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Letters from North America

By Peary Perry

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I tend to think of this weekly column as carrying a certain amount of responsibility to keep you, the loyal reader informed of certain points of interest as they become available, no matter where in the world they occur. To me, it's a sacred trust and one that I do not take lightly. It's a heavy burden to voluntarily place upon one's self, this universal omnibudsman role for the benefit of those unfortunates in our country who might otherwise remain in the dark about vital information that certainly affects each and every one of us. A case in point is this one which I happened to stumble upon while conducting my weekly research for your enlightenment.

The University of Georgia has just completed a long and through study which shows conclusively that rats exposed to marijuana lose their sense of perception. Yes, these dedicated scientists, working feverishly, working long and arduous hours in cramped conditions have proved once and for all that when rats are exposed to an injection of synthetic marijuana they become (are you ready for this?) DOPEY.

This experiment was conducted in the strictest of environments by using two different sounds. If the short sound was heard, the rats had to press the lever on the right to receive a pellet of food. If the long sound was heard by our furry inmates, they soon learned to press the lever on the left. Short sound, right lever. Long sound, left lever. Got it? Good. You can be assured you would have been fed. The rats did fine under this arrangement.

And then, guess what? Yes, dear reader the good old US Government stepped in and authorized a study to find out if the behavior of these little animals would be altered in any way if they were stoned. And what do you think they found?

That's right boys and girls. The little mice just went bonkers and didn't care at all about which lever they pressed when the horns went off. Except when they got the munchies. Can you imagine that? They pressed the right lever when the long sound was made and the left lever when the short sound was made. Isn't that the most amazing thing you've ever heard? Once they were smashed out of their little gourds they didn't care if they ate or not. They got confused. Happy, but confused, nevertheless.

The point of all of this was to determine if animals have a sense of time. Obviously any animal (human or rodent) stoned on grass loses track of time and cannot concentrate. Not that rats and mice have to be anywhere at some specific time anyway, but I suppose it's good to know they couldn't be relied upon in the event we needed them for some important national security issue or something. One of the researchers was quoted as saying "We and other animals have a sense of time. We can judge how long we have been waiting for a bus, for example, and decide that the current wait is longer or shorter than usual." He went on to say..."The marijuana-like substance dramatically altered the ability of the rats to maintain sustained attention. The implication is clear, that marijuana smokers shouldn't drive after smoking."

He didn't elaborate on who should or shouldn't drive. Rats or us? I'm also confused about the bus part. I haven't taken a bus in quite a long time, so I can't tell you from first hand experience, but have rats taken to riding the Metro in parts of this country?

Boy, am I glad we spent a ton of taxpayer bucks to make a study of this magnitude. Not to be cynical, but I wonder what happens to those rats if you make them chug down, say four or five vodka martinis? They probably need to call a taxi. Friends don't let rats drive, do they? I'm looking into the possibilities of a federal grant to study the effects of obesity in ferrets if they eat forty hot dogs a day for a month. I'll keep you posted on my progress.

I was born at a very early age. I arrived in this world with very little. It was during the war and according to my parents, names were being rationed out. My Mom was kind of slow and she couldn't run very fast. I guess by the time she got down to the Federal Bureau of Names, all of the Johns, Jims, and Davids were gone. So, according to what I've been told...she just settled on two names that were the same, but weren't. As in Peary Perry.

It's October and there are no NHL hockey games on the horizon.

By Catherine Kenyeres

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It should be the start of the NHL hockey league 2004–2005 season but it's not happening. The sports arenas across North America are quiet. There are no piercing sounds of whistles, no scraping sounds of hockey skate blades digging into the ice or pucks being slammed into the boards. The television crews normally setting up to televise the games are nowhere in sight. The NHL hockey players, coaches, and TV crews are off doing something else this season.

And there is no sign of NHL hockey coming back any time soon. The owners and the players are on opposite sides of the spectrum and there have been no talks since September 9, 2004. No further talks have been scheduled. The longer the impasse continues, the greater the blackout will carry on. Hence, in all probability, there will be no hockey season this year.

It's for certain that no games will be played in October or November for that matter. As for December, even if the sides come to some agreement, December will most likely be used for training and the earliest a game can be played would be January.

What are the players doing? 200 of them (1/4) are currently in Europe playing hockey. Their contracts have out clauses which mean that if the NHL starts up again, they will return to North America to play here.

And if you are a die hard fan needing to see a hockey game, the minor hockey leagues are up and running in the smaller towns and are happy to have you come out and see them play.

Catherine Kenyeres is a freelance writer and publisher of <http://www.best-4u-tickets.com>. Catherine has written numerous articles for the sports enthusiast.



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