

I'm Not MAKING THIS STUFF UP

WRITTEN BY JOHN G. BROWNING

ONE OF THE MOST COMMON QUESTIONS I GET FROM READERS OF THIS HUMOR COLUMN is whether I've ever been tempted to make up content during "slow" periods. To put it bluntly—no, and the endless parade of the legally weird never seems to slow down. Case in point: not long after sending off January's column showcasing fugitives who got caught after commenting on law enforcement social media posts about them, it happened again. Christopher Spaulding was apparently miffed when he was left off the Rockdale County (Georgia) Sheriff's Office "Most Wanted List" on the law enforcement agency's Facebook page. So, the 40-year-old man sent a message from his personal Facebook account asking, "How about me?" Rockdale police were only too happy to oblige Spaulding, who had two outstanding felony violations of probation warrants. Within days, Rockdale's finest had an updated Facebook post: a photo of a handcuffed Spaulding with the caption "We appreciate you for your assistance in your capture!" Ouch.

Another category—what one might call the gift that keeps on giving—is the ever-popular Zoom fails. If you've ever had an embarrassing glitch or tech mishap while on Zoom (or have had to explain that you're not, in fact, a cat), then take heart that it could have been much worse. For example, you could have been the unfortunate (and unnamed) barrister in England's Sheffield Crown Court recently. The lawyer was one of multiple counsel representing 13 defendants charged with

smuggling drugs and a cellphone into prison. Some lawyers were attending in person, while others were attending via common video platform, or CVP, a secure digital network used by the British judiciary. The plea hearing presided over by Recorder Jeremy Richardson KC was going fine—that is until loud "porn noises" were heard. An unidentified (and undoubtedly mortified) lawyer finally came forward, admitting that the X-rated sounds were coming from his computer and hastening to add, "It's so strange how easily you can be hacked these days." An upset Judge Richardson abruptly ended the hearing and announced that future hearings could *not* be held via CVP. I hope that hapless lawyer has learned a valuable lesson.

Of course, some Zoom fails involve judges themselves. During a November 16 court hearing held on the videoconferencing platform, a Colombian judge appeared lounging in her underwear and puffing on a cigarette. The hearing involved a June 2021 car bombing. When an attorney at the hearing informed the judge that her camera was on, she immediately turned the device off. The video of the scantily clad 34-year-old judge quickly went viral. Not long afterward, Colombia's Judicial Disciplinary Commission placed the judge on unpaid leave and launched an investigation, calling her failure to comply with the judicial dress code "not consistent with the care, respect and circumspection with which a judge of the republic must administer justice." In her defense, the judge maintained she was lying down after suffering an anxiety attack.

The judge from Colombia isn't the only judge in hot water because of attire (or lack thereof). A Kentucky judge is facing ethics charges before that state's judicial conduct commission. Some of the charges involve alleged use of his office to pressure people for campaign donations, as well as claims that he required people to participate in a particular drug treatment program because he had a connection to it. But other charges leveled against the judge concern some odd behavior. He allegedly

retaliated against a sheriff's deputy, believing that deputy had shared courthouse camera footage of the judge wandering the courthouse in his underwear with a local news station.

Another judge's choice of attire is getting attention as well. As New York tabloid news readers have learned, a recent city judiciary appointment is also known in some circles as "Sir Jibril al-Dakhil," a knight he cosplays as during his spare time as a member of the role-playing group Society for Creative Anachronism. Soon newspapers were running photos of the judge in full knightly garb.

And finally, you may have known that you have the right to remain silent, but did you know that you also have the right to be boring? Well, at least that's true in France, where a man who was fired for being "too boring" was recently vindicated. According to Paris' Court of Cassation, the unnamed employee was fired in 2015 from Paris-based consulting firm Cubik Partners. Cubik openly espoused a "fun" approach to work, allegedly holding mandatory parties and alcohol-fueled training activities for its workers. The plaintiff was purportedly fired because of his reluctance or refusal to take part in such hijinks, failing to embody the company's "party" atmosphere, and for being "boring." The court awarded the former employee the equivalent of \$3,000, saying he was entitled "to refuse company policy based on incitement to partake in various excesses."

So, with all due respect to the Beastie Boys, here in the United States, you may have to fight for your right to party but in France, you apparently have to fight for your right to be boring. **TBJ**



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