

Montana
Real News

I'm
with
Ski
Busey



In manic depressive mood swings, in search of fireworks, alcohol, brain stem disconnect, and any other stimuli that the Fourth of July Weekend could offer, the publisher goes West to join forces with the Real News Western Bureau, for an all-out assault on good taste, humor, driving skills, buffalo steaks, satellite television morphine like instant addictions, welcome to the World of the Montana Real News, July 2003 Edition.

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STOP THE PRESSES; FIRE UP THE BBQ GRILL

JULY 2, 2003: VACATION, during a Rocky called the Chez Pablo answering machine after receiving a bizarre email from Ski, the rogue publisher of the Real News and other assorted brain splatter.

He was worried that Ski would not be able to make it to his Summit in Bozeman, Montana. Instead, he feared that he would click on the 10 p.m. news to hear the story of a Chicago man's insane low bass mumbling chant of VACATION,

during a Loop rampage.

The unknown cause? After four hours of intense data entry input into the office computers, the system crashes wiping out all the data entry, and destroying the master data files. Ski was in the midst of getting this financial reporting info-processing done the day before leaving for the long holiday weekend. It turned into a hellish nightmare of angry cursing.

Staff had to stay clear. After two hours of reconstructive surgery, restarts, re-bombs, and hair pulling, the system gets back to its "pre-disaster" form. But it is too late to accomplish ANYTHING. An entire day wasted in the default one-man tech department.

In no mood to update the Ski sites (skirealnews.com; cyberbarf.com or pindermedia.com), a flurry of vile emails hit the address list.

In retrospect, probably exaggerated. But it sure got the attention of the authorities.

Originally pegged as a long anticipated sequel to the 1994 Bachelor Summit, and further refined to the My Life Sucks Summit (coined prior to the office tech meltdown), the whole thing dissolves into a tornadic vortex of eye-rolling, head shaking, nervous laughter and cursing soundtrack called "I'm with Ski Busey."



“Take your worst day at work, then put ten exponentially to that number,” Ski said on the telephone on the eve of his trip. After reading the fine print on the NWA e-ticket, he took out the measuring tape for the bag he was going to bring, finding it one inch to big in two of the three dimension restrictions. Great. Not to fool with security gate issues, he would have to check-through this adapted computer-overnight luggage carrier.

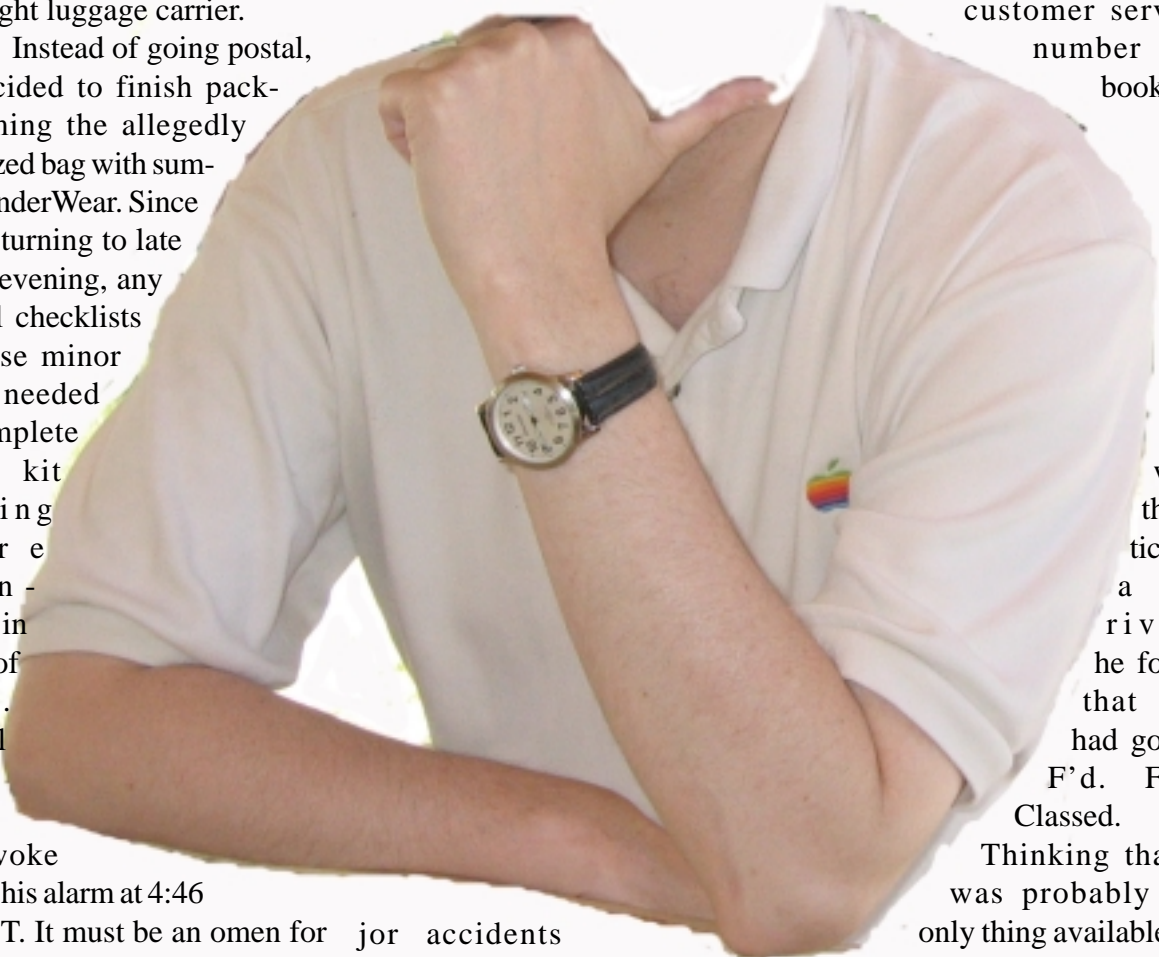
Instead of going postal, he decided to finish pack-cramming the allegedly oversized bag with summer pinderWear. Since it was turning to late in the evening, any mental checklists of those minor items needed to complete toilet kit packing were abandoned in favor of sleep. Restful sleep.

He awoke before his alarm at 4:46 a.m. CT. It must be an omen for bad traffic, unruly delays. He stomped through the townhouse as dawn broke, and beat his 6 a.m. alarm out the door.



There was no traffic on this Thursday morning. The I-90 rush hour normally starts gridlock before 6 a.m. with ma-

The Northwest counter was almost vacant. Only one person waiting at the two stations, first class and coach. He had gotten the runaround trying to e-ticket his flight on nwa.com a month earlier. In order to book a flight, you needed a new frequent flyer number. In order to get one, you had to log into another site page, which refused to load or process information. So Ski called the customer service number to book his flight.



major accidents and tie-ups. But on this fine, clear day, nothing! Parked, locked and in the terminal before 6:30 a.m. for the 9 a.m. flight.

and when the e-tickets arrived, he found that he had gotten F'd. First Classed.

Thinking that it was probably the only thing available for the summer rush to Big Sky-Yellowstone country, he thought of nothing further, and bite the bullet to go West.



THE EARLY BIRD CATCHES THE SCAM

The station person quickly typed in the e-ticket information and asked if I was checking any bags. I said one.

At the next station was the huge luggage scanner, some monster atom accelerator discarded at a Fermi Lab garage sale. But the first class attendant merely motioned a security checker to the luggage stand, tied off the zipper, and put into the carousel without being x-rayed to dust.

She then asked if I wanted to be change flights for the 8 a.m. I said yes, more time to meet a connection flight. She said that was a good idea because there was "plenty of seats." This confirmed my worst suspicions about the customer service booking agent a month earlier; I was getting a higher ticket price on an empty flight, first class or not first class.

Within two minutes, the deal was done and boarding passes stapled together. Ninety minutes to kill at O'Hare. As fun as waiting in the dentist's foyer.

Through the people security gate, all metal and cell phone in the briefcase or tray, and I am zipping through unmolested to Gate E11.

The radio station claimed

that 37 million people would be on the road this weekend. Clearly, they were not driving to the major airports. The place was almost abandoned by lack of traffic. The normal passenger was not hiding in the restrooms inhaling illegal cigs to get a nicotine fix before boarding because the men's room was pumping full volume jazz music to get people out quicker.

The flight was patently uneventful. From the first class three rows of oversized recliners, came the breakfast bar, and reusable glass glasses. That is the only difference from first class and coach: the glassware?? The twisting knife in the back of the full fare first class ticket rode me for the entire hour flight to Minneapolis-St. Paul.

The pilots tried to do a quick stop-stall as the plane entered the airport airspace at 25,000 feet. The braking took place right over the airfield, bearing in mind that the pilots may have overshot the field. A slow, roundabout circle followed, where we could view every square foot of MSP real estate. Note: there are an overpopulation of trees in this city.

A hard thud and stress braking for a few football fields, the plane taxied to the gate, avoiding a city police car parked on the concrete apron.

The C2 waiting area was very light on passengers and

heavy on empty seats.

Empty airports breed boredom. The MSP airport has dramatically changed since the last time I was here. The concourses have been revamped. The mid-course security stations have been eliminated. Within eye shot is a flight status monitor. Every few gates there are new, and different food and convenience newsstands. Wandering down C-concourse, the Maui Taco-Surf Bar, video arcade, a Miami Grill, a Starbuck's book store, Pizza Huts, then turn a corner, a full-sized TGIFridays, then a kids play area, a food court with an A&W Root Beer stand. This place has more and diverse vendors than O'Hare.

But the coolest thing was next to a phone bank. It was gray plastic office divider with a display screen advertising "The Gate Station." The Gate Station is an internet kiosk, complete with the all the functions of a full metal work cubicle, including a drink holder! (For a review of this service, see the July, 2003 issue of cyberbarf.com) After rambling around with this interesting diversion, it was off to buy the local paper and chill for the next hour.

I notice that the young 20 something women milling about the concourse are into the "whole girl" concept of wearing a tight belly shirt which shows off more than most would consider good.



In the post-9/11 era, it is apparent that some young women reacted by buying big security dogs, getting a commitment to marriage, having kids, or living everyday to the hilt including losing the diet mania of the past. Men have gone to seed, too, but we don't wear a shirt six sizes too small in order to expose an unfashionable beer belly unless we lose total control and pass out in a gutter behind a bar and the rats have begun to gnaw the beer soaked cotton.

One must say the women in the northland appear healthy and content with their appearance. So who is really to complain?

While reading the local paper in a waiting area, a southern belle who in Wisconsin hunting circles would proclaim she had a ten point rack, was adamant on her cell phone. She was halfway across the waiting area, on her feet, waving one hand, and pacing around her carry-on luggage. Her dishwasher brown pony tail

bobbed with each emphatic sentence.

She was quite pushy and vocal on the phone, and one could clearly hear her say "just call my attorney" and "I want my personal documents!" The lat-

ter phrase was repeated at least five times during this conversation as she paced the room, waving her free arm in dramatic gestures.

She continued to stress her demand for her personal documents from her office. She ended the session with "have a nice Fourth." She grabbed her two bags and bolted down the concourse.

One could only assume that she just got fired from her

job or was going through a nasty divorce-like situation. An employer who cuts staff as they are travelling on a long holiday weekend is cold. Blood cold.

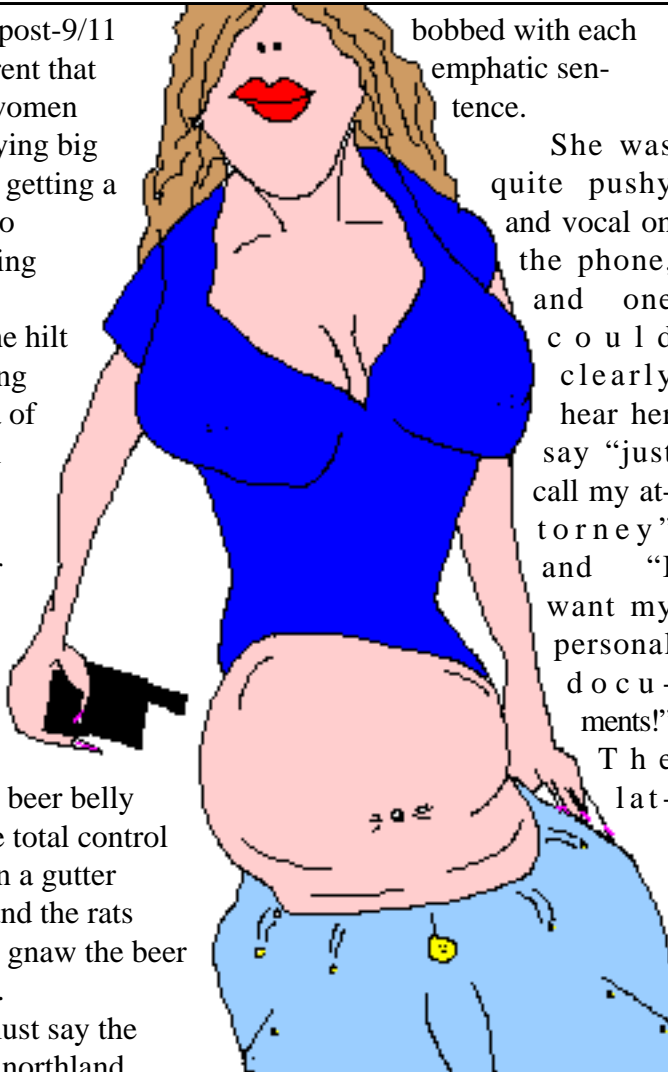
But such matters of personnel and personal tragedy have no effect on me on this day because I am on my own long weekend.

Twenty minutes later, after skimming the rest of the local paper, I am walking down the concourse toward my connection flight when I hear a loud, boisterous southern voice. I glance into the Surf Bar to see the clear visible white bra lines through the shear top of the southern belle. She was making loud talk with a bearded construction worker two stools away. The bartender, who had no one else to serve this early in the morning, kept his distance as she revelled in her story.

She had the same wild arm gestures as her cell phone routine while her Corona bottle sat half-filled. Drinking early for a reason added to the suspicion.

She finished the bottle (no glass) and pulled from her purse a bill, and ordered another. She got this bottle, and within two minutes, had guzzled it dry. In a flash, she bolts up and shrugs her shoulders and leaves the bar back down the concourse.

The construction worker merely sat motionless; numb by the encounter.





TOUCHDOWN FOR THE HOME TEAM

The connecting flight to Bozeman had a few more passengers than the first flight of the day. I had an aisle seat. I was the first in the plane, and waited for the others to arrive. A woman with crutches stopped by my seat, and said that she was in Seat A (window), and I immediately said I'd move over because of her condition. She was thankful for the opportunity to be on the aisle.

Later she told me that she had broken her leg in 11 places when a dog undercut her legs when she was moving furniture around her patio. At the last minute she decided to go with her husband to visit relatives in Montana because after 6 weeks she was cleared to use crutches to move about. It puts other matters into perspective.

The flight was normal, except that on this foray instead of a breakfast candy bar, the flight attendant brought us a huge ham and swiss sandwich roll, salad and large slice of New York cheesecake. Damn. It was a flashback to the old days when airlines actually served recognizable food in the cabin.

The flight landed with NWA procedural normalcy in hard breaking, but one time, at Gallatin Field, Bozeman.

There were a few people in the terminal ground floor waiting for passengers. Rocky was not among them. The entire flight stood around the lone baggage claim area waiting for any movement from the ground crew. With no other flights landing, there was no conflict for use of the carousel.

About ten minutes pass when I see Rocky motoring around a clan of campers. He was wearing the official Real News baseball cap, accented with a micro-brim flashlight. "Glad to see ya," he says before stating that he was late because of "the traffic." Traffic in Bozoland? That was the last thing I imagined would trip up the trip.

He also foreshadowed the fact that the baggage handlers were incompetent idiots so he prepared to wait 45 minutes to an hour before the first bag hits the metal bin. He was right. It was almost an hour before the first bags began to crawl around the shoulder to shoulder passenger line.

My priority bag was one of the last to make its way down the line. A quick snatch and we are off to the parking lot. The heat was on. A dry heat, but the temps had been reaching mid 80s all week.

As we are in line, Rocky explains that the first half hour of parking is free. I then remind him of the procedural history of

baggage claim being 45 minutes, which means parking is not free. It immediately gets the discussion brewing toward conspiracy theories and bribes of the ground crew for kickbacks or work slowdowns to squeeze a few dollars from each vehicle.

After Rocky pays, he is behind an SUV in the left turn out lane, where he is heading to get back to Bozeman. The SUV does not move; then a man escorts a dazed woman around the vehicle and into the passenger seat. Insane. The urban curse of the zombie crosswalkers, as I call the rampant idiots recently not looking at all while using the crosswalks in Chicago, have turned others into pod-people in Big Sky country. Rocky curses their pea brains, pulls out into the right turn lane, and guns it around the blockade.

Rocky needs to do his errands around town. I am in no hurry; driver and host rules. His gas gauge is on fumes, so one thing is petrol. But there is an apparent gasoline shortage in town because each Town Pump is jammed with vehicles. We head to the KMart for personal items. I find a Mars squad light on sale. I tell Rocky he should buy it, and when we hit Kewanee next weekend, he should pull up behind Mr. Hash on the dark country road and turn it on. Rocky looks at me like I'm nuts, and does the mature thing. No!



he says.

A run to the grocery store yields an overly customer friendly bread aisle manager who goes into the stockroom to find the wheat hamburger buns Rocky normally buys. He almost turns into Rocky's personal shopper. The grill fixings of brauts and hamburger are purchased. We are on final cruise toward home.

The town has dramatically changed since 1994. It is in the Boom Town syndrome of the rest of new construction America. It is growing too fast. Too many big box strip malls, and vacant office buildings sprouting like weeds. Later in the afternoon we count more than 11 grocery stores for a town of less than 20,000. That is an insane per capita distribution curve.

We finally get into a gas station to fill and de-bug the windshield. However, before we turn into the station, at the cross street there is a green van with a bicycle wedged under the front bumper. The fire trucks have taken half of the intersection. An ambulance must have taken the rider away before we arrived on scene. Another zombie crosswalker mental note.

We zoom past the campus of Montana State University toward the outskirts of town where Rancho de Rogstad is located. As we turn off the highway to the subdivision frontage road, Rocky slows the vehicle

because of the gravel pothole condition of the street.

In the first vacant lot down the street, Rocky exclaims at the site of a small, thin red fox loping through the field. He may be out in the country, but not that far out.

We unpack at the homestead, and Rocky is immediately on course to flip through his satellite dish channels. He lands on one of his favorite stations, TechTV, were the nubile techbabe reporters are his current raves.

TechTV is like a San Francisco campus radio station broadcasting from a trendy loft with the carefree, natural banter of a frat house. Topics of digital shoplifting, an internet vandalism contest, dancing hamster graphics, are normal events on this station. I immediately tell Rocky that they "should not substitute cocaine for creamer in the coffee room."

The host gets into an interview with a person who has been alleged to be involved in a digital pyramid marketing scheme. Then there is a game segment, and software program cheats and customization.

Rocky is right. The twentysomething techbabes are very cute, smart, witty and computer savvy. What more can one want in life? Apparently host Morgan Webb only wants a home Macintosh computer. Call me!

Rocky bursts out laughing at a geek's t-shirt. It says "Macintosh for Productivity. Linux for Development. Palm for Mobility. Windows for Solitaire." "I got to get one of those shirts," Rocky laughs.

The backyard porch is kilned with an electric grill set to China Syndrome. The heating elements glow fiercely like carbon rods at a nuclear meltdown. The brauts are the metal, as the sun begins to drift down. The backyard is quiet; an unobstructed view to the forest mountains. The only intruder is Rocky's new nemesis, who I call, Bugs.

Apparently this rabbit has found a happy buffet of weeds and clover in Rock's yard. He also got into the garage one day, and played hide and seek with the Man for a day.

Rock is hoping that the fox will get his unwanted guest. Montana residents have a black and white hunting mentality.

It is probably a result of watching too many hours of the Game Show Network. Games like Cram It, where sleep deprived co-eds try to answer quiz questions while their opponents keep active in large hamster wheels. Or, Russian Roulette, a weak sister of MTV's old Remote Control where if you lose a question, you spin a lever and possibly fall through a trap door through the round stage.



Then there is Friend or Foe, where ex-MTV jock Kennedy tries to be Ashley Banfield-like in a quiz show about backstabbing greed. The winning team in the end has a choice to either split the pot as friends or try to steal the whole wad by electing to be a foe. Two foes means they both lose the money. Rocky says that happens often. So what is the point?

The night ends with the otherwise pointless New Tom "I wannabee Letterman, Conan, Kilbourne, Kimmel Lite" Green Show. It is another exhibit in the case of where once you get on television, you never get off television.

As the remote control battery fades with the third MGD, we call it quits for Day One.

VIAGRA TRAIL MIX

The morning constitutional on Independence Day was to go hiking to Palisades Falls in the Gallatin National Forest. With no hangover, and a fairly early start, no problem even though the thought of exercise on vacation should be equated with an exorcism.

The trail was not steep. The passage through the natural setting of fallen trees and moth sized mosquitoes was uneventful. As the grade went steeper near the end of the trail twists, a small creek began to appear, and the temperature began to cool. At the final destination, the falls came cascading over the rim of a canyon and into a rocky laden ravine. The temperature fell to very cool to match the scene. It is Nature's natural air conditioning system.

A few guys in military fatigues were pretending to be mountain goats as they attempted to navigate to the top of the falls over the large, but loose rocks.

Not to be semi-undone, I traverse up the slope to get a better photographic angle, while I send the Bureau Chief toward the summit to catch the Shot of the Day. (See picture on next page).

On the way down, I had to do a little "rock surfing" as gravity and non-hiking boot sneakers gave way.



STAFF BOX

The dedicated fools who contribute to the demise of society by writing bluntly about their own adventures.

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(skirealnews@skirealnews.com)

ROCKY MOUNTAIN
BUREAU CHIEF Crag Antler

CONSERVATIVE LIAISON Rush Rogstad

WEB HOST Rocky (descendingspiral.com)

GOPHER Bill Clinton

OUTSIDE STAFF Bugs the Gardner

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No bumps. No bruises. We watched the youngsters continue to hop around the boulders, occasionally letting go mini-landslides while their co-campers watched in agony.

The last guy down the rockslide was leaping from rock to rock like the stones were hot lava, barely keeping his balance.

Rock took the camp-oree crews' digital picture for them (it was his alleged good turn for the day).

Then the crowds began to wander up the trail, each with a bigger and bigger dog panting, sweating and drooling toward our rock ledge seats.

The youth campers pack up. A young guy puts on a trendy Eddie Bauer backpack with a hose attachment to a hidden gallon of vodka. They slurp some liquid and head down the mountain ahead of us.

More families come past us as we make the easy descent to the parking area. The youth campers peel gravel in their old dusty pick-up trucks. We loiter home to the homestead for lunch and more channel surfing.

Rocky is introducing me to more of his current techbabes from TechTV. They are reading emails on the air, and looking good in their jogging shorts and tight tops. I suggest to Rocky when he emails them again to use the following lines as attention



Ski positions himself to get a good shot of Rocky at the Falls. Below, Ski rock surfs to safety. Real News Action Pictures.

grabbers:

“I need one of your eggs” and “Sara, you left your panties at my place.”

Then there was a quick tip on using Photoshop to make realistic bullet holes in a



metal highway sign. Why would anyone need to know how to do that? Remember this is the channel that reviews one-shooter action games with the high octane lust of each and every blood splattering headshot.

Last night on X-Play, the game review show, the host

drooled to orgasm over the shooter game called XIII. He kept showing a variety of headshot kills like they were his prized children. It was gut busting hilarious. So Rocky suggests to get air flights moving along, he'd use his laser pointer when the flight attendant is doing the



safety speech before take-off. “Red dot headshot.” I kept reminding Rocky that I don’t do criminal law. He did not seem to care that much considering the state of airline ser-



vice. He got several new gadgets in the mail, including a four-in-one flashlight, laser pointer that can show a point an extremely long way away. Anything to keep his attention diverted to other matters at hand, including cleaning, sleeping, working, etc.

More hip action on TechTV as the game review show has a band called 14 Year Old Girls in studio playing songs between segments. I finally realize that this television channel is like the old college radio station where the attitude was “everything goes” so long as you were professional about it. Another regret because we should have thought of this before they did. Another wasted opportunity to be ultra-cool.

Rocky is cooling himself off with another 64 oz. refill. He has already consumed more than 128 oz of Diet Rite since I arrived. I don’t know if that is cause

or effect, but his septic tank may beat the Mars lander in orbit.

More tech babes with those damn Ashley Banfield glasses. Is she the role model for all currently employed quasi-journalism twentysomething newsbabes?

THE WORLD HAS GONE MAD AGAIN

A news bulletin. The world’s longest french fry, measuring 6.75 inches, has been sold on eBay for \$202.50.

The band only plays songs about video games. Now that is typecasting to an extreme.

A magazine is asking the question, who is the sexist vegetarian alive. They are alive? The Lewis & Clark expedition averaged 9 pounds of meat per day in order to survive their journey. Who needs vegheads?

We run toward campus to see if the old Karl Marx pizza place is open for business. The Mall is crowded with blockades for collect the \$8 parking for the free evening fireworks show. Even the parking lots across the street were charging for space.

As we motored back down the highway, the police tape stretched for a half mile along the shoulder, protecting an empty field from trespassers. We concluded it was a waste.

The pizza parlor was empty when we walked in. We ordered a large and drinks and waited for anyone else to show up. Only a few couples came in; the wait staff always outnumbered the customers. Rocky asked one young lady if she was getting double time for working on the 4th. From under a armful of pizza platters, “I wish.” Clearly, no one happy to be slinging the cheese poison that day.

The plan was to return to the Ranch and watch the public and private firework shows. Rocky had promised 360 degrees of show.

The police scanner started squawking before sundown. Dispatch an ambulance near the “M” for a motorcycle and deer accident with injuries. Dispatch ambulance for Honda and deer accident with the deer still being alive. Dispatch back up to roust 5 vagrants at the WalMart. Report of one of the accident drivers having alleged four DUIs and a revoked license. Report of three children abandoned at the park by their mother, who left to “go over and hurt Nicky.” Dispatcher strongly urges a patrol to go snatch those kids. At 10:05 p.m., the first complaint by a neighbor about someone lighting off fireworks. Ten minutes later, a call comes in of a “possible shooting” from an address that does not exist. A few minutes later, a fire depart-



ment unit is dispatched to a car that is fully engulfed, located across the street from the fire house!

Rocky's trespassing rabbit, Bugs, just sat and stared at us for most of the early evening, driving Rocky to curse his existence. How can

one little bunny rabbit occupy an educator's mind? Well, in the quiet preserve of the underdeveloped open spaces of Montana, the rabbit has found the subdivision the perfect open range. In urban Chicago, my brother has found the remains of rabbits in his yard; coyotes have taken up the suburban landscape for their hunting ground. In the food chain, coyotes eat fox, fox eat smaller animals like rabbits, rabbits eat weeds. I don't know why Rocky is obsessed with the ill-proposed fate of Bugs unless he fears coming home to find a hundred or so furballs nesting in his multiple living room lazy-boy recliners.

The neighbors did not wait for darkness to fall to begin lighting roman candles, fire balls and full blown firecrackers. Throughout the evening, it ap-

peared that some neighbors were in intense competition for a better show. The fireworks stands around town were packed in the late afternoon so there was plenty of black powder to be burned that night.

The public show lasted a good fifty minutes, creating a large metallic white cloud that engulfed the campus community. A local radio station played rock n roll, interrupted by a weird "taps" solo, during the public fire display.

The show ended just in time for the last event of the evening, the network debut of the South Park movie. I had not realized that Rocky had not seen this animated cursefest. So it was locked and loaded in front of the big screen. The first 18 minutes of the movie were commercial free!

During the movie, Rocky nearly choked to death on the leftover pizza slice when he heard "I don't trust anything that bleeds for 5 days and does not die!"

A few more gutbusting laughter spasms well past midnight propels our mental faculties begin to rebel and shut down.

ANOTHER DAY ANOTHER ROAD TRIP

Saturday morning in the post-firework world was slow going at first. The television only pleaded for adultADD, classic oldie albums and female protection products. Rocky went on the adultADD site to find that it contained only four generalized tests to diagnose you as a potential ADD candidate (the site was sponsored by a drug company, too.) Anyone who has day-dreamed is a candidate for heavy medication in todays chemical dependency, free medical care society.

On the road heading toward Dillon, Western Montana University, where Rock works. At a stop light in Bozeman, a dirt biker nearly flies over the handlebars when he starts up when the traffic light turns green. The bike bucks the rider for a good fifty feet until he stops it on the shoulder beyond the intersection. How stupid or incompetent can one be?

On the Interstate, Rocky is searching for radio tunes, and comes across a station that is on but is pumping no sound. Apparently, I assume, the engineer has overslept from the fireworks firewater and forgot to open the station door or is sitting in jail from one of those police calls.



The sojourn to Dillon had two purposes: first Rocky wanted to clear his office email, and second his boss was getting married in a state park that afternoon. He had to make an appearance.

During the ceremony, in the background, a family was coming back to the boat launch after a morning of fishing. A stepfather figure picks up his son over his shoulder and throws him into the creek. The boy comes up soaking wet and cursing. It was a strange contrast to the laid back wedding only a few hundred feet away.

Afterward, a run toward Ennis, a tourist fishing town. Another gas line at a Town Pump where the customers line up inside and do the stupidest things, like give expired credit cards to the attendant, or write a check for \$2.53.

Just out of town, Rocky is cursing a grandmother driving a trailer that is stalling the single lane traffic. A few miles later, the trailer driver bolts around a truck and passes over the rise.

A few miles later, we find that wagon and trailer on the shoulder,



a passenger “mooning” traffic next to the blown trailer tire. A fitting end to their day.

Rocky is trying to navigate to Buck’s T-4 for the required buffalo steak dinner. He can’t quite recall which route to take so we stop for a few moments so he can digest a map.

We are back grinding through the national park roads as the daytrippers begin their sunstroked journeys to their ho-

tel beds.

Our waitress is some young lady named Syringe. the restaurant is empty which is strange for a Saturday night. The food was good as usual, with too much to digest.

A lazy ride back home through the new rich mountain side Californication of the area where monster summer homes are being built. But none compare to the Montana sunset.

