

AllCovered NEWS

HIGHLIGHTS TO HELP YOU THIS WEEK

- Five Ways to Praise Employees
- Is Health Self-Insurance For You?
- Senate Panel OK's 100% Cargo Screening
- Who Owns Cargo From MSC Napoli?

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NOTE: All links to stories in PDF version work – just click them

>> SMALL BUSINESS SECTION <<

SMALL BIZ – FIVE WAYS TO PRAISE

--- Excerpted from an article by Bob Nelson – Link at end ---

Employees have been stressed, squeezed and asked to do more with less time and time again, so it's all the more important to take some time to thank and appreciate your employees for their contributions to the success of your organization.

There are five ways that you can praise employees. Each way means different things to different people and different things to the same person at different times.

--- Personal Praise:

Considered the most important type of praise by employees. It consists of being verbally thanked one-on-one for doing good work and being specifically sought out for such praise by one's manager. The best personal praise is timely, sincere, and specific. Create time to connect with each employee to see how they are doing & to thank them.

--- Written Praise:

Considered to be the next most valued type of praise by employees. It comes in several varieties: from a written note of thanks or a thank you card to a more formal letter of commendation being added to one's personnel file.

--- Electronic Praise:

Similar to written praise, but enables you to leverage positive communication as it occurs in your daily work. In my research, 28% of employees report it is "extremely important" to them to have positive e-mail messages forwarded to them and 65% say it's "extremely or very important" to be copied on positive e-mail messages.

--- Public Praise:

Praise in front of management and peers is valued by most employees. Taking time at the beginning or end of a staff meeting to thank employees or allowing employees to acknowledge one another in a group meeting is effective.

--- Indirect Praise:

This is using any of the above techniques to praise someone and his or her performance to others even if they are not present, knowing that word will get back to the person who you singled out in a positive way

--- Summary:

It doesn't take a lot to make a big difference in how your employees feel about themselves and their work. Make sure to connect with each of your employees in a way that they'll remember throughout the work day.

MORE: http://www.bizjournals.com/extraedge/consultants/return_on_people/2007/01/29/column385.html?hbx=e_sol

5 WAYS TO PRAISE EMPLOYEES

- Personal Praise
- Written Praise
- Electronic Praise
- Public Praise
- Indirect Praise

Strike
JUST FOR FUN:
2006 Darwin Awards
NEXT WEEK
Rewards Pay
Links to source stories at end of excerpts
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HEALTH BIZ – IS “SELF-INSURANCE” FOR YOU?

--- Excerpted from an article by Kathy Robertson – Link at end ---

For companies with 75 employees or more, what are known as “Partially Self-Funded” health insurance programs can often save money.

Constantly rising health insurance premiums have more companies looking at taking greater control of their health and benefits programs.

Self-insurance doesn't work for smaller businesses, which can't spread their risk over a big enough employment pool, but it offers an alternative to a growing number of midsize and large employers.

Employers with private insurance are at the mercy of health plans when it comes to renewal rates, with very little explanation of increases.

With self-insurance, business owners set the coverage and pay the claims, so they know exactly where the money is going. Costs are more volatile, so employers that go this route must have "stop-loss" insurance to pay extraordinary claims, but the additional data about routine claims offers an opportunity to manage the health of the work force better.

Freedom to design a health plan exactly as an employer wishes, choose benefits, and choose the doctor groups employees use in is a major advantage of self-insurance.

In most cases, the employer contracts with a Third Party Administrator (TPA) to manage the day-to-day operations of the health insurance program.

Under a “Partially Self-Funded” program, the employer buys “re-insurance” for major losses, and sets aside a set amount each month to pay for the coverage, just as it would normally pay a monthly premium under a regular off-the-shelf health insurance program from an insurer. In the first years of a partially self-funded health insurance program most companies set aside more than what the program costs them to build up a reserve fund for worst-case scenarios.

The employer sets the types of insurances that will be provided. These can include added benefits such as vision and dental as part of the plan for all employees, or these added benefits can be offered as extra-cost benefits employees can choose to buy themselves. Disability and life insurance options are often also options.

In the first year, self-funded programs may cost as much as off-the-shelf coverage, but the added benefits of predictability, more control, more options, more information on expenses and the likelihood of future savings can make it an investment that pays off.

MORE: <http://www.bizjournals.com/ct/c/22659053>

CONTACT: Gary Allen, Allen Insurance Group for more: gary@allenins.com

IS SELF-FUNDED FOR YOU?

- Do you have 75 employees?
- Can you dedicate the time for initial set-up of the program?
- Can you dedicate the time for monthly review and management of a partially self-funded program?

HEALTH BIZ – DEMOCRATS RE-EVALUATE HEALTH CARE: Democrats now control the US House and the Senate, and have begun setting a new national agenda that party leaders say will include changes in health care benefits. Benefit analysts predict the new Congress will pay more attention to laws addressing health information technology, covering the uninsured, prescription drug prices, mental health parity and resurrecting the Patient Bill of Rights. Yet, experts also say proposed legislation on health saving accounts, consumer-driven health care and medical malpractice reform likely will take a back seat.

MORE: <http://www.benefitnews.com/pfv.cfm?id=10059>

HEALTH BIZ – WAL-MART & UNION CALL FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE: Wal-Mart Stores and a labor union with which the retailer often clashes are joining forces to call for universal health care coverage for all Americans by 2012.

MORE: <http://www.businessinsurance.com/cgi-bin/news.pl?newsId=9463&print=Y>

HEALTH BIZ – FITNESS BENEFITS GAIN AMONG EMPLOYERS:

MORE: <http://www.bizjournals.com/ct/c/22685455>

TECH BIZ – MS RELEASES CRITICAL PATCHES: If you use Microsoft software, be aware last Tuesday Microsoft issued 20 software patches. If you have not already, update your PC.

MORE: http://reviews.cnet.com/4531-10921_7-6693689.html?tag=nl.e724

>>>> TRUCKING SECTION <<<<

TRUCKING – TRACK YOUR FATALITY RISK: An 18-year-old male and an 80-year-old female have the same driving risks. Male drivers have a 77% higher risk of dying in a car accident than women. These traffic statistics are part of a new interactive website developed by Carnegie Mellon University researchers and the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. The website, Traffic Stats, offers details of how traffic fatality risks vary by time of day, vehicle type, age and other categories. The safest road passenger is a 4-year-old strapped in a car seat during morning rush hour.

MORE: <http://www.aaafoundation.org/trafficSTATS/index.cfm>

MORE: <http://www.etrucker.com/apps/news/article.asp?id=58006>

TRUCKING – FMCSA PROPOSES HOUSEHOLD MOVER REGS

The US Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is inviting comments until May 9 on its proposal to require brokers who arrange the transportation of household goods to comply with additional consumer protection requirements. FMCSA says it believes some household goods brokers “are acting deceptively, particularly on the Internet.”

Problems and challenges FMCSA has identified include:

- Minimal or no requirement to disclose contact and nature of operations information;
- No protection of consumers from unlicensed, illegal motor carriers;
- The practice of quoting estimates of charges without providing written documents;
- No requirement for brokers to disclose refund policy for customers' deposits when shipments are cancelled;
- No significant identifiable capital investment, reputation and standing in the community, or insurance concerns;
- Consumer lack of knowledge and experience with moving transactions; and
- Internet brokers providing false or inaccurate information on their websites.

FMCSA says its proposal addresses those problems.

FMCSA also would increase the amount of surety bond or trust fund now required for household goods brokers to \$25,000 from the current \$10,000.

MORE: <http://www.etrucker.com/apps/news/article.asp?id=58143>

TRUCKING – FMCSA OFFERS RAIL CROSSING SAFETY CARDS: The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has a new card drivers can keep with them about highway-rail grade crossing safety. The card, which is small enough to tuck into a visor pocket, has seven tips for preventing train-truck collisions on one side. On the other side, it explains what to do if the vehicle stalls or hangs up on the tracks.

DOWNLOAD AT: www.fmcsa.dot.gov/documents/outreach/visor-vert-both-04.pdf.

TRUCKING – FMCSA SEEKS COMMENTS ON DATA COLLECTION: The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration wants feedback on plans for a new information collection related to Commercial Drivers Licenses (CDLs). FMCSA wants comments indicating whether the proposed collection is needed for the agency to meet its goal of reducing truck crashes. Comments may be sent to the US Department of Transportation, Dockets Management Facility, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh St. SW, Washington, DC 20590, or electronically at <http://dms.dot.gov/submit>. The docket number, which is FMCSA-2006-24843, must be included at the head of the document submitted. The deadline for submissions is April 2.

MORE: <http://www.etrucker.com/apps/news/article.asp?id=58046>

TRUCKING – US DIESEL UP 4.4-CENTS: The US average on-highway retail price of a gallon of diesel rose another 4.4 cents to \$2.476 for the week ending 12 February.

MORE: <http://www.thetrucker.com/News/Stories/2007/2/12/Averagedieselpriescjump44centsagallon.aspx>

TRUCKING – SCHNEIDER GETS OK TO OPEN IN CHINA:

MORE: <http://www.thetrucker.com/News/Stories/2007/2/16/SchneidergetsauthoritytooperateinChina.aspx>

TRUCKING INSURANCE FROM THE TRUCK INSURANCE EXPERTS

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>>>> SECURITY SECTION <<<<

SECURITY – TWIC CLOCK TICKING... 26 MARCH DEADLINE: Costly deadlines are looming for ports and terminals that plan to redraw restricted areas to reduce the number of employees and visitors who require the new Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC). The Transportation Security Administration program begins March 26 at 10 major seaports which have yet to be identified by the federal agency. Those ports will have 90 days to submit revised plans regarding the areas where individuals without TWIC cards will require official escorts and where TWIC-carrying workers can travel without escort.
MORE: <http://www.joc.com/articles/news.asp?sid=41199>

SECURITY – SENATE COMMITTEE OK'S 100% SCREENING: The US Senate Commerce and Transportation Committee last week approved legislation to require the screening of all cargo in the bellies of passenger aircraft within three years. "The steps proposed in this bill will both improve our existing security system and give the Transportation Security Administration the flexibility to combat new and emerging threats," committee Chairman Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) said in a statement. The measure is still a long way from becoming law, which requires passage by the full Senate and House as well as President Bush's signature.
MORE: <http://www.atwonline.com/news/other.html?issueDate=2%2F14%2F2007>

SECURITY – CANADA TOLD TO IMPROVE AIR CARGO SECURITY: The International Civil Aviation Organization has quietly told Canada to beef up air security through improved cargo screening and better training programs. "Although certain measures are in place for cargo security, Canada should further develop security controls," says the report obtained by The Canadian Press. The report says the auditors found some training programs, such as those for aircraft operators and cargo handling companies, were "not comprehensive and/or not fully developed."
MORE: <http://www.edmontonsun.com/News/Canada/2007/02/12/3596662-sun.html>
MORE: <http://www.thestar.com/News/article/181056>

SECURITY – WASHINGTON STATE PROPOSED BOX TAX DRAWS HEAVY FIRE:
MORE: http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/business/303745_container15.html

>>> AIR & OCEAN SECTION <<<

OCEAN – MAERSK SEES 10% CONTAINER GROWTH IN 2007: "This demand will continue to be driven by the increasing international sourcing and consumption of goods. Therefore, we also expect that the demand for international container transportation will continue to grow faster than the world's GDP," says Knud Stubkjaer, the chief executive officer of Danish shipping giant Maersk Line.
MORE: <http://business-times.asiaone.com/sub/shippingtimes/story/0,4574,224300,00.html?>

OCEAN – MATSON HIKES US-CHINA RATES: Matson will implement an across-the-board freight rate increase in its China-Long Beach Express of \$300 per 40-foot container for cargo moving to the West Coast and \$650 per FEU for inland points effective 1 May.
MORE: http://www.americanshipper.com/SNW_story.asp?news=49144

OCEAN – OCEAN RATES UP ON INDIA- ASIA ROUTES: Seventeen lines involved in the trade between India, Southeast Asia and the Far East have announced an eastbound rate increase of \$50 per TEU (20-foot Equivalent Unit).
MORE: <http://www.joc.com/articles/news.asp?sid=41190>

OCEAN – ASIA FREIGHT RATES FIRING: Spot freight rates for the benchmark Asian route were higher compared with week-ago levels, as shipowners took advantage of port congestion in Australia to raise their offers despite thin demand. Spot charter rates for modern panamax tonnages on the US Gulf-to-Japan route were pegged at US\$56-58, about US\$1 higher.
MORE: <http://business-times.asiaone.com/sub/shippingtimes/story/0,4574,224447-1171483140,00.html?>

OCEAN – WHO OWNS IT?

--- Excerpted from Bow Wave newsletter by Sam Ignarski – Link at end ---

You may have seen TV pictures of people grabbing cargo that had washed up on the beach in the UK when the “MSC Napoli” was grounded.

Sam had this from Derek Luxford of Australian solicitors Hicksons:

Who owns the goods? Can you just help yourself in these situations? Can you keep the goods with or without paying anyone for them? Do you have to tell anyone that you have taken the goods?

The answer is much the same in around the world due to the prominence of English maritime law and customs. This is the legal position:

1. No, you can not just help yourself with impunity.
2. The goods still belong to their owner. It might be different if the goods had been washed off a vessel which sank way out at sea. Goods floating around the sea after the ship sinks or which have been jettisoned are called flotsam and jetsam respectively and sometimes a beachcomber might be able to acquire good title to them. Not in this case.
3. You should report your find of the wrecked cargo to the quaintly named “Receiver of Wrecks.” If you do this you may in some circumstances be able to obtain a salvage award as remuneration from salvaging the cargo if it has any marketable value after your salvage efforts. Do not expect much of a reward unless your efforts have involved unusual risk to your own life or property.
4. If you take something from the beach with no intention of returning it to its rightful owner you are a thief and liable to prosecution if you do not return the goods. The insurers of the goods may come after you exercising their subrogated rights.
5. You can always buy the goods from their true owner on a "salvage" basis which will give you a bargain and good title as well as showing you are a good citizen.

MORE: <http://www.wavyline.com>

OCEAN – MSC NAPOLI LOSES SEVEN MORE CONTAINERS:

MORE: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=436617&in_page_id=1770

MORE: http://www.americanshipper.com/SNW_story.asp?news=49643

OCEAN – ANOTHER MSC BOX-SHIP HAS TROUBLES: 2007 is not starting well for Mediterranean Shipping Company. Last week the “MSC Roma” collided with a French trawler in the English Channel, 38 km north of the port of Fecamp. No one was injured and the MSC Roma continued. MSC Roma was on its maiden voyage. The “MSC Napoli” is beached in Lyme Bay in the UK.

MORE: <http://www.seanews.ru/default.asp?l=e&a=l&v=d&g=1&i=30610&n=1>

OCEAN – BOXES UP 2.1% AT LONG BEACH IN JANUARY:

MORE: http://www.americanshipper.com/SNW_story.asp?news=49631

OCEAN – ALLIANCES RESUME ASIA-US ATLANTIC ALL-WATER SERVICE: Ocean carrier members of the Grand Alliance and the New World Alliance plan to resume operation of their joint all-water service from Asia to South Atlantic ports in April. The new EC3 rotation will be Shanghai, Chiwan, Shekou, Hong Kong, Savannah, Norfolk and back to Shanghai.

MORE: <http://www.ioc.com/articles/news.asp?sid=41195>

OCEAN – MSC STARTING US-CENTRAL AMERICAN WEEKLY SERVICE: Mediterranean Shipping Company is starting a weekly Central American service that will connect to all U.S. ports served by the Geneva, Switzerland-based carrier, apart from Long Beach and Boston, via its hub facility in Freeport, Bahamas.

MORE: http://www.americanshipper.com/SNW_story.asp?news=49522

OCEAN – MAERSK STARTING ASIA-RED SEA SERVICE: Maersk Line will start a weekly Asia/Red Sea service 6 March that the Danish carrier said would improve its transit times from China to Aqaba in Jordan by up to seven days.

MORE: http://www.americanshipper.com/SNW_story.asp?news=49642

OCEAN – PSA PLANS PANAMA PORT:

MORE: <http://www.ioc.com/articles/news.asp?type=ocean>

AIR – LH-CARGO UP 7.1% IN JANUARY: Lufthansa reports cargo traffic rose 7.1% in January from a year ago, driven mainly by double-digit gains in the Americas region which grew more than twice as fast as Asia/Pacific routes.
MORE: <http://www.joc.com/articles/news.asp?type=air>

AIR – CATHAY-DRAGONAIR CARGO DOWN 0.1% IN JANUARY:
MORE: http://www.americanshipper.com/SNW_story.asp?news=49640

AIR – AIR CHINA CARGO UP 12.5% IN JANUARY:
MORE: http://www.americanshipper.com/SNW_story.asp?news=49639

AIR – SIA CARGO PROFIT DOWN IN 3Q 2006::
MORE: http://www.americanshipper.com/SNW_story.asp?news=49262

AIR – AF-KLM CARGO DOWN: Air France-KLM says cargo revenue slid in the third fiscal quarter to 789 million euros [\$1.03 billion] from \$1.06 billion in the 2005 period although traffic was broadly unchanged due to lower rates and negative currency movements against the euro, mainly the weakening dollar.
MORE: <http://www.joc.com/articles/news.asp?sid=41203>

AIR – SHANGHAI AIR CARGO TO US: Chinese airline Shanghai Airlines has applied for two new air freight services, a Shanghai/Anchorage/Chicago route to begin in August and a Shanghai/Anchorage/Los Angeles/Dallas route to begin in December.
MORE: http://www.americanshipper.com/SNW_story.asp?news=49263

AIR – FLIGHT DELAYS INCREASE PUSH FOR “PASSENGER BILL OF RIGHTS”:
MORE: <http://news.airwise.com/story/view/1171623052.html>

AIR – BA UNION REJECTS CONTRACT: A union representing ground crew at British Airways said on Monday its members had rejected the airline's plan for lowering the pensions scheme deficit.
MORE: <http://news.airwise.com/story/view/1171346595.html>

AIR – AMERICAN AIRLINES PARENT COMPANY BUY-OUT TARGET?:
MORE: <http://news.airwise.com/story/view/1171625988.html>

AIR – QANTAS BID CLEARS ANOTHER HURDLE:
MORE: <http://news.airwise.com/story/view/1171255871.html>

AIR – NORTHWEST TO EXIT BANKRUPTCY IN JUNE:
MORE: <http://www.atwonline.com/news/story.html?storyID=7946>

AIR – DELTA LOST \$6.2-BILLION IN 2006:
MORE: <http://www.atwonline.com/news/story.html?storyID=7930>

AIR – FOG DISRUPTS DELHI FLIGHTS SATURDAY:
MORE: <http://www.hindu.com/2007/02/18/stories/2007021809180300.htm>

TRADE – SHIPPERS HURT BY CN RAIL STRIKE: No talks are scheduled in a strike by conductors and yard workers against Canadian National Railway. The railroad has continued to operate with management personnel working train crews and yard-switching duties. Some customers said that rail service had suffered.
MORE: <http://www.joc.com/articles/news.asp?sid=41232>

TRADE – DP-WORLD US PORTS SOLD TO AIG: Six major US port operations will come under US ownership after Dubai Ports World cleared a \$50 million hurdle Friday to end a yearlong political conflict over security at the nation's cargo terminals. New York ports had demanded that AIG agree to massive investments in the port facilities holding up the sale. Friday officials said they had struck a deal to resolve the impasse, with AIG agreeing to make more than \$40 million worth of infrastructure improvements, as well as a direct payment of \$10 million to the Port Authority.
MORE: <http://www.newsday.com/news/local/wire/newyork/ny-bc-ny--portssecurity0216feb16.0.2375623.story?coll=ny-region-apnewyork>

>>>>> JUST FOR FUN <<<<<

(These are shared by readers – Please share yours. Thanks. Mike)

2006 DARWIN AWARDS

The Darwin Awards honor those who improve the species by removing themselves from it. Honorable Mentions are those who do not accidentally kill themselves, but come close.

The rankings are made by readers and contributors at www.darwinawards.com.

2006 Honorable Mention #3 - Snake In the Grass: A hiker in Scotland picked up a grass snake so his brother could take a picture. Just as he reached for it, a black serpent slithered into view, so he grabbed that one, too. It was a Black Adder, Britain's only venomous snake. Both reptiles sank their fangs into the 44-year-old, who responded with serious anaphylactic shock. He gradually and painfully recovered in the hospital. His excuse for his rash act? He didn't think venomous snakes inhabited the whole of Scotland

2006 Honorable Mention #2- Severely Faithful: (26 May 2006, Malaysia) A woman found a text message another woman left on her husband's phone. A bitter spousal argument ensued. In a desperate effort to prove his faithfulness, her 41-year-old husband rushed from the room and cut off his own penis. In earlier times, he would have succeeded in ending his reproductive days. But modern medicine is miraculous. The organ was reattached by doctors, and the man earns an Honorable Mention for his heroic, but ultimately unsuccessful, effort to remove himself from the gene pool.

2006 Honorable Mention #1 – Flyswatter: (April 2004, California) An adult education teacher gave 25 students an impromptu lesson in safety during his safety class. Using opaque reasoning, Teach figured the 40-mm shell he had found on a hunting trip must be inert. He kept the round and used it as a paperweight on his desk. After all, ordnance is such a unique conversation piece. But more notably, this particular ordnance was the teacher's ticking ticket to fame. One spring morning, a bug crawled across his desk. Should he squash it with a tissue? Sweep it out the door? Leave it to pursue its happy existence, and continue on with his lesson? No; the teacher picked another alternative. He took up the "inert" artillery shell and slammed it onto the short-lived insect. The impact set off the primer, and the resulting explosion caused him burns and shrapnel lacerations on his hand, forearm, and torso. No one else in the classroom was hurt. To the teacher's further consolation, his actions did succeed in one respect: the bug was eliminated.

2006 Darwin Award #7 - Copper Kite: (19 March 2006, Belize) Benjamin Franklin reputedly flew his kite in a lightning storm, going on to discover that lightning equals electricity. However, certain precautions must be taken to avoid sudden electrocution. Kennon Hernandez, 26, replicated the conditions of Ben Franklin's experiment, but without Ben's sensible safety precautions. Kennon was flying a kite with a short string that he had extended with a length of thin copper wire. The copper made contact with a high-tension line, sending a bolt of electrical lightning towards the man. Just bad luck? Kennon's father told listeners his son was an electrician, and "should have known better." Kennon is survived by his parents, six sisters, and five brothers.

2006 Darwin Award #6 - Faithful Flotation: (August 2006, Libreville, Gabon) In August, a congregation's 35-year old pastor insisted one could literally walk on water, if one only had enough faith. Big and bold was his speech. He extolled the heavenly power possessed by a faithful man with such force that he may well have convinced himself. Whether or not he believed in his heart, his sermons left room for only shame should he leave his own faith untested. Thus, the pastor set out to walk across a major estuary, the path of a 20-minute ferry ride. But the man could not swim. Lacking the miraculous powers of David Copperfield, let alone holy Jesus Christ, this ill-fated cleric found only a Darwin Award at the end of his final path.

2006 Darwin Award #5 - Score For Goliath: (September 2006, Florida) A fearsome mythical giant was felled by a humble slingshot. But a modern speargun vs. an underwater leviathan is another tale altogether, as a Florida man discovered. Outlawed in 1990, hunting Goliath-sized groupers remains surprisingly popular. These fish can weigh hundreds of pounds, yet there are underwater hunters who choose to tether themselves to such muscular sea creatures. However unlikely a pursuit, the poaching of groupers by divers and snorkelers continues, in defiance of both the law and common sense. Of this elite group, our Darwin Award winner distinguished himself yet further by disregarding one essential spearfishing precaution. By embarking on this hunt without a knife to cut himself loose, the "fit and experienced snorkeler" was guaranteeing that his next attack on a giant grouper would be his last. Why anyone thinks it's a good idea to tether yourself to a fish twice your size, I don't know. Some time later, the body of the spearfisher was found pinned to the coral, 17 feet underwater. Three coils of line were wrapped around his wrist, and one very dead grouper was impaled at the other end of the line. In those final hours, the tables were turned, and the fish was given an opportunity to reflect on the experience of "catching a person."

2006 Darwin Award #4 - Missed Stop Mis-Step: (New York) "My father works as an investigator for an insurance company, a job he frequently reminds me of how much he hates. One of his major clients is a train station. On a day not unlike any other, a man awoke on a train to find that he had missed his stop. Instead of looking out the window, or asking another passenger where the train was, he ripped open the doors of the train and threw himself through them, much to the astonishment of onlooking passengers. "Had the ill-fated passenger taken the time to look out the window before leaping off the train, he would have noticed that it was moving in excess of 50 MPH, and it was also moving over a bridge. "Look before you leap." He died at the scene in the Hudson River. "My father investigated this case for the insurance company. The family of the deceased was suing because 'you should not be able to open doors on a moving train.' My dad's defense was, 'you should not open doors on a moving train.' I imagine the case was either dropped or settled."

2006 Darwin Award #3 - Hammer Of Doom: (August 2006, Brazil) August brings us a winner from Brazil, who tried to disassemble a Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) by driving back and forth over it with a car. This technique was ineffective, so he escalated to pounding the RPG with a sledgehammer. The second try worked--in a sense. The explosion proved fatal to one man, six cars, and the repair shop wherein the efforts took place. 14 more RPG grenades were found in a car parked nearby. Police believe the ammunition was being scavenged to sell as scrap metal. If it wasn't scrap then, it certainly is now!

2006 Darwin Award #2 - High On Life: (3 June 2006, Florida) Two more candidates have thrown themselves into the running for a Darwin Award. The feet of Jason and Sara, both 21, were found protruding from a deflated, huge helium advertising balloon. Jason was a college student, and Sara attended community college, but apparently their education had glossed over the importance of oxygen. The pair pulled down the 8' balloon, and climbed inside. Their last words consisted of high-pitched, incoherent giggling as they slowly passed out and passed into the hereafter. Sheriff's deputies said the two were not victims of foul play. No drugs or alcohol were found. The medical examiner reported that helium inhalation was a significant factor in their deaths. A family member said "Sara was mischievous, to be honest. She liked fun and it cost her."

2006 Darwin Award Winner - Stubbed Out: (17 April 2006, England) There's always someone who thinks good advice doesn't apply to him. For example, if a doctor advises that the one thing you must not do is go near a flame, as you are going to be covered with a flammable material, most people would take this advice onboard, and not strike a match until the flammable material has been removed. However, Phillip, 60, knew better than his doctor. Phillip was in the hospital to treat a skin disease, said treatment consisting of being smeared in paraffin-based cream. Phillip was warned that the cream would ignite, so he definitely should NOT smoke. But he just couldn't live without that cigarette." Smoking was not permitted anywhere on the ward, but Phillip took this setback in stride, and sneaked out onto a fire escape. Once he was hidden, he lit up... inhaled... and peace descended as he got his nicotine fix. Things went downhill only after he finished his cigarette, at the moment he ground out the butt with his heel. The paraffin cream had been absorbed by his clothing. As his heel touched the butt, fumes from his pajamas ignited. The resulting inferno "cremated" his skin condition, and left first-degree burns on much of his body. Despite excellent treatment, he died in intensive care.

If you have curious, interesting, funny or thoughtful items to share in "Just For Fun", Email them to mike.miller@allcovered.net . Thanks.

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