<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report</th>
<th>Report Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I      | Dog Shoots Itself While Looking for a Water Dish  
         Pro Golfer Shoots a Birdie without Reaching the Green |
| II     | Frustrated Woman Fries Husband  
         Armed Robber Leaves His Call-back Number |
| III    | The Spoils of Kiddie Litter  
         Psychologists Claim Having Choices in Life is Life-Threatening |
| IV     | People Prefer Flowers to Snakes  
         My Drinking is Your Problem |
| V      | 7-Eleven Store Robbed of 10 Boxes of Condoms by Man in Wheel Chair  
         Close the Ports!  
         Fat People Got Every Reason to Dance!  
         “Talk English Hoss-ette!” |
| VI     | Air Fives Replace High Fives  
         The Bobbles of John Wayne and Lorena Bobbitt |
| VII    | “Bambi” and “G Force”  
         Make the Punishment Fit the Crime  
         “Facebook” for Kids |
| VIII   | Harvard Students Suffering from Malnutrition  
         Airports from Nowhere to Nowhere  
         Divorce, American Style |
| IX     | Michael Vick Humbled Enough to Rise like Phoenix  
         Sports Agent Polishes his Reputation  
         Food Gestapo Pursues Ronald McDonald  
         Dis-merit Pay! |
X    Down Thru the Chimney with Good St. Nick!
    4-Year-Old Sued for Recklessness
    Upcoming Litigant Jawbones a Lawsuit
    Man Sues Family because he Killed a Family Member

XI   Friendly Toasts to a Toasted Friend
     Pervert, Heal Thyself
     Acid Reflux
     If the Rat Poison Won’t Do It, the Anti-freeze Will

XII  “Lay down, I think I love you!”
     Entrapment
     In God we Trust, as well as Ramses

XIII Smothered with Love
      Moral Indignation
      Placenta: Pills or a la carte?

XIV  Pistol Packin’ Mama

XV   On the Wings of a Dove

XVI  Do a Good Turn Warily
     Let the Punishment Fit the Crime
Your on the Street Reporter
Heard off the Street (XII)

October 5, 2012

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. It’s been almost a year since I filed my last “Heard off the Street” report to you. It is not a matter of having inadequate material. Weird human behavior, the primary subject of these reports, is as common as the housefly. The delay has come from my sorting the many reports into the slightly weird, the average weird, or the very weird. Our focus is on the very weird, reflected in previous reports, as well as Part (XII).

For Part (XII), direct quotes from sources and conversations are placed with quotation marks. Brackets are used to indicate my comments within these quotes.

**Report One: “Lay down, I think I love you!”**

Anywhere but home.

In most cultures, it is accepted that sex can be life-prolonging: “Good health to you, my love. Now, let’s prolong our lives just a bit more!” If not life-prolonging then certainly life-enhancing: “I just died and went to Heaven.”

But studies have emerged that claim certain sex acts are not all that life-prolonging. Quite a number of people (mostly males) take a trip to the Pearly Gates during their sex act---which, as an aside, must be anti-climatic. But this situation is more complex:

“A Japanese pathologist reported that of [a sample of dead males] who had passed away during intercourse, nearly 80% had died during extramarital sex.”

A detailed analysis of this phenomenon, based on interviews with the ex-wives about their ex-husbands, as well as the doctors involved, revealed: The men were out of shape…in more ways than one.

Studies in several other countries reveal the same statistic: Men are more likely to die of extramarital sex than of marital sex. As one former wife put it: “It’s irony in action or inaction, depending on which bed a man is in.” And as Zsa Zsa Gabor put it, “I know nothing about sex, because I was always married.”

There’s a message in these studies and sayings. But I’m only the messenger. People have to work it out…regardless of how many may be involved.

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Report Two: Entrapment

Washington, DC.

“Federal regulators have urged swimming-pool operators to close thousands of public swimming pools and spas that use drain covers that may not prevent potentially lethal “entrapment” accidents, in which powerful suction from a drain traps a swimmer underwater.”

Paraphrasing the press release: This notice was issued on the eve of the nation’s informal beginning of the summer swimming season [Memorial Day]. It is part of a recall of drain covers announced by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Here is an inside look from this off the street reporter about how it happened:

- Commissioner Alpha (a blue politician), “We need to shutdown those pools that are drowning people.”
- Commissioner Bravo (a red politician), “Pools don’t drown people. Water drowns people. If you want to regulate water, fine. But don’t go looking for excuses to outlaw pools.”
- Discussion further degenerates into another deadlock based on intractable ideologies.
- Later, after lobbying from the SPCA, (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Aquatics):
  - Commissioner Charlie (a reddish-blue bureaucrat), “OK, we’ve got an agreement. We don’t outlaw water, but we do outlaw water drain covers. We’ve known about these dangers for a long time. Thus, I propose we make this announcement effective on the Memorial Day weekend.”
  - Commissioner Delta (Not destined for political or bureaucratic stardom), “But Memorial Day is the swimming day of the year! Why did we not make this announcement earlier, one that did not coincide with a national holiday? Memorial Day is when many people actually swim.”
  - Commissioner Charlie, “That’s why we’ve chosen Memorial Day: to prevent as many people as possible from drowning.”

Reporter notes: Obviously, these exchanges are for fun. Except one: The potential dangers from these drains were known long before Memorial Day. Yet as said, the announcement was made just before this holiday. Small wonder we citizens are continuously baffled by our government’s problem solving mentality.

Anyway, after lobbying from the NRA (that is, the National Recreational Association), regulations about this matter were rescinded. The idea behind this policy was that if a swimmer felt threaten by a drain cover in a pool, he could carry his own drain cover, and thus be adequately armed. The NRA’s powerful lobby in Washington, D.C. was able to sway the government to allow citizens to carry-around unconcealed pool drain covers, without a license, no less.

By the way, this commission declared that there had been reports of 97 entrapments nationwide from 1999-2010. (Twelve of whom died.) Over a decade of time, in which reported entrapments were slightly less than ten a year. Think of this disproportionate fact: In hundreds of thousands of

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spas, wadding ponds, and pools, the chances of being entrapped are less than winning a national lottery.

Even more ridiculous: Public swimming pools became part of the Fed’s drain pool entrapment program of entrapment. Of those 97 nationwide incidents, I could not find any that took place at a public swimming pool. There may have been some, but in proportion to the notification, Uncle Sam—once again—has cast a far wider net than was needed.

America’s obsession with building cocoons of security around every aspect of the lives of its citizens held sway. We are once again protected but increasingly controlled.

Report Three: In God We Trust, as Well as Ramses.

New York, NY.

If you are in New York City and are tired of looking at tall buildings with their long shadows, visit the Museum of Sex, located at 223 Fifth Avenue, at 27th Street. I did not know the place existed until I came across an article telling its readers that the museum has a display titled, “Rubbers: the Life, History & Struggle of the Condom.”

I understand parts of the exhibit’s title. Life and history make sense. But struggle? How does a condom struggle? Without question, the contents inside the condom can struggle—perhaps rising to the occasion, perhaps not—but the condom adapts accordingly to its guest’s behavior.

Anyway, there must be a museum somewhere in this world for just about any subject. I came across one in Europe that was a museum of thread; another was a museum of salt. There is a building in Wallace, Idaho, that houses the Museum of Accordions.

According to the condom exhibition reviewers, the display is a “modest exhibition.” An exhibition whose themes are sex and rubbers hardly seems modest. Also, reviews say the “exhibition elevates the status of the condom.” I was unaware the condom was low on the list of esteemed American status symbols. I thought just the opposite. As one example:

During my high school years, the most prestigious “red badge of courage” that could be displayed by a boy was the circular imprint a rubber left on the exterior of his wallet. Condoms in those days were not easy to come by. In my hometown they were sold behind the pharmacist counter at drug stores. However, a rough semblance of the rubber ring could be attained by keeping a half-dollar coin in the wallet for a while. We boys would pull out our wallet anytime we wished to show-off the status of our testosterone levels. For example:

• Girl, “Why are you pulling out your wallet to put a dime in the Coke machine?”
• Boy, “I need some change.”
• Girl, “Right.”

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The museum displayed hundreds of condoms with many styles and packages. In so far as a rubber can be acclaimed, the exhibit showed examples of some of the more venerated rubber manufacturers. One that captured the fancy of America’s males was made by Julius Schmid, Inc. of New York. The condoms were sold in tin containers, as shown in Figure 1. The “Ramses” name for the product led to locker room jokes, one based on the full name of this pharaoh, “Ramses, the Great.”

One purpose of the exhibit was to encourage the use of the condoms. As a result, temperance and abstinence leagues were absent. Trojan (a name apropos to the product, and a favorite at our high school) was one of the exhibit sponsors.

One review of this museum exhibit concludes with this assessment of the condom, “It is evidence of civilization and its discontents.” For the life of me, I cannot figure out what this reviewer is saying. It seems to me the condom is evidence of civilization and its pleasures.

PS: Using a Coin to Emulate a Rubber
Returning to my days of adolescence: Depending on the newness of the half-dollar coin (sharp or dull images) and the malleability of wallet’s leather, more than the mere ring outline of the coin might be imposed into the leather. During one night when ten or so of us boys were cavorting about in our small town, the subject of sex came up (it was only a matter of time). One of our buddies, known for his bravado, started bragging about his bagging his girl friend the night before. This sort of admission was rare, and we were taken aback, if for no other reason than few of us had bagged anything thus far in our lives.

We guffawed and told him he was, as usual, full of it. He would not let well-enough alone and took out his rubberless wallet to prove his point. Sure enough, there the condom ring was but no rubber. Reverential silence followed.

But not for long. One of the boys, a recent import from a big town in Texas, knew the ropes. He asked to see the wallet. It was handed over. He examined it from the outside and then the interior. Guffawing again, he opened the inside of the wallet wide enough of us to see…a dim outline of the head of Benjamin Franklin.

From the outside of the wallet, the ring looked like that of a condom. The insides revealed the true origins of the ring. I suppose if my friend had left the rubber inside his wallet long enough, the “In God We Trust” pledge on the coin would eventually have been etched into the leather.

My thought about his matter in human’ lives is simple: “In God We Trust, but don’t forget the Ramses.”