



Anchorage Daily News

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OPINION

The 2007 Soapy Smith Awards

In the spirit of Jefferson Randolph "Soapy" Smith, the most notorious and conniving hustler of Alaska's Gold Rush, the Anchorage Daily News revisits the most dubious achievements of 2007. Without further ado, the envelopes please. ...



OBVIOUSLY, THESE GUYS AREN'T TAKING STEROIDS

Anchorage Assembly conservatives passed a resolution saying they planned to hold the city budget to last year's spending level. When the Assembly finally passed the budget, it was \$28 million bigger than the previous year.

EVEN A BLIND SQUIRREL FINDS AN ACORN NOW AND THEN

Conservative talk show host Dan Fagan's regular column in the Daily News included one blasting Lisa Murkowski for her cut-rate deal buying a Kenai River waterfront lot from developer Bob Penney and another blasting Don Young for handing out funding earmarks for Lower 48 campaign contributors.

DITTO

U.S. Sens. Ted Stevens and Lisa Murkowski drew praise from conservationists for co-sponsoring a bill that would actually help fight global warming.

HOW CAN WE MISS YOU WHEN YOU WON'T GO AWAY?

The Voice of the Times, run for 15 years by recently convicted bribe-payer Bill Allen, left the pages of the Daily News but continued as a Web-only publication.

UNCLEAR ON THE CONCEPT

U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski agreed to sell back the Kenai River lot she bought at a cut rate from political pal Bob Penney, but said her big mistake was doing a bad job of explaining why there was nothing wrong with the deal.

WHERE THERE'S SMOKE ...

Though not indicted, U.S. Rep. Don Young has already spent half a million dollars on legal fees, which he drew from his campaign funds.

AT LEAST HE DIDN'T HAVE TO TAKE OFF HIS SHOES FOR TSA

Lacking government ID for traveling by plane, Paul Woods decided to drive from Alaska to Mystic, Conn., on his riding lawn mower. He made it as far as Pennsylvania.

AND TO I.D. PROBLEM BUREAUCRATS, WE SUGGEST CLOWN HATS

The Department of Fish and Game announced a plan to help identify problem bears at the Russian River by tranquilizing them and dyeing their coats with bright colors.

WHERE IS JUDGE JUDY WHEN YOU NEED HER?

A state court in Palmer held a four-day trial, followed by three days of jury deliberation, to determine who should have custody of Carl the Cat.

DON'T YA HATE IT WHEN THE WIFE DOES THAT?

The First Dude went back to work with BP on the North Slope, even though Gov. Sarah Palin had promised he wouldn't do so when she was running for governor. She said she hadn't checked with him before making that campaign promise.



HE SHOULD'A BUILT IT IN SPENARD

After Airport Heights resident Billy Powers built Snowzilla, a two-and-a-half-story-tall snowman that drew local gawkers and worldwide attention, city code enforcement officers cracked down on Powers for letting years worth of junk pile up in his yard.



YOU MEAN HE WOULD DECEIVE THE GARBAGEMAN, TOO??

Former House speaker Pete Kott's attorney, arguing for a light sentence in the Veco corruption scandal, said "He's a thoroughly decent human being that will treat the garbageman and the governor the same."



UNFORTUNATELY FOR BILL, THE FBI REPOSSESSED IT

Convicted lobbyist Bill Allen was caught on tape boasting to former House Speaker Pete Kott, "I own your ass."

ALIENS MADE HIM DO IT

One of Kott's supporters told the court, "The real Pete is a model of decorum and respect. He normally treats people with kindness, speaks kindly and does not use profane language."

OH, SO THAT EXPLAINS IT

Another supporter of Pete Kott told the court Pete was a really nice, decent guy — when he wasn't drinking.

HE WAS ALSO DETAINED ON SUSPICION OF BREATHING THE AIR WITHOUT A PERMIT

Police confiscated Brian Tanner's laptop computer because he was parked in the Palmer library parking lot after hours, using the library's wireless Internet connection, which is free to users when the library is open and had not been turned off at closing time.

COULDN'T HAPPEN TO A NICER TOWN I

Wasilla was treated to an aerial display of huge, foamy bubbles that burped into the sky from the city sewer lagoon.

COULDN'T HAPPEN TO A NICER TOWN II

A study commissioned by the city of Juneau says global warming will make the rainy state capital even warmer and wetter.

FORGET THE GIRAFFES. WHAT ABOUT THE HYPERVENTILATING PRIMATE IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES?

Ketchikan state Rep. Kyle Johansen said Alaska didn't need to put ocean rangers aboard cruise ships to make sure they are obeying state anti-pollution laws. "It's akin to Legislative Affairs hiring 20 extra security guards to keep the giraffes out of the parking lot. They're just not there. It doesn't exist," said Johansen.

WHEN GRENADES ARE OUTLAWED, ONLY OUTLAWS WILL HAVE GRENADES

Alex Crawford, a Libertarian Assembly candidate from Muldoon, complained that he couldn't get grenades for his grenade launchers.

ALASKANS DON'T REALLY CARE HOW THEY DIE OUTSIDE

The Anchorage Daily News started a new feature on the obituary page that was briefly called "Deaths Elsewhere."

OOPS. HE'LL BE STAYING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BARS

Kott was caught on tape telling his Veco patrons, "I just want to be the warden in Barbados," referring to a prison Veco was building in the tropical locale.

THE LEAST OF HIS WORRIES

After Bill Allen pleaded guilty to corruption felonies, Gov. Sarah Palin kicked him off the Alaska Alberta commission.

SINGING FOR HIS SUPPER

In Bill Allen's deal for a guilty plea on corruption charges, the government agreed not to go after his company, Veco, whose funds were used to further Allen's corrupt schemes. Later in the year, the Allen family sold off most of Veco for about \$365 million.

HE'S NOT A DOCTOR, BUT HE PLAYED ONE IN ROOM 604

Bill Allen provided Pete Kott with sleeping pills and pills for enhancing sexual performance.

WE'D ALL BE BETTER OFF IF HE'D SLEPT MORE

After getting pills for sleeping and for enhancing sexual performance from Bill Allen, Kott told Allen he got the two kinds mixed up and spent a long, frustrating night awake while his "old lady" slept next to him in bed.



FUNNY, I DON'T RECALL ANY FBI RAIDS ON THE MAYBERRY POLICE DEPARTMENT...

Before former state Rep. Vic Kohring was convicted on corruption charges, his lawyer said Vic was just like Andy Griffith, the big, folksy sheriff of the fictional TV town, Mayberry.

ANTI-BRIBERY LAWS ARE JUST SO DARN COMPLICATED

The lawyer for convicted bribe-taker Tom Anderson said Anderson "believed at the time that his actions were not in any way unlawful."

YEAH, BUT MONEY ACTS LIKE A MAGNET ON THAT OL' COMPASS NEEDLE

John Harris, R-Valdez, wrote the court in Tom Anderson's defense, saying the convicted lawmaker "had the best interest of Alaskans on his moral and ethical compass."

DARN. WE KNOW IT'S IN THERE SOMEWHERE

Alyeska lost part of a cleaning pig in the trans-Alaska oil pipeline for more than a month. A spokesman said "We'll just keep looking."

HE'S PETA'S MAN OF THE YEAR

When a dog on the team of Yukon Quest musher Aaron Burmeister swallowed its tongue and stopped breathing, the musher saved the dog by giving it "mouth to snout" CPR.



BUT BOYS, IF YOU WANT A DATE, SHE'S ALREADY SPOKEN FOR

Gov. Palin said any Alaska student who was thinking about dropping out could call her personally for advice and encouragement.

FUN COUPLES

Bill Allen and Pete Kott
 Sarah Palin and Andrew Halero
 Sarah Palin and Lyda Green
 Lyda Green and Hollis French
 Lisa Nowak and Billy-O the Astronaut
 Mark Begich and Mark Pfeffer

SHOOT A DART INTO MY BUTT, WILL YOU? WELL, TAKE THIS!!

After biologists tranquilized a moose near Gustavus, the drugged animal charged the hovering helicopter and made it crash by sticking its snout into the copter's tail rotor.

THAT WAS NO ACCIDENT; THAT WAS A POLITICAL STATEMENT

Dogs were banned from the state Capitol after a security camera caught one "leaving a sizable deposit" in front of an elevator.

WE'RE RED, TOO - FROM EMBARRASSMENT

During a U.S. House floor debate on an energy bill in January, Congressman Don Young declared — "I am wearing this red shirt today; it's the color of the bill we're debating today — Communist red."

FIRST PRIZE, ONE LUNCH WITH DON SECOND PRIZE, TWO LUNCHES

In January, Congressman Don Young started a trivia contest for constituents, in which the first one to call with the correct answer won lunch with him in either Alaska or Washington, D.C.

NEXT STOP, THE WORLD COURT

The U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the last-ditch appeal filed by opponents of the federal law that gives a subsistence hunting and fishing priority to rural Alaska residents. Opponents vowed not to give up their fight.

GRADING ON THE CURVE

U of A Regent Jim Hayes defended his initial refusal to resign, despite a federal corruption indictment, saying his attendance was "pretty good," even though he missed more than half the meetings in the previous 14 months.



OH SHUT UP I

In fighting efforts to fix Alaska's corruption-tainted oil tax, Fairbanks Republican Rep. Jay Ramras suggested that Gov. Palin was the second coming of Joe McCarthy, the anti-Communist witch hunter of the 1950s, persecuting legislators like him who dared resist the tax change.

OH SHUT UP II

Ramras also compared himself to the famous unknown protester in China who stopped a line of tanks in Tiananmen Square during a brief uprising in spring 1989.

OH SHUT UP III

Ramras also complained about how hard it is to be an oil company in Alaska, because they have to scour the world looking for oil and trying to keep making more and more money, so their shareholders will be happy.



THAT'S WHAT YOU GET FOR FLYING AROUND ON BROOMS ...

With oil prices above \$90 a barrel, and the Legislature preparing to pass a higher, corruption-free version of Alaska's oil tax, Exxon complained that it was a victim of a "witch hunt."

HMMM ... MAYBE 'WITCH' IS PUTTING IT NICELY

As the Alaska Legislature debated raising the state's oil production tax, passed under corrupt pressure from Veco to hold down the rate, Exxon argued that legislators should drop the tax rate even lower than Veco wanted.

NOW YOU'RE REALLY INSULTING WITCHES ...

The same week Exxon argued for a state oil tax cut, the company got the U.S. Supreme Court to consider its appeal, which, if granted, would kill the entire multibillion-dollar punitive damage award won by Alaskans after Exxon's oil spill 18 years ago.