would you believe . . . . . •

The U.S. Navy is losing a lot of sailors to desertion these days -- more than at any time in the Navy's 202 - year history -- and twice the number that jumped ship during the divisive war in Vietnam.

Navy leaders have confirmed that the desertion rate for the last fiscal year was almost 32 for every 1,000 enlisted persons, and say they have set up a service-wide task force to deal with the problem.

The problem seems to be that in peace time, fellows just don't like the idea of spending lots of time away from land and out to sea. During a war, or when sailors feel that their work is vital to the national interest, they do their duty. But in times of peace, they see it as just a job -- and one that they don't always like.

Deserts usually receive less than honorable discharges, but that bad piece of paper has failed to stem the tide of desertions. So now the Navy is looking for guys who really want to go to sea. (Newscript)

Here's a case that proves that eloquence is more important than facts in the courtroom.

A man known as the Santa Monica Flasher recently managed to get himself acquitted on indecent exposure charges by acting as his own attorney. Courtroon observers say he was so eloquent that he put veteran barristers to shame.

But just before the jury was about to issue its not-guilty verdict, a young woman approached the bench and asked to address the judge. She was interrupted, however, by a buzzer announcing the jury's return. After the verdict was handed down and the Flasher was set free, the young woman was finally allowed to speak. She told the judge that while the jury was deliberating, the Flasher was seated inthe back of the courtroom with his pants open, exposing himself to any and all. (Newscript)

When it comes to mixed conversations, women do most of the talking. Right? Wrong. According to a study conducted by doctoral candidates at the University of California at Santa Barbara, men not only talk a lot more than women, but they interrupt the conversation a lot more frequently too. Graduate student Candice West said she studied the conversations between unrelated undergraduates and those between married graduate students and found that for every two interruptions made by a woman, a man would interrupt 46 times.

The results of the study were published in a newsletter called, "Women and Language News," which is compiled three times a year by graduate students at Stanford University. The newsletter notes, the women's movement hasn't done much to change our language. Most men, it said, still refer to themselves as "Chairmen" while "Chairperson" seems reserved for women who hold such positions. And the title, "Ms.", though it was meant to get rid of all references to women's marital status, now seems to refer only to "young women who are feminists". (Newscript)

Star light, star bright, how much smog is in the air tonight? Telescopes trained on distant stars can now tell us not only how much smog we breathe, but exactly what's in it.

Two scientists from Lawrence Livermore Laboratory near Oakland, California say they developed the successful technique, which involves photographing the stars through the telescope.

The researchers explained that as a star sets, its light appears fainter as it passes through more of the urban smog layers. Light detectors and cameras can then identify the pollutants while a microcomputer makes a vertical "map" of the smog layer. (Newscript)

A California firm has developed, patented and published the details of a space-age laser gun, apparently overcoming serious problems that made earlier laser guns impractical.

New Scientist Magazine says the new device is a hand-held unit which looks somewhat like a space-gun. When the operator squeezes the laser gun trigger, complex chemical reactions occur, producing a laser beam that reportedly blinds the foe.

In earlier laser guns, the toxic gases released by the chemical reaction could fell the soldier firing the gun, while the heat produced would give him away to the infrared detection devices of the "enemy." But TRW's version has a pump cartridge which sucks in the gases and absorbs the heat. (Newscript)

If you're one of the 1.3 million Americans living in sin, Human Behavior Magazine warns that Arkansas may not be the place for you.

A bill recently introduced into the Arkansas legislature would require all unmarried persons living with members of the opposite sex to apply for a $1,500 (dollar) "cohabitational license" and register with the local sheriff. The bill also stipulates that persons failing to obtain the "cohabitational license" could be arrested and fined a maximum $2,000 (dollars).

The bill, by the way, is reportedly dying a quiet death in legislative committees.

When John Christoffel paid $2.60 for a six-pack of Lowenbrau recently, he thought it was an expensive imported beer. It wasn't so Christoffel sued.

What he had actually bought was an "image beer", brewed not in Munich, Germany, but by Miller Brewing Company in Milwaukee; Azusa, California or Fort Worth. An "image beer", says Frobes Magazine, is a "well-known and sometimes prestigious foreign beer to which a domestic brewer has bought the rights and which it brews in the U.S." It doesn't cost as much as the *real* thing -- but it sure looks mighty impressive when friends drop by.

These "image beers" serve a real purpose to the big domestic brewers as well. There's a beer war going on, driving the cost of a six-pack of beer below the cost of a six-pack of Coke and cutting into the brewer's profit margin. If the brewers can charge 80 cents more for the "image" six-pack, while the costs remain virtually the same, well, it does real nice things to your profit margin.

John Christoffel has dropped his suit, but he's probably reading his beer labels very closely these days. And maybe you should too. (Newscript)

A state senator is suggesting in all seriousness that Hawaii get into the pot-growing business.

State Senator Anson Chong told a Senate Health Committee meeting on the medical uses of marijuana that the University of Mississippi receives $200,000 (dollars) a year from the federal government to raise marijuana used in federally sponsored research. Chong thinks that Hawaii should get a piece of the action because of its (quote) "excellent growing climate and respected capabilities in tropical agriculture."

Richard Stillman, a psychiatrist with the National Institute of Drug Abuse told the committee that Hawaii might well be a good place to grow federal pot, since the state's even climate could produce what the fed's want -- a standardized product. Research is indicating that marijuana has potential in treating the nausea that accompanies cancer chemotherapy. (Newscript)

Perhaps you own a private lake or a bit of beach. But every summer the teeming masses find your lake or beach, and despite all the "Private--Keep Out" signs, insist on swimming and playing in your personal bit of water. What do you do?

Buy a shark. Stephen Winkworth, a London artist, has designed a five-foot shark made of fibreglass and painted to look like the real thing.

It swims, dives, turns and changes speed, all at the push of a button. This may or may not come as a disappointment, but it neither chomps on legs nor eats.

Despite this weakness, Winkworth has already sold several sharks at $900 (dollars) each. (Newscript -- Credit: Parade Magazine)

Mothers who don't like their new born infants can almost guarantee a negative outcome later in life - a true, self-fulfilling prophecy.

Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh conducted a study of more than 100 children over an extended period of time. They found that those kids whose mothers had rated them below-average in babyhood, showed an astonished degree of emotional disturbance at age four and at age 10 or 11.

By age 10 and 11, only eight percent of these children were judged to be completely emotionally healthy. But of those children whose mothers had rated them above-average, almost half were symptom-free. (Newscript)

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