

# marcus howard

marcushoward1@hotmail.com  
818-895-7536

**News-based jokes (one-liners)**  
(pages 1 and 2)

**"The Skew": Where real news goes for a punch-up**  
(page 3)

**"Dear Star Savior": An advice column for celebrities**  
(page 4)

**"Principles of Panhandling": A correspondence course for beggars**  
(page 5)

## **NEWS-BASED JOKES**

### **Chinese maker of recalled toys commits suicide**

The head of a Chinese toy-manufacturing company at the center of a huge safety recall in the U.S. reportedly committed suicide Saturday by hanging himself in a warehouse. Investigators found that the apparent suicide was just a jump-rope malfunction.

### **Zebra killed in drive-by shooting**

An 18-year-old Texas man has been arrested and accused of killing a zebra in a drive-by shooting. Depending on where the bullet hit the zebra, the man may be charged with a hate crime.

### **Pollution blamed for cancer's rise in China**

Health experts have reported that worsening air and water pollution and frequent use of food additives and pesticides made cancer the top killer in China last year. Second on the list was being born a girl.

### **Putting bad feelings into words helps recovery**

According to a new study by a group of brain researchers, putting negative emotions like anger and sadness into words often makes people feel better. The researchers said the exception is a suicide note.

### **Virus may contribute to obesity**

According to research findings presented Monday, infection with a common virus may contribute to the development of obesity. Scientists said the virus usually is transmitted by forks.

### **Man explodes grenade after train-ticket request**

After train inspectors asked to see his ticket, a Russian man blew himself up with a hand grenade inside a train he had been asked to leave. He later was removed from the train with a hose.

### **Study: To lose baby weight, get more sleep**

According to research presented Monday, new mothers who want to lose the extra weight they gained in pregnancy should try to get more sleep. For those who stay asleep long enough, the baby loses weight, too.

### **Man jailed for killing boy who walked on his lawn**

An Ohio man was sentenced to life in prison for fatally shooting a teenager who was walking on his carefully tended lawn. The man said he regretted the shooting, since his lawn looked better without a dead body on it.

### **Blind man arrested twice for driving**

An Estonian faces jail time after having been arrested twice for driving a car while drunk, in addition to being blind. To save jail costs, police plan to lock him up at home and not tell him.

### **Homeless man admits to attacking painting**

A homeless man pleaded guilty to attacking a \$3.4 million Joshua Reynolds painting with a hammer in London's National Portrait Gallery. If convicted, the man will be sentenced to remain homeless.

### **Many older people still have active sex lives**

More than half of people between the ages of 75 and 85 have sex at least two to three times a month, according to researchers who interviewed senior citizens about their sex lives. The greatest slowdown in sexual activity was seen in the researchers after the study.

## **NEWS-BASED JOKES (continued)**

### **Smoking fuels cancer's rise in Third World**

According to an American Cancer Society report, an increasing number of people are dying of lung cancer in Third World countries due to smoking. Researchers said smoking in the Third World reduces the average life span by an hour.

### **Dating show to match U.S. citizens, immigrants**

A Los Angeles company is producing the reality TV game show "Who Wants to Marry a U.S. Citizen," which will attempt to bring together legal citizens and immigrants with temporary visas. Each loser will receive a complimentary head start.

### **Chilean prostitute auctions sex for charity**

A Chilean prostitute has auctioned 27 hours of sex to raise money for poor, disabled children. A portion of the funds will provide medical treatment for the auction winners.

### **Accident-prone Japanese driver arrested at age 100**

A 100-year old Japanese driver, who had been in two recent hit-and-run accidents and was arrested after his car hit an umbrella held by a child, said driving was his way to avoid senility. Police said his driving nearly helped the child avoid senility, too.

### **Woman arrested for groping Santa Claus**

A woman at a mall in Connecticut has been charged with sexual assault for fondling a Santa Claus while sitting on his lap. The Santa was arrested when a kid sat on his lap afterward.

### **Exercise may boost antidepressant in the brain**

In a study published Sunday, researchers found that the level of an antidepressant chemical in the brain can be increased through exercise. The most effective exercise was sprinting to a pharmacy.

### **87-year-old man receives bachelor's degree**

After a 50-year hiatus, a man received a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee at the age of 87. He returned the degree after his nurses found him there.

### **Iranian police target tight pants in crackdown**

Iranian police have announced a crackdown on women who wear winter fashions that violate Islamic dress codes, including tight pants tucked into long boots. Police will loosen tight pants with amputations.

### **Study: To lose baby weight, get more sleep**

According to research presented Monday, new mothers who want to lose the extra weight they gained in pregnancy should try to get more sleep. For those who stay asleep long enough, the baby loses weight, too.

### **Boy charged with drunken driving**

A Michigan man and his 13-year-old son were arrested on charges that the man had the boy try to drive them home after they both had been drinking. The boy has been sentenced to die by living with his father.

### **New Arab TV station targets women**

The new TV station Al Aan reportedly is the first in the Arab world to target women with mild entertainment instead of news that contains graphic images and violence. Violent content is still available for viewers who look outside.

## **"THE SKEW": WHERE REAL NEWS GOES FOR A PUNCH-UP**

### **Study of baby shampoo raises chemical concerns**

According to a new study, chemicals in baby shampoos, lotions and powders may expose babies to reproductive problems.

Researchers said the babies' main reproductive problem would be trying to have sex.

"The shampoo chemicals didn't help, but the babies never really mastered the sex part of reproduction," a researcher said. "Maybe it's because they couldn't control their hands or hold their own heads up. They messed up the sheets, but it was totally platonic. We'd like to help the babies master sex before the chemicals kick in, but we were arrested for filming the study."

### **Major diabetes study cut off after deaths**

The National Institutes of Health abruptly ended a diabetes study after 257 patients died after intense therapy to reduce their blood sugar.

Researchers said those patients' therapy technically was a total success.

"Some patients died, but their blood sugar wasn't just reduced; it was eliminated," a researcher said. "That really brought down the blood-sugar average. To make it up to their families, we'll pay for the funeral catering, but none of that low-fat and sugar-free stuff. It's awful. That's the last thing a grieving family needs, even if they're diabetic, too. Live a little."

### **Internet sex auction leads to paternity battle**

A Web site has been ordered to reveal the real names of the winners of an online sex auction, so the woman who held the auction can find out which man is her baby's father.

Regardless of who the father is, the baby's upbringing will involve syphilis.

"I want my baby to be in touch with his STD heritage," the woman said. "I'm going to teach him traditional STD songs and dances. I'm learning to make traditional STD baby food, which is a challenge because I've never cooked with penicillin. And there might be STD schools, with any luck. I'd cross my fingers, but it hurts my lesions."

### **Industry says kids' jewelry needs lead to be cheap**

According to the Fashion Jewelry Trade Association, lead should continue being used in jewelry for children despite its health risks because it keeps costs down for companies and consumers.

The group said lead keeps costs down by reducing the number of children.

"We all know that kids like to share their toys with their friends," a representative said. "As their lead-filled jewelry makes its rounds, it kills wave after wave of children. That's where the savings begin: Parents save money because there aren't as many kids around for peer pressure, and the companies save money because they don't have to make as much jewelry. It's a win-win."

### **Man kept year's worth of trash in his apartment**

A California man saved every piece of trash he generated over the past year and kept it in his apartment to make a statement about the environment.

After a year of living surrounded by trash, he made a second statement seeking organ donors.

"When he came in, he was a disease buffet," a doctor said. "And his apartment needs shots. He would have been better off in a real dump, where it's ventilated and rats share the disease load. To pay his medical bills, he had his apartment cleaned enough to rent as a crackhouse."

## "DEAR STAR SAVIOR": AN ADVICE COLUMN FOR CELEBRITIES

### **Britney Spears' kid-free car**

Dear Star Savior,

Hi. It's Britney Spears again. A judge ruled that I can no longer drive with my children in the car with me, since I supposedly failed a drug test and there is a video of me running a red light with my kids in the car. This is so unfair! What do you think I should do?

*Dear Britney Spears,*

*Since you're not allowed to have your kids in the car, you should focus on providing more danger at home to make up the difference. Otherwise, your kids will be confused by all the new safety. The good news for you is that the home offers plenty of ways to endanger kids' lives. After breakfast, you could have one of them wash the toaster. For a little fun, you could teach them bathtub diving. They could learn to count while stuffing paper clips into electrical outlets. It might take a little planning and work, but it will be worth it. After all, these are your kids' formative years. The worst thing is for them to get their danger from someone else.*

### **O.J. jailed for violating bail**

Dear Star Savior,

Hi. I'm O.J. Simpson. Up until Friday, I was out on bail after being arrested for an armed robbery of my own sports memorabilia from a hotel in Las Vegas. I was sent to jail Friday for trying to call one of my co-defendants to stop him from cooperating with authorities. Was this really such a bad move on my part?

*Dear O.J.,*

*A phone call wasn't the best way to stop this co-defendant from working with authorities. Since you live in Florida, you should have tapped into your local voodoo community. Unlike phone calls, voodoo can't be traced back to you, and it has no long-distance charges. On top of that, Florida's voodoo community has an excellent tech-support team that would help set up your voodoo doll and customize a chant for your situation. The bones aren't included, but you might know where to find some for free.*

### **Akon's boy-tossing trial**

Dear Star Savior,

Hi. I'm R&B singer Akon. In court Monday, I pleaded not guilty to pulling a 15-year-old boy up onto the stage and throwing him off the stage after he threw something at me during a concert in June. And a woman said she suffered a concussion when the boy landed on her. Now, I'm facing up to a year in jail. What advice do you have for my next court appearance?

*Dear Akon,*

*Since you grew up partly in Senegal, your best bet in this case is the "culture" card. In court, you should tell this story, word for word: "Back in Senegal, lifting a person off the ground is the equivalent of a hug, and throwing that person onto someone else's head starts a hugging chain. When that third person shakes off the concussion and snaps his or her neck back into place, he or she is thrown onto someone else's head. The chain continues this way until everyone has been thrown onto at least one other person's head and vice versa. It's how my parents met. (choking back tears) After all these years, they still jump onto each other's heads every night."*

## **“PRINCIPLES OF PANHANDLING”: AN ONLINE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE FOR BEGGARS**

### **SESSION ONE: STORY DEVELOPMENT**

I understand how life's low blows and sucker punches can instantly drop any of us. And I certainly know how difficult it can be to ask for help of any kind. But I've been approached by one too many beggars whose stories need work. I'm here to help.

You may not realize it, but as soon as you say anything beyond flat-out asking for money, you become a storyteller and writer. As a panhandler, your story is everything. The sad truth is that this all-important element often is overlooked in pursuit of speed and sheer quantity.

So this is my service to you, from one writer to another.

#### **Creativity**

If your repertoire includes any cliché panhandling stories - like the one about having run out of gas just a few blocks away and needing a little tank-filling money to get home - ditch them. They've been done to death. Don't be a hack.

If I'm being hit up for cash in the middle of a hot parking lot at a time when my one and only ambition in life is to get home, there's no bigger turnoff than a hack story. Conversely, well-crafted work will brighten my day and maybe loosen my airtight pockets. So wow me. I'll be more likely to fork over a little money - if I can find some without taking my eyes off you.

#### **Realism**

While I have a weakness for creativity, I can spot the stink vapors of falsehood wafting from a fraudulent story.

Don't make your story too much of a departure from who you really are. Take a good, deep look at yourself and put together a plausible story you can pull off. The best lies have their roots in truth. And if a day of self-medication is in your datebook, nothing hides it better than BS that comes straight from your heart.

#### **Details**

Don't overlook the supporting details and logic related to your story.

Even the “my car ran out of gas” story could be made more effective by displaying a set of keys, especially if the set includes an actual car key or two - many people can distinguish car keys from other types. Carry a gas can, if possible. And if you insist on standing by this shopworn story, remember this: Your believability is inversely proportional to your distance from a gas station.

#### **Audience**

In any kind of writing or storytelling, it's imperative to keep the audience in mind. Develop a few stories to use on different types of people; the same pitch that melts the heart of a soccer mom might not work as well on a frat boy making a beer run. Nothing makes a “mark” feel special like a personalized lie.

#### **Buddy Up**

Find a story-writing buddy and bounce ideas off each other. Shadow a beggar whose work you admire and study what makes their stories so effective. Join forces with your fellow indigents and workshop your stories.

And don't hold back out of fear of having your ideas stolen. Open, flowing creative energy will benefit the entire group and make things better for panhandlers everywhere. The people you approach on the streets will be less suspicious of you if the previous beggar gave an endearing, well-made pitch.

**NEXT TIME:** I'll introduce four real professional panhandlers to study as a review of today's material. If time permits, we'll also begin our study of story presentation.