



# The Times

FLOYD COUNTY

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One Voice for Eastern Kentucky

Member, Kentucky Press Association

### In brief

#### Another town calls on residents to conserve water

The Associated Press

FLEMING-NEON — Another Eastern Kentucky community is calling on residents to conserve water amid a lingering drought.

Water Department Superintendent Carlos Phillips says residents of Fleming-Neon shouldn't wash cars or water lawns until precipitation replenishes the city's water supplies.

Phillips told The Mountain Eagle newspaper in nearby Whitesburg that he is calling for voluntary conservation. He says residents can use as much water as is needed for daily living, "but no frills."

Magoffin County residents also are facing water woes. Businesses and schools in and around Salyersville are under a water emergency and are told to minimize water use by switching to disposable utensils and shutting off soda and ice machines.

The drought has depleted the Licking River, which is the county's primary source of drinking water.

## County still waiting for coal money

SHELDON COMPTON  
STAFF WRITER

PRESTONSBURG — Despite voting to raise the pay of two county employees and recalling a previously laid-off deputy coroner, members of The Floyd County Fiscal Court spent more time expressing hope Friday that coal severance money earmarked for use by July 1 would be here in time to take care of already planned business.

The county is expected to receive some \$630,000 in coal severance money to be spent before July 1, 2009, the end of the fiscal year, but have yet to receive the funds, a fact that led some officials to seek reinsurance Friday.

District 2 Magistrate Jackie Edford Owens asked about the status of the severance money and was told there should be no problems in receiving the funds in time

(See MONEY, page three)



Floyd County Judge-Executive R.D. "Doc" Marshall spoke with fellow members of the fiscal court Friday to address the expected arrival of hundreds of thousands of dollars in coal severance money for the county.

photo by Sheldon Compton

### RED, WHITE & BLUE



photo by Jarrid Deaton

Gray skies and soggy streets didn't deter local residents from having a good time at the annual Red, White and Blue Festival in Martin on Friday.

## Shooting suspect caught

SHELDON COMPTON  
STAFF WRITER

WAYLAND — A five-day search for a suspect police say shot a man four times ended with his arrest in Wayland Thursday.

Wesley Glenn Martin, 33, of Clear Water Road in Wayland, was taken into custody Thursday and charged with first-degree assault for allegedly shooting 28-year-old Robert A. Brady four times on Oct. 11.

The Floyd County Sheriff's Department had been searching for Martin since Brady was found

wounded over the weekend. Deputy Sheriff Terry Chaffins arrested Martin Thursday and had been helping to actively pursue the hunt, and served Martin's warrant Thursday.

"The way they understood it, the two had had a physical altercation earlier in the day," said Floyd County Attorney Keith Bartley, "and Mr. Martin then went back and supposedly shot Mr. Brady."

Martin's criminal record includes convictions on charges in both Floyd and Knott County.

(See ARREST, page three)

## Working families continue to struggle

SHELDON COMPTON  
STAFF WRITER

A national report released this past week says that 30 percent of working families in Kentucky are considered low-income, more commonly referred to as "the working poor."

Mike Tackett, of Melvin, doesn't need a national report to tell him this. He says he himself struggles under the pinched financial times and most of the people he knows do the same.

"It's just getting harder every day to make ends meet," Tackett said. "My work is seasonal and so there are times when I draw unemployment until my work starts again. It's hardly enough, and I am, like a lot of other people, working as hard as I can and doing the best I can. It's just never enough lately."

The report, originating from a study based in Washington, D.C. also says that of the 30 percent considered low-income, 24 percent of the jobs

in the state are occupations paying below the federal poverty level for a family of four.

The report, "Still Working Hard, Still Falling Short," is a follow-up to a 2004 report "Working Hard, Falling Short" also offered statistics saying that 1-in-4 working families nationwide — a total of 42 million adults and children — were low-income in 2006, earning too little to meet their

(See FAMILIES, page three)

## Animal shelter receives donation

by JARRID DEATON  
FEATURES WRITER

PRESTONSBURG — The furry friends that currently call the Floyd County Animal Shelter home now have a new reason to wag their tails, as the Jenny Wiley Festival Committee donated \$700 to the shelter to be used for food.

"This is a great need in our area," said Donna Wells, chairwoman of the festival. "The shelter pro-

vides relief for abandoned pets and stray animals. Without the shelter, we would have a very serious problem within our city. The folks do a very good job at the shelter, but they definitely need help."

Wells hopes that the citizens of Floyd County will decide to visit the shelter and possibly give a new home to one or more of the animals there.

(See SHELTER, page three)

## UNITE, Focus on the Family hold summit

by JARRID DEATON  
FEATURES WRITER

PRESTONSBURG — Operation UNITE kicked off its "Declare Hope" family-strengthening summit with Focus on the Family, a conservative Christian organization, at the Allen Baptist Church in Prestonsburg on Friday.

"Believing that strong families are key to healthy, safe and thriving communities, the Focus on the Family organization has partnered with Operation UNITE to launch a new initiative in southern and eastern Kentucky," said Dale Morton, communications director with Operation UNITE.

The Prestonsburg summit is the first of two meetings, with the second taking place in Somerset on Saturday.

Karen Engle, the director of Operation UNITE, is excited about the partnership with Focus on the Family.

"We are really happy with the crowd that showed at Allen Baptist Church," Engle said. "We expect an even larger crowd at Somerset because it is on the weekend. I'm elated about the partnership. Government programs are good and have their place, but very few times are they able to offer hope. With this partnership, we can."

Psychologist Dr. Bill Maier, host of the national "Weekend Magazine" radio program and the "Family Minute with Dr. Bill Maier," is the featured speaker at both events. Maier is also a frequent guest host for the daily "Focus on the Family" radio program and "Focus on the Family Commentary."

Those attending the meeting will receive a "family challenge" kit, a 75-day plan to strengthen their own families, and a second kit to give to friends or family members.

(See SUMMIT, page three)



photo by Jarrid Deaton

Karen Engle, director of Operation UNITE, speaks with Tim Rhodes, a pastor who drove from Morehead to attend the "Declare Hope" summit at Allen Baptist Church in Prestonsburg on Friday.

### 2 DAY FORECAST

#### Today



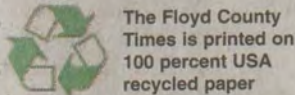
High: 67 • Low: 35

#### Tomorrow



High: 71 • Low: 43

Get up-to-the-minute weather forecasts at floydcountytimes.com



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# Lifestyles



## INSIDESTUFF

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## CAR TALK:

### Properly used jumper cables pose no danger

see pg. B6

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## This Town, That World

*Editor's Note: For years, Floyd County Times founder and former publisher Norman Allen wrote a weekly column that looked at Floyd County through his eyes. His columns are being reprinted due to request.*

What an inspiration Marcella Bailey had when she conceived the idea of Red, White, and Blue Day. But the greatest thing about it is—now it belongs to all who take part, and all are invited.

□□□

Anybody got a double whammy to spare? The single job I tried on the Yankees isn't working.

### THE BAD NEWS

Just arrived—The Old Farmer's Almanac (its 187th anniversary edition), and now it's official; we're in for another hard winter. For the Greater Ohio Valley region, which includes Kentucky, the Almanac predicts:

"The winter will be notable for the frequency of the cold waves, from November through February, with those occurring from Christmas into the first week of January, from the last week of January through the first week of February, and the end of February being particularly severe. There will be an abundance of light, dry snow."

Is that all? No (it says here), after that, comes a mild March, and after mid-month, heavy rains will cause flooding.

After that—never mind, if we make it till then, we'll be ready for anything, and whatever befalls later should, short of an earthquake, come by way of relief.

Still with the Almanac. It gives this helpful hint:

To drive a nail without injuring your fingers, place the nail between the teeth of a comb.

(That one could provide me an excuse for carrying one.)

### BEFORE CURTAIN FALL

I had a feeling when I sat down to write this, that I shouldn't mention this matter, but I shall. It is a bit trite, I know, to belabor a topic with which everybody is familiar, but to witness the blooming of these hills in a dying process that mystifies and enralls by its beauty, and remain silent is beyond me. For the next two weeks we are to enjoy what I think is the greatest show on earth. Wish I could keep the curtain from ringing down so soon.

**EDITOR'S NOTICE:** The Floyd County Times is happy to announce your engagement, new marriage, new baby, birthday or family reunion free of charge. However, space is limited and we can offer no guarantee of the exact day your announcement will run. Readers may opt to purchase ad space if these conditions are not satisfactory. With the purchase of a paid ad, run date, size and placement may be guaranteed.

## For Josie

by DOUG MANUEL

"CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE BREAST  
CANCER SURVIVOR'S SOUL"

We are not confused — we know we are two separate people — man and wife. Yet when we met, when we married, when we had children and grandchildren, we knew that we were amused — something existed between us, beyond us, that exists as a third entity — something each individual contributed to and could draw on.

And now we have cancer, know-



Franklin Stumbo, foreground, was one of two physical therapists from the United States that served on the medical team for the World's Strongest Man contest held in Charleston, WV.

photo courtesy of Franklin Stumbo

# KEEPING THEM FIT

## Local therapist part of strongman competition med team

by JARRID DEATON  
FEATURES WRITER

A local physical therapist was part of a special medical team that was selected to work with the competitors in the 2008 Met-Rx World's Strongest Man contest in Charleston, W.Va.

Franklin Stumbo, PT, CSCS, from East Kentucky Physical Therapy and Sports Clinic in Betsy Layne, was one of two physical therapists from the United States that served on the medical team, along with two massage therapists from England, and one physical therapist from England. The team attended to the screening, care, and preparation of each athlete entering the competition.

"This was a once in a lifetime opportunity to work with such world class athletes that usually can only be seen on ESPN," Stumbo said. "The entire event was a top-notch production with many wonderful people bringing the event together."

Stumbo compared the injuries that the competitors deal with to that of sports like football, but the massive size of those that compete in the World's Strongest Man contest makes treatment much different.

"Medical wise the ailments and injuries these athletes experience are similar in some ways to other sports such as football but on a much larger body," Stumbo said. "A lot of hands on manual therapy

was needed for these athletes along with managing injuries such as torn biceps and calf muscles."

The World's Strongest Man contest began with 30 international competitors, narrowing down to 10 for the finals. More than 4,000 fans attended each day of the event, which is scheduled to air on ESPN in December. Mariusz Pudzianowski, a native of Poland, won the title for the second year in a row.

Stumbo, who has been practicing physical therapy for 11 years along with serving as an adjunct faculty member at Alice Lloyd College, said that he hopes to attend the 2009 World's Strongest Man contest to once again serve on the medical team.



## MOVIES FROM THE BLACK LAGOON

### 'Wrong Turn 2: Dead End'

by TOM DOTY  
TIMES COLUMNIST

I'm going to start off here with a bold statement ... wait for it ... "Direct to video films will become the premiere venue for decent horror movies."

To prove my point, I'll submit this direct-to-DVD sequel that far surpasses the theatrical installment. The first film was actually terrible. Just another installment in the "young adults go camping and run into a cannibalistic family" thriller genre. This sequel actually improves upon that premise (not a huge challenge I grant you) and offers at least one hero you can root for as well as a more in-depth look at the villains and their customs.



Tom Doty  
Times Columnist

It begins with a promising opening that finds a blond starlet cell-poning her agent to complain about her reality show gig on "The Ultimate Survivor." The dangers of cradling a cell phone while operating a motor vehicle are graphically illustrated when she fails to brake for the shuffling mountain dude who crosses her path and winds up getting launched into the asphalt.

Here you get a modest surprise as she jumps out of her trendy sports car and appears genuinely concerned for her fellow man. Turns out to be her second mistake as the guy leaps from the ground and holds her steady so Pa can sneak up behind her and chop her in half.

Meanwhile, the other contestants show up and meet the program's host, Dale Murphy, U.S. Marine Corps, retired. He's a macho loudmouth but also holds some surprises as he gets in the face of one guy when he makes a derogatory comment about the South. Turns out Dale is local and doesn't cotton to ignorant punks who espouse racist viewpoints on Appalachia.

Besides earning points for his sensitivity, Dale becomes the only hope for the contestants when they get on the cannibals' radar. He may be retired but he also turns out to be as resourceful as Rambo and is soon boarding the mutant flesh-eaters in their own lair in an effort to save what's left(overs?) of his group after they have been captured.

This one works because it harkens back to the 1970s genre films in which anyone could die at any time. The lack of star power helps in that regard.

The budget here is lower than the one they had for the original, but that's a good thing as the filmmakers give you more time with the villains. Some of that stuff is amazing. You get to observe their family structure, dining rituals and you even meet their normal grandfather — who explains that they were born, deformed after their watershed was polluted from toxins generated at a wood mill. You

(See LAGOON, page six)

ing that one of us must fight an internal battle and one of us will tend the supply lines, knowing that the two of us are one, each afraid — each giving courage to the other, knowing we will endure.

1965 — Sir Francis Drake High School, San Anselmo, Calif.

Third date, basketball game at Terra Linda, the path from the parking lot to the gym blocked by a wire cable: We duck under the wire, reaching for each other's hand to steady ourselves, knowing yet not knowing the meaning of holding hands, surprised by the electricity, delighted by the simplicity, content in the rightness of such a simple act.

And we never let go — even to arrange fingers in a more comfortable

arrangement, not even to appease the dean of women and rules against public displays of affection.

We held hands to exchange rings, to deliver two children, to teach them to cross the street, to make a swing for grandchildren, as we walked — one, two, three.

2001 — Swedish Medical Center, Seattle

Pre-op: I held her hand as she lay on the gurney waiting for Dr. Dawson. When he arrived, I let go of her hand and he took it in his and walked beside her, holding it.

Post-op: He told me many things. I asked questions, relieved and worried. I wrote them down, looked for hidden meanings, sifted through hopes and fears.

He explained that she would be upside-down, over the first falls, taking on water, spinning, gasping for breath.

Information swirled, yet I knew his meaning fully, and understood his gentle smile when he said, "I held her hand."

The Rapids: This turbulent river we travel on is not of our choosing.

We were not heading in this direction when we slammed into the first rock. Cancer — malignant. Three doctors before we could even believe we had hit a rock. By then, we were

upside-down, over the first falls, taking on water, spinning, gasping for breath.

When one is in a whirlpool, one cannot swim toward the surface, one cannot overcome the downward force of the water. One must swim downward with the pressure, letting the turbulence push down, out, then up. This requires presence of mind, especially when one is not sure what is up and what is down.

(See SOUP, page six)



# Everybody's Science: Bigger, prettier, tastier apples

by SANDY MILLER HAYS  
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
SERVICE

An apple a day may keep the doctor away...but what with environmental stresses, pests and other menaces, making sure there's an apple a day available is no simple feat. And we won't settle for any old apple; we want them to be big, shiny, colorful, and taste great.

Fortunately, the scientists of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) have worked out a variety of novel methods to protect and improve those delectable fruits while they're still on the tree.

The latest innovation is sprayable reflective films that contain microscopic particles

of minerals. The ARS scientists conducted a three-year study in which these sprayable particle films were installed strategically in an orchard of Empire apple trees. The layer of mineral particles is so thin that it easily allows water and carbon dioxide to pass through to the apple surface.

In the experiments, the scientists applied an aluminized plastic film to the grass strip between some rows of apple trees. Elsewhere, they sprayed a particle-based reflective film on both the trees themselves and the grassy strip between the tree rows. For comparison, a third group of apple trees received neither of the treatments.

The good news is that the use of the aluminized plastic

film between the tree rows consistently improved the color of the apples, and the sprayable particle film boosted the apples' red color in two of the three years of the study. When the sprayable particle film was applied to the grass between the tree rows, average fruit weight increased in all years of the study, compared to the untreated trees and those that only had the aluminized plastic film on the grass.

This may sound like magic, but the scientists think they know what's going on. The mechanism responsible for the increased fruit weight with the particle film treatment may be the altered light quality that's reflected onto the fruit. This reflected light has enhanced far-red radiation, which may

have beneficial effects on both the fruit color and the fruit weight. The particle film also reduces heat stress and water stress in the plants, and improves their production efficiency.

A few years back, the ARS scientists at that same lab in West Virginia experimented with spraying fruit trees with a white, reflective coating of a specially processed type of clay called kaolin. One of the pluses of that treatment was that it prevented sunburn on the apples in hot climates. That sunburn damage creates a tempting environment for microorganisms that can rot the fruit.

Other benefits of the clay coating included serving as a matrix to hold chemicals on the plant or soil and get more even distribution—and thus perhaps be able to cut down on

the amount of active chemical ingredient required in the treatment.

In terms of sheer innovation, my personal favorite is still the technique for "tasting" apples with a laser. ARS scientists have worked with the produce industry on "machine vision" tools that can predict the flavor of a fruit or veggie without ever touching the produce.

Typically, produce is checked through "sample tastings," but there's no guarantee that all the apples passing by on the conveyor belt have the same quality as the one that's tasted. Samples are tested for firmness by poking them with a thick steel probe, but that leaves the sampled produce unmarketable. So ARS scientists in Michigan developed machine vision prototypes that can "taste" every single piece

of produce—not just one here or there—as it passes by on the packing line.

How does it work? The detector focuses four laser beams, each a different light wavelength, into one sharp beam that shines on the individual fruits. Laser light photons momentarily scatter all the way to the fruit's core and back. The amount of light bounced back after interacting with the tissue reflects the fruit's firmness.

Since scattered light also indicates the amount of light absorbed by the fruit, and that absorption is affected by sugar levels in the fruit, this technology can also be used to predict flavors such as sweetness in apples.

So thanks to those ARS scientists, there's a way to tell if an apple's beauty really is only skin deep!

## Lagoon

also get to observe their mating, hunting and self-gratification habits, but less said about them the better.

This one also benefits from great special effects, which illustrate the deadliness of common wood mill tools such as dynamite and industrial strength pulping machines. All

that and you also get a terrific turn by "Black Flag" frontman Henry Rollins, as the hard bitten Murphy.

Direct-to-video is losing the stink that guys like Stephen Seagal and Jean-Claude Van Damme left on it and it's proving to be the only place where you can experi-

ence seat-of-your-pants thrills that don't have to worry about appealing to the masses by watering down their action until it's a PG-13 snooze fest.

Best line: "They killed Mara and tied her to the roof of their truck."

2007, unrated.

■ Continued from p5

## Norris

lains; information about religious services regularly held in the Capitol in the 1800s, and an unaltered display of the U.S. Constitution highlighting the First Amendment which established our country's right to the freedom of religion."

That's a good start, but I believe we, the people, need to help keep the pressure on these officials to assure these revisionist rectifications and equitable representation of America's religious heritage—not just token artifacts. We also must stop the whitewashing of our religious history from taking one more step. We must preserve the fact that our Founders weren't creating a secular state but a sectarian-free state—and there is a huge difference. With some 15,000 expected guests daily, including thousands of children and students from across America, it is also our duty to safeguard our Capitol's religious history in the Capitol Visitor Center. That is why I am encouraging Americans to write or call the Architect of the Capitol's com-

munications officer (emalecki(at)aoc.gov or 202-228-1793) and also their representatives to voice their opinions.

America's Founding Fathers wholeheartedly believed in the premise stated in Psalm 33:12: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." But what would they have thought of a nation that removes God from its heritage, classroom instructions, civic ceremonies, buildings, monuments, historic sites, etc.? I believe the words of Thomas Jefferson are as fitting for religious apostasy as they were for slavery; words that are inscribed upon his memorial in

■ Continued from p4

Washington: "And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever."

To find out more about Chuck Norris and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com).

## Soup

For the moment, we have righted the boat and are learning to paddle, know we are on the river, aware there is rough water still ahead, and there are people both on the bank and in the water to offer help and believe we will make it.

We will make this river our river.

Cancerland: We unfold the game board as one opens a fortune cookie hoping to discern the future. As much as we watch, cancer always makes the first move and catches us by surprise. We ask the experts: What are the rules? They tell of statistics, survival rates, possible outcomes, risks, but still, we must roll the dice,

count out the spaces, slide into despair, climb upward in hope.

One must wait one's turn for treatment, must wait to learn the results of tests. Blood counts fluctuate. Side effects accumulate like so much debt. Must wait years to know for sure, years of worry and dread.

As children, we played simple games. Primary colors. Rewards came quickly, defeats forgotten easily.

As parents, we taught our children games to pass the time. Taught them to follow the rules: Win or lose, we could always play again.

As grandparents, we understand the rules are unknowable, that time passes of its

own accord, that this game is serious, and our best might not be good enough. Yet we start each day, stubborn, ready to compete.

Radiation: Fiat lux.

As children on a bright day we would hold a magnifying glass to catch the sun's rays, focusing the circle of light on a piece of paper into one point of intensity until the spot scorched, smoldered, flamed and burned.

Now machines focus unseen energy on those cancer cells that may have escaped the surgeon's dissection, the chemotherapy's poison.

Let there be light.  
Let there be life.

■ Continued from p5

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# GREG STUMBO



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**Legals**

**Notice of Bond Release**  
In accordance with KRS 350.093, notice is hereby given that V & M Mining Co. of Paintsville, Inc., 1509 Napier St., Flatwoods, Kentucky 41139, has applied for a Phase II & III Bond Release on permit No. 836-5332 Inc. No. 1, which was last issued on 12/14/1999. The application covers an area of approximately 4.94 surface acres, located approximately 1/2 mile north of Honaker in Floyd County. The permit area is approximately 0.80 mile south of the junction of CR 1426 and the Justice Branch Road, and is approximately 0.03 mile south of Justice Branch.

Total bond now in effect is \$13,400.00. Approval of this application will release 100% of the original bond amount.

Reclamation work performed includes backfilling, grading, and initial revegetation, and was completed, March 2006. Written comments, objections, and requests for a public hearing or informal conference must be filed with the Director of Field Services, No. 2 Hudson Hollow, Frankfort, KY 40601 by Dec. 1st, 2008.

A public hearing on the application has been scheduled for Dec. 2nd, 2008, or soon thereafter as may be heard at the Department for Natural Resources Prestonsburg Regional Office, 3140 South Lake Drive, Prestonsburg, Kentucky 41653. The hearing will be cancelled if no request for a hearing or informal conference is received by Dec. 1st, 2008.

This is the final advertisement of the application. Written comments, objections, and requests for a public hearing or informal conference must be filed with the Director of Field Services, No. 2 Hudson Hollow, Frankfort, KY 40601 within 30 days of today's date.

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# Properly used jumper cables pose no danger

by TOM and RAY MAGLIOZZI

Dear Tom and Ray:

My wife heard a report on a local radio station warning people not to use jumper cables on modern cars. The guy said they could cause "unstable voltage" and damage on-board computer operations. I own a 2005 Subaru and a 2007 Ford. When I contacted both vehicles' dealerships, each told me it is OK to use jumper cables. Additionally, each told me that the devices they use in their repair departments to start cars with dead or low batteries are just like jumper cables. So? What's the truth? Are my dealership's service representatives ignorant? Please advise! Thanks! — Rob

RAY: It sounds like you're describing my brother, Rob. Unstable voltage and on-board computer problems.

TOM: Actually, your dealership's service representatives are exactly right. We jump-start cars all the time at the shop, and have never had any car suffer from "unstable voltage" or computer damage when it was jump-started correctly.

RAY: Now, there are lots of problems that can be created if you hook up the jumper cables BACKWARD.

TOM: Right. That can cause unstable voltage, unstable engine, fried computers, angry customers and lots of explainin'.

RAY: So, when you DO jump-start a car, you want to take great care to make sure you're doing it correctly. If you're not sure how to jump-start a car, we have a diagram and instructions on our Web site at [www.cartalk.com](http://www.cartalk.com). Print 'em out and stick 'em in your glove compartment.

## The tale of the detached wheel

Dear Tom and Ray:

Something interesting happened to me today. I was on my way to work, and the right front wheel fell off my 2000 Jeep Grand Cherokee Laredo. I want to know why it fell off. All five of the studs were sheared off, and I could not find any of the studs or lug nuts near the scene when I stopped. When I left my home this morning, I could hear a knocking sound in front of the firewall on the right side. I turned off the radio so that I could listen a little closer, and I noticed that it got louder when I accelerated. I finally decided, after about half a mile, to stop and check it out. I walked all the way around the car, looked underneath it and checked under the hood. I couldn't see anything, so I got back on the road. About another half a mile down the road, I heard and felt some real banging in the front, so I immediately pulled over. As I was pulling to a stop, there was a big bang, and I thought, "Did my front wheel just fall off?" Sure enough, next to my car when I got out was my right front wheel, along with the rotor and everything else, sitting right there in the dirt. I had the car inspected a couple of months ago, and that same day I took it in for an alignment and to have them fix a stabilizer shock-absorber-looking thing that had come loose under the front end area. Since that time, I have put nearly 3,000 miles on it, but I am telling you this because that is the last time I can remember that there could have been an opportunity to remove that wheel. So here is my main question: Why would my wheel suddenly fall off my Jeep? I can think of only a few scenarios.

No. 1: The last time the wheel was off the vehicle, they did not put the lug nuts on tight enough. Good theory, but how was I able to go 3,000 miles before having an incident like this one?

No. 2: The last time the wheel was off the vehicle, they put the lug nuts on too tight and stretched the studs to the point of almost breaking. Again, how did I make it 3,000 miles?

No. 3: My wife hired a hit man who bungled the job. Not a very good theory either, because I already know that she thinks I'm pretty much worthless, so she wouldn't have much to gain by offing me.

Should I check my wife's fingernails for dirt? Please do your best Car Talk CSI work on this for me. I am really depending on you. This could be life or death if I'm wrong. — John

TOM: Well, so far, I think your wife is the leading candidate, John.

RAY: Actually, it could have

been lug nuts that were too loose OR too tight. They could loosen up and fall off one by one over 3,000 miles, but that is an unusually long time. More likely, the lug nuts were overtightened.

TOM: Here's the likely scenario: When you had your stabilizer replaced 3,000 miles ago, someone overtightened your lug nuts. What that does is it stretches the studs. Now, every metal has an "elastic region," a point to which it can be stretched and still return to its original shape and size. But if you stretch it beyond its elastic region, you get to its

"plastic region," where it won't return and is permanently weakened.

RAY: My guess is that, after being overtightened, at some point one of your studs failed and broke off, taking the lug nut with it. You didn't notice it, because you had four more. But because one was missing, those four had to do the work of five. That put more stress on the remaining studs.

TOM: Eventually, another one broke. And then another. When you set out this morning, you had two studs left. That's

why you were hearing the wheel banging against the disc rotor. One more stud broke off, and the noise got louder. And then, that last one sheared off and the wheel came off with it.

RAY: And you should get down on your knees and thank your lucky stars that you were going 4 mph when it happened instead of 40.

TOM: If you're sure that the guys who did the stabilizer repair removed only that one wheel, you can just replace those five studs and be fine.

RAY: But if there's a chance

that those animals overtightened all four of your wheels, then I'd recommend replacing all 20 studs. And just to be safe, check your wife's bedside table to make sure she hasn't taken out an "accident only" insurance policy that you don't know about.

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