

FLATTMANN FILES

April 2019

“Quality Is No Accident”

FROM THE DESK OF *Grady Flattmann*

Did you know that if you accept a settlement for a personal injury accident, the insurance company will require you to sign a release agreement that makes it your responsibility to reimburse any third parties who may have an interest in your settlement? This includes outstanding medical bills and the reimbursement interest of your own health insurance company (including Medicare).

Settlement releases typically include an “indemnity” agreement. This means you agree to protect and defend the other insurance company if a third party comes knocking at their door demanding to be paid out of the settlement funds you received. Once you sign a release, the insurance company is out of the picture and you are on your own.

A big part of our job is administrating settlements and making sure that our clients don't run into trouble once their case is resolved. This can be a very complicated process and includes keeping our clients compliant with their own health insurance, negotiating medical reimbursements, and jumping through hoops with Medicare.

If you are handling your own settlement, make sure to consider what happens after you sign a

release. For more information, check out our website and download our free book: *The Essential Guide to Car Accident Claims in Louisiana*.



-Grady

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GEORGE P. BURDELL

ONE OF THE MOST ELABORATE PRANKS IN HISTORY

Whether April Fools' Day is a time-honored western tradition or a tired, unfunny festival of eyerolls depends on who you ask. Ask the mom who just got blasted with water via the old “rubber band on the sink sprayer” trick, and you'll probably find the latter. But ask the kid who planted the trap, and you'll get a hearty, cackling endorsement.

Even if you're sick of watching your back on April Fools' Day and tired of the corporate cash grabs masquerading as (mostly) bad jokes that pop up like clockwork every year, you still have to give it up for the classics. Even the most bitter among us must admit that some pranks are so clever, elaborate, and inspired that they deserve their place in the annals of history. The name “George P. Burdell” will certainly reverberate through the hall of hoaxes for decades to come.

GEORGE COMES TO LIFE

Never make a clerical error with a young student who has too much time on his hands. In 1927, when William Edgar Smith was mistakenly sent a second enrollment form for the Georgia Institute of Technology, he had an idea. Combining the name of his then-principal, George P. Butler, with Burdell, the maiden name of his best friend's mother, he enrolled the fictitious George P. Burdell in the prestigious university.

Next, Smith signed Burdell up for all his same classes and, for the next four years, completed every bit of his schoolwork twice — once under his own name and once under Burdell's, changing a few details here and there and varying his handwriting slightly so as not to raise suspicion.

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Somehow, despite the fact that Mr. Burdell never once attended a day of class, he managed to secure his B.S. in Civil Engineering in 1930. Soon after, he continued on to his master's degree.

At some point, George P. Burdell morphed from an elaborate practical joke into a bona fide legend with countless copycat pranks to his name. One of the most famous came early on, when a truckload of furniture arrived "collect on delivery" to a Georgia Tech fraternity, addressed to one George P. Burdell. Apparently, a freshman had felt snubbed by the frat and decided to get even.

Burdell was continually enrolled in the school by loyal fans for decades. In 1969, Georgia Tech computerized the registration process, but intrepid hackers found a way to enroll him in every single class offered at the school that quarter. The man was unstoppable.

Members of the armed forces carried on the Burdell hoax, and Private Burdell began to appear all over the world in dozens of

conflicts. He even flew 12 missions in a B-17 bomber over Europe in the 8th Air Force until a Georgia Tech graduate was promoted to operations officer and put the kibosh on his service. Burdell wed the fictional Agnes Scott student Ramona Cartwright in 1958, served on the board of directors for Mad magazine, and was nearly voted the 2001 Time Person of the Year before the magazine removed him from consideration.

Barack Obama even did his part to further the myth. While giving a speech at the school in 2015, he began "Now, I understand George P. Burdell was supposed to introduce me today — but nobody could find him!"

The only thing more impressive than Mr. Burdell's abundant achievements is his fans' dedication to keeping him alive. You may think your buddies' inside jokes are long-running — this one practically willed a human into existence.

Today, people always seem to be on the lookout for Burdell, paging him at the airport



or during football games. Even in his ripe old age, he still has time to be the production assistant on "South Park" and read thousands upon thousands of magazines during his spare moments. Wherever he is, we can only wish him well and hope that all the would-be pranksters out there take a note from William Edgar Smith's playbook this April Fools' Day. After all, if you're truly dedicated to your craft, what's 70-plus years?

HOW THE PLACEBO EFFECT WORKS

The placebo effect works. Study after study has confirmed it. The question is how. Numerous studies have shown placebos are most effective for aches and pains, as well as seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and depression. The placebo effect even works if you're aware you're taking a placebo.

With that in mind, a person can't just start taking placebos (or sugar pills) and expect a placebo effect. There is a strong psychological component. This may mean seeing a doctor or participating in a drug study to get the ball rolling.

There are three challenges a person needs to overcome for a placebo to be most effective: **conditioning, expectation, and belief.**

First, you need to be **conditioned** to accept the placebo as the real deal. For example, the placebo has to look like the medication it is meant

to emulate. You might start treatment with the real medication and eventually transition to the look-alike.

Then, you must **expect** it to work. There must be an indication that the placebo is "real." This might be a doctor telling you it's real and effective, or it might be previous experience taking a certain medication. In your mind, if the real drug worked, so will the look-alike.

Lastly, you need to **believe** that when you take the placebo pill, it will do what you **think** it's supposed to do. Belief is a powerful tool, and when you believe it's going to help, the placebo will be most effective.

In pain studies, for example, some people experienced the same reduction in pain as they would have experienced had they taken typical, over-the-counter pain medication. Keep in mind, however, that the placebo effect affects each person differently.

Exploring the Crimes of Antarctic Wildlife

Legal Case Study: Adélie the Rock Thief

On an island off the coast of Antarctica, a BBC film crew caught footage of a crime taking place. In the video, as one male Adélie penguin leaves his nest to search for additional rocks to add to it, his neighbor waddles over, removes a rock from the nest, and carries it back to his own. When the first penguin returns from his search, his neighbor plays it cool, but at each opportunity, he repeats the crime and steals his neighbor's rocks.

While animals aren't actually subject to legal action, and the Adélie penguin was only behaving according to natural instinct, the fine writers for the blog Legal Grounds point out that the rock thief situation presents an interesting legal case study.

By taking his neighbor's rock and putting it in his own nest, the neighbor penguin committed an act of theft. Theft is defined as "the taking of someone else's property with the intent to permanently deprive the victim of that property." In some places, when a thief leaves the scene of

the crime, the theft is considered complete. If the thief returns and steals additional items, that could be considered a new crime and result in additional charges. So, since the neighbor penguin takes a rock, leaves the scene of the crime, and returns, he could be found guilty of multiple theft charges. If he'd decided to go big and take his neighbor's entire nest at once, he might've been charged with grand theft.

Now, if the penguin who was stolen from had used force to protect his precious nest rocks, the case would be complicated even further. Allowable force is generally limited in cases of theft. To prove self-defense, the victim penguin would have to show there was a threat of force against him, that he didn't provoke the neighbor penguin in any way, and that he didn't have the option to escape. From a legal perspective, it was probably best that the victim penguin didn't use force.

For now, we'll leave the Adélie penguins to their nest-building business and save the legal cases for the human world.



Take a Break!

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Inspired by foodnetwork.com

PASTA PRIMAVERA

Ingredients

- 12 ounces pasta, ideally fusilli
- 1/2 pound broccoli florets
- 2 carrots, shredded
- 1 yellow bell pepper, cut into strips
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese, ideally Parmigiano-Reggiano
- Kosher salt, for pasta water and to taste

Directions

1. In a large pot, liberally salt water and bring to a boil. Add fusilli and cook according to package directions. Add broccoli, carrots, and bell pepper during the last 2 minutes of cook time.
2. Drain the pasta and veggies, reserving 1/2 cup of cooking liquid. Return pasta and veggies to pot.
3. In a large skillet, heat olive oil to medium heat. Add garlic and cook until translucent and golden, 30 seconds. Add tomatoes, red pepper flakes, and 1 teaspoon salt. Cook until tomatoes are wilted, about 2 minutes. Stir in reserved pasta water.
4. Add tomato mixture to pasta pot, stirring to coat evenly.
5. Divide into bowls, top with parmesan, and serve.



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RATED E FOR EVERYONE

What Do Ratings Mean, and How Should You Use Them?

Despite guidance from ratings systems, it can be difficult for parents to discern what digital content is appropriate for their children. Learn more about ratings guidelines for common entertainment media and how to decipher that information so you can make educated decisions that work for your family.

Movies: G-rated movies are considered suitable for all ages, whereas PG, PG-13, and R-rated movies are progressively less appropriate for kids because of violence, nudity, and language. Some ratings come with age limits; children who are under the age of 17 must be accompanied by an adult at R-rated movies.

TV Shows: Due to laws that limit inappropriate content on public airwaves, TV rating systems follow unique codes. In the U.S., shows that are rated as TV-14 (content that is suitable for those ages 14 and older) can only air after 5 p.m. Meanwhile, TV-MA (content that is appropriate for mature audiences) can only air between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Most shows airing between the hours of 6 a.m. and 5 p.m. are rated TV-G or TV-PG. These are similar in content to their movie counterparts. Some television children’s shows will also be rated as TV-Y or TV-Y7, and their only distinction is that TV-Y7 has been deemed appropriate for young children ages 7 and older. TV ratings can also have additional descriptors attached to them to explain what kind of content earned the rating.



Video Games: There are seven video game ratings: Early Childhood (EC), Everyone (E), Everyone 10+ (E10), Teen (T), Mature (M), Adults Only (AO), or Rating Pending (RP). These ratings provide consumers with more information about content. Again, as the age of the intended user increases, content progresses from allowing mild violence or suggestive content to adult themes.

When choosing family entertainment, experts suggest using both the rating and the description of the media to make your decision since the rating system may not fully explain media content. For example, studies have found that a PG-13 movie can sometimes have just as much violence as an R-rated movie. Additionally, you may be fine with the content in a T-rated video game for a more developmentally advanced 11-year-old.

Once you get past all the combinations of numbers and letters, you as a parent might find that ratings for video games, movies, and TV shows provide helpful information. Couple the ratings with your own research and your own values, and put an end to worrying about what surprises may lurk in your children’s media.