



Friday, November 6, 2009

Van stolen 35 years ago in Wash. state recovered



SPOKANE, Wash. – A Volkswagen van stolen 35 years ago in Washington state has been found in a shipping container at the Los Angeles/Long Beach seaport. Customs agents found the 1965 van on Oct. 19 when they opened a shipping container bound for The Netherlands, The Spokesman-Review newspaper reported. They ran the vehicle identification number and discovered it was listed as stolen. Law officers said the van, which is in great shape, was stolen from an upholstery shop in Spokane on July 12, 1974 — while Spokane was hosting the 1974 World's Fair. Authorities have not been able to find the

original owner, whom they would not identify. The operators of a vehicle restoration business in Arizona were the latest to have possession of the van, which they refurbished and planned to sell overseas, said Michael Maleta, an investigator with the California Highway Patrol. Maleta said the shop is also considered a victim in the case, and he declined to identify it. The van now legally belongs to Allstate Insurance Co., which paid off the original owner's theft claim back in 1974. The Highway Patrol turned over the van to Allstate this week. Maleta said the van had been restored to pristine condition. "Now it's probably worth 27 grand," he said. "It's a beautiful van." Megan Brunet, a spokeswoman for Allstate, said the company is looking through old records trying to find the original policy and theft claim. "Trying to find paper files from that far back can be pretty challenging," she said. The company will likely have the van appraised and go through the process of getting a replacement title before selling it at auction, she said.

Enid couple escape injury after collision with escaped pachyderm



An Enid couple considered themselves lucky to be alive after a close encounter Wednesday night with an escaped circus elephant. They also had a hard time convincing passers-by what had happened after the accident. Bill Carpenter, a 68-year-old farmer, and his wife, Deena, were on their way home from church when their SUV side-swiped a 29-year-old, 8-foot, 4,500-pound female African elephant that had fled from the Family Fun Circus set up on the south side Garfield County Fairgrounds. The Carpenters were returning home at 8:50 p.m. Wednesday, driving north in the inside lane of U.S. 81, when the elephant, Kamba, came southbound toward them. "We got by P&K John Deere (4121 N. U.S. 81 Bypass)," Carpenter said. "We were doing about 55, not speeding or anything. All the sudden I saw something running out in front of me. I thought, 'What is that?' I know it wasn't a deer or a cow." Carpenter said

he isn't quite sure if he hit the elephant or if the elephant hit him. "I thought this was wheat and cattle country but not elephant country," he said. The Carpenters are thanking God they lived through the accident. "Had I not turned that wheel of the car extremely, which I did, we would

have hit the elephant right in the legs and it would have come over the car and landed on us and we would have died," Carpenter said. "The elephant ran right into the side of the car with its knee and tusk. The car was on two wheels and I whipped it back and it went on the other two wheels. Then I braked. "It happened so fast. We give the Lord all the glory and credit for saving our lives. We are a walking miracle." The elephant was hard to see before the accident because it blended into the roadway, Carpenter said. When he told his wife he saw an elephant, Deena said she replied, "What?" "It's not every day you hit an elephant," she said. "I didn't see it until we hit it. I looked to the left to where he was sitting and all I could see was this big body of an elephant, and of course it started tossing us. "Afterwards my husband said he didn't know whether to laugh or cry." 'We just hit an elephant' Following the accident, Carpenter and his wife tried to warn other traffic of the elephant's presence. "I faced back south, toward town, and started flashing my lights at other oncoming traffic to slow them down," Carpenter said. His wife also tried to flag down a car to call the police to report the accident. "She went out on the road to stop traffic, she forgot her cell phone. When we told them we hit an elephant, they thought we had been drinking or smoking something," Carpenter said. Deena said the drivers she stopped weren't sure what to make of her story. "I flagged down a driver. The first two didn't stop. The third one did," she said. "She asked me, 'Are you hurt?' I said, 'Well, I hit my head' and I said, 'We just hit an elephant.' "She said, 'An elephant?' and her husband said, 'You mean a deer.' I said, 'I hit my head but it wasn't that hard. I saw an elephant.'" said Deena. The SUV's front driver's side fender is dented from the elephant's knee and the elephant's tusk punched through the side, tearing up sheet metal. "The police and fire and rescue came. They were gracious and very kind. I asked, 'Did we really hit an elephant?'" Carpenter said. Following the accident, the elephant hid in a field off the roadway in some trees and brush. Handlers were able to subdue it and keep it chained until a semi-trailer truck could be brought in to transport it. ([Read Full Story](#))

Who's taken my fur coat? Vets baffled by bald bears with mystery condition



Los Angeles -- Dogs that open doggie doors with their noses are such ruffians. Those ill-mannered animals will probably never get a date or a bone. Sophisticated pets, with deep-pocketed owners, can now use garage-like doggie doors that open and close electronically when a pet wearing a collar with a radio-frequency-identification chip approaches. The doors only open for the pet with the RFID chip, keeping out unwanted visitors. The chips are widely used at automated toll booths and for tracking airline baggage. Plexidor

Electronic Pet Doors cost \$129 to \$800 depending on the size and model. To see a picture, check out our [L.A. Unleashed blog](#). "It allows the pets to go outside when they have to, not when you're able to let them out," said Plexidor President Joe Ambrose. He added: "For the pet owner, it is very helpful in preventing pet messes in the house from the pet having to hold it too long."

Babies May Pick Up Language Cues In Womb

The distinctive sounds of a newborn's first cries may be influenced by the mother tongue of its parents. A new study of over a thousand recorded cries from 30 French newborns and 30 German newborns found differences in the cries' melody patterns. French cries tended to have a rising melody, while the German cries tended to have a falling melody. The finding suggests that newborns just a few days old may already be trying to imitate the prevailing intonation patterns of the language they heard while still in the womb. "I think French and German are quite different with respect to their intonation patterns," says Kathleen Wermke of the Center for



Prespeech Development and Developmental Disorders at the University of Wurzburg in Germany. She says that in French, intonation is characterized by a pitch rise at the end of words or phrases, while the German language has a falling pattern. Those differences are mirrored in

the differences seen in newborns' cries, according to a report in the journal *Current Biology*. Of course, both groups of infants were capable of producing different types of cries, says Wermke. But in general, she says, "the dramatic finding was that the French prefer to produce those having their pitch maximum at the end, while the Germans did not." Newborns are likely highly motivated to imitate their mothers in order to enhance bonding, she and her colleagues argue. "If we would have compared German and English newborns, we probably would have found not such a strong difference," says Wermke, because their intonation patterns are more similar to each other. Previous studies have already shown that newborns appear to show a preference for melodies that they heard prenatally. And Toben Mintz, associate professor of psychology and linguistics at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, says scientists already knew that newborns can distinguish different languages, probably based on rhythmic patterns. "But what is really novel about this study is showing that they can actually produce these patterns in their cries," Mintz says. "Crying is not linguistic, yet they seem to be echoing the acoustic patterns that they've heard either in utero or very early on, very early exposure, right after birth." He says it's surprising that such young infants have this degree of vocal control. "That is quite astonishing that they can do this so early on, and it suggests some sort of innate mechanisms that form this link," he says. Even though most new parents concentrate on trying to stop a baby's crying, Wermke says, the take-home message for her is that people should also listen more carefully and truly appreciate the complexity of a baby's first sounds. "I think we should be more aware that crying is a language itself," she says, "and the baby is really trying to communicate with us by its first sounds already." ([NPR Story](#))

Man calls 911 to say marijuana missing

Salem, MA -- A 21-year-old Salem man reportedly called 911 to say that his marijuana was missing, but when deputies arrived, he was booked on drunken-driving charges instead, officials said. It began at 12:52 a.m. Tuesday as a report of a vehicle break-in at the Freeloader Tavern, 501 Lancaster Drive SE, said sheriff's spokeswoman Lt. Sheila Lorange. A man told dispatchers that while he was in the bar, someone broke into his truck, stole \$400 cash, a jacket and about 3/4 ounce of marijuana, valued at about \$180. Deputy Ryan Clarke went to the tavern but was unable to find the driver. About an hour later, the driver called 911 again, angry that deputies had not arrived. Lorange said the dispatcher had difficulty understanding the caller because the driver was driving and stopping several times to vomit. Deputies eventually found the man at 49th Avenue and Fontana Court SE, where he had parked. The man, who was found about 100 feet from his truck, told deputies that he was looking for the people who stole his "weed." Clarke said the driver was drunk. Clarke took a theft report from the man regarding his missing items but explained the implications of possessing marijuana, Lorange said. If the driver, who did not have a medical-marijuana card, was found in possession of marijuana, he would have been charged with possession of a controlled substance. Calvin Hoover, 21, of Salem was arrested on charges of driving under the influence of intoxicants.

Dancing Weather Man



Los Angeles -- The weather in Los Angeles is so predictable weather reporter Mark Thompson from the local Fox affiliate can just play sexy rap music and dance the day's forecast. [Here's one video.](#) [Here's another,](#) and [here's yet another.](#)

Central Talent Booking