's

what I talked about earlier – the fad revival tactic. I guess that's why they did it. But I find it amazing that they found enough people who thought this was such a good idea that they made it happen – including the 5 original members of the group. Some have gone on to mildly successful movie or solo music careers. Some have raised families. But how someone got all 5 to agree to resurrect the New Kids on the Block circa 1991 is astounding.

If you don't believe me about how terrible they are or if you just like to watch train wrecks in action, check this out. Help me figure out who looks more ridiculous – the group or the fans. This video is part one of three, but you'll only want to see the first part, if that, trust me:

MOTORcycles

Typing in CAPS is considered yelling, as far as computers and text messages go. And I'm yelling MOTORCYCLES because that's what you have to do in order to be able to hear yourself talk or even think while one is nearby. With the horrible reality of gas prices these days (holding "steady" at \$3.99 in my area currently), it seems that people are turning in their minivans and SUVs for more fuel efficient vehicles, especially motorcycles.

This is unfortunate for me because I can't stand the things. Normally I'm all for people doing their own thing; if someone wants to ride a motorcycle, why should it bother me? Because simply put, it DOES affect me. I can't stand when I'm walking down the street, talking to my husband or my girls, only to have one of us drowned out by the awful noise of a motorcycle. Some moron on a motorcycle revving his engine even startled one of my kids so badly that she cried! It affects us even when we're in our own car, and the noise of a motorcycle drowns out our conversations, the kids' movie, or even wakes the kids up. Sure, you can roll up the window, but oftentimes it's too late, unless you want to drive around with the window closed. And why should I have to do that? It's MY car; I shouldn't have to be so negatively affected by other people's actions in my own car! And the fact is, these effects come from just one motorcycle. The situation can be especially compounded when there are a whole pack of motorcycles, and they do often travel in packs, which means even louder interference. I don't understand why it is that cars can be ticketed for having loud mufflers, yet motorcycles can drive down the road, revving their noisy engines and being as deafening as they please.

The main reason why I hate motorcycles doesn't even have anything to do with the fact that their racket makes their owner seem very discourteous and not aware of others at all... I also have a major beef with the safety issue motorcycles present. It would be one thing for a rider to drive down the road on a motorcycle, not wearing a helmet – as they often do – if it only affected him... But unfortunately, that is not the case. If any type of car accident were to happen involving a motorcycle, no matter who was at fault, any driver involved would have to live with the guilt for the rest of their lives that someone got hurt. And if a motorcycle is involved in an accident, it is relatively easy for the cyclist to get injured – it's a proven fact, plus I've witnessed 2 such crashes – neither were pretty, and one ended with the motorcycle's *helmeted* occupant being airlifted by helicopter to the trauma center. His helmet was smashed almost flat, and If he hadn't been wearing it, my kids and I and whoever else happened upon that scene would have witnessed a fatality, no doubt.

So now that I've sounded off, I feel better. It's not like I think motorcycles should be banned or anything like that... though if my kids or I get interrupted by the clamor of a motorcycle and I'm having a bad day I might feel differently. And in this age of \$4/gallon gas with no end in sight to the price increase, I can't say I blame people for wanting to lower their transportation bill. I just wish it didn't affect other people so extremely! So if you're a motorcyclist, please be considerate, don't rev your engine unnessessarily, it makes kids cry! Please always have safety as your #1 priority, and ALWAYS wear a helmet – not just for you, but for the rest of us! Helmets and other safety gear a motorcyclist might wear look much cooler to me than the idiots who wear do-rags or shorts while riding... What's a do-rag gonna to do for you anyway in case of an accident, soak up the blood from your head wound?

Walking With Dinosaurs

In case you haven't heard of it, [Walking With Dinosaurs](#) is a traveling show that is based on the BBC documentary of the same name. It is in Fort Wayne, Indiana this week, which isn't too far from us. They've been advertising it heavily, and I've been meaning to check out ticket info, but I kept forgetting. Thanks to our local paper who ran a story about it the other day, I was reminded about it just in time! Seems the tickets are QUITE costly! However, my computer-savvy husband went online and found a discount that saved us SO much money on tickets, but only if we went opening night... So, we dragged all the kids to Fort Wayne to see some dinosaurs on a school night. Let me say, it was SOOO worth it!

It's been a really long time since I was really excited about something that actually ended up measuring up to my expectations. I was really excited about this show; I thought it would be a good show, but I will say that it *EXCEEDED* my expectations! Not only was it visually stunning, It was a perfect show for the whole family. There were lifelike dinosaurs engaging in battles, flying, and scavenging... what's not to like?!? We have kids of all ages and bravery levels, and they were all entertained. Our 8-year-old and our 4-year-old did get a little nervous in the beginning, but their fear quickly turned to excitement and awe once the dinosaurs started appearing. Our 19-month-old LOVED everything about the show. She is getting to the age where it's hard for her to sit still, especially now that she can walk, but she watched every moment of this show, and clapped and laughed so hard that I was even distracted from the dinosaurs at times by my daughter's cuteness. I wasn't distracted too much though, cuz the dinosaurs were totally AWESOME! They were life-size

and SO realistic looking, it was amazing. Our seats were great too – best in the house, front row center. These dinosaurs were even better looking than the ones in the movie [Jurassic Park](#)! Walking With Dinosaurs operates on a \$20 million dollar budget, and it shows!

I would venture to say that this is probably the best professional live show I have ever seen, and that includes musicals from Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, The Phantom of the Opera, Camelot, and Les Miserables to other shows like Monsters Inc. on Ice, Dragon Tales Live, and dinner shows like Medieval Times, Arabian Nights, and Pirates Dinner Adventure in Orlando, Florida. This was fun for the whole family; probably even most fun for my husband and I! If the tickets weren't so pricey, I would definitely go back and see the show again – even with the \$20-30 it cost in gas money alone. My 4-year-old suffered from what I call “fundown” after the show – a feeling of disappointment when an event is over that is so intense for kids, they usually cry or throw tantrums. But I can't say I blame her. When I realized the show was ending, I had my own “fundown” when I realized there weren't going to be any more dinosaurs!

Totally awesome show – wait, that's not even the right word. It was more of an experience than a show. Even better than the dinosaur-themed rides at Disney World and Universal Studios. As we were leaving the coliseum, the rest of the audience seemed very pleased as well. Everyone was smiling and jabbering about the dinosaurs a mile a minute. They also had one actor – who was upstaged by the dinosaurs, of course! – and some other props and effects in the show that made it totally awesome. Also pretty impressive were the rows upon rows of trailers parked outside that carry the dinosaurs from venue to venue. I knew it would take a few semis to cart around all those dinosaurs, but there were probably at least 25 semis parked out there! It is understandable that all these lifesize dinosaurs would create such an entourage, since

the Brachiosaurus alone was 36 feet tall and 56 feet from nose to tail.

If this live show experience is going to be anywhere near your hometown, I highly recommend that you do your best to get tickets. It is a perfect show for the young and old, dinosaur fans, skeptics, or even those who are indifferent to the world's history; I don't see how anyone could NOT enjoy Walking With Dinosaurs!

OOPSIE – UPDATE

Here is an update on a story I posted last week about a man who was pulled over and subsequently backed his car up onto the police car. Seems the officers did manage to find something to charge him with besides the original speeding ticket:



Police Charge Niles Man They Say Backed Onto Squad Car

A Niles man who reversed his car so that it ran on top of a Buffalo Grove police car Friday has been charged with reckless driving.

Henry Raskin, 70, had been pulled over by a police officer around 11:30 a.m. Friday for speeding. He had been driving 58 mph in a 35 mph zone on Dundee Road, police said.

After the officer wrote Raskin a ticket, he hit the gas while he was in reverse and ended up with his vehicle on top of the squad car, police said.

Sgt. Scott Kristiansen said Tuesday that police determined the incident wasn't purely an accident after watching the squad car video and talking to Raskin.

"It appears to be a little bit more than a mistake," he said. "We think it meets the criteria for reckless driving."

Kristiansen said that most drivers if they found they had accidentally reversed in this situation, would have hit the brakes before driving over a police car.

Raskin posted 10 percent of his \$2,000 bond Friday and was released. He has a June court date in Rolling Meadows.