

APRIL 2019



# OPENING

# STATEMENTS

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## FROM THE DESKS OF *RAZUMICH + DELAMATER*

### SPRING IS IN THE AIR!

As I'm writing this, we're FINALLY seeming to turn the corner when it comes to our particularly nasty winter season. There have been a few news stories about how Pennsylvania has "arrested" the groundhogs and is charging them with providing false evidence; I definitely wouldn't want to be the attorney defending that missed weather prediction!

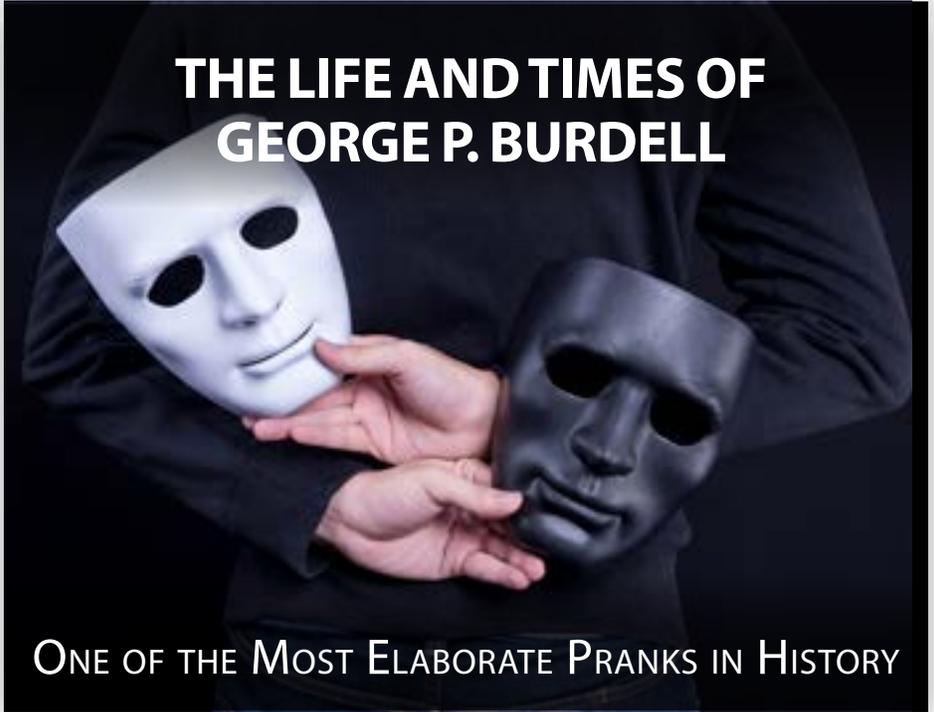
Like many other people around this time of year, the Office has been engaging in a little spring-cleaning. We've learned that Dots (the candy) never go bad and Keebler Fudge Stripe Cookies may last forever, assuming that the brave team member that tried them doesn't succumb to what we're reasonably certain is an unrelated illness.

Baseball season is also approaching, and anyone who knows Jack knows that he's a HUGE Chicago Cubs fan. As a native New Yorker, Joe tends to prefer the Yankees, but only to the extent that he can try to taunt Jack when the Yanks are doing better in the standings than the Cubs.

Convention season will also have started by the end of March, so keep watching this space for Jack's adventures at various trade shows. Take care until next month!



## 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.

*Continued on page 2 ...*

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?

## THE BRIGHT SIDE OF DARK TOURISM *THE ART BEHIND THE MACABRE BUSINESS*

People have always been fascinated by the strange and macabre, as is evident by popular Netflix documentaries, true crime podcasts, and horror novels. From watching public executions throughout history to visiting famous death sites, humans have been curious about the morbid and the taboo, always looking to catch a glimpse of something that takes us away from the doldrums of our sheltered lives. But where some may see suffering, exploitation, or ill-advised curiosity, others see dollar signs. And "dark tourism" keeps the cash rolling in.

"Dark tourism" is an umbrella term used to describe people visiting and migrating to certain areas because of a titular dark event that took place there. Sites like the scene of Princess Diana's car crash in Paris or serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer's apartment in Milwaukee attract thousands of visitors each year, who all contribute to the pot in some way. Not only does this type of travel benefit the city — think of Paris' world-famous catacombs and the

type of cash flow they produce — but it trickles down to the ticket sellers, tour guides, and T-shirt salesmen on street corners.

It's not just goths and devil worshippers paying homage either. People from all walks of life find themselves drawn to these sites. Professor Lennon from Glasgow Caledonian University in London, who helped coin the term "dark tourism," says that the phenomenon stems from humans being "motivated by a desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death." People have been profiting from the misfortune of others since the beginning of time, and the margins are steep. It's pretty cheap to conduct research in a public library, it costs next to nothing to print out pictures to commemorate a horrible tragedy, and it's free to stand on a sidewalk.

Where there's a will, there's a way, and where there's heartache, there's business.

# Companies That Participate in April Fools' Day

## 3 Hilarious Pranks Played by Businesses

April Fools' Day might be the only appropriate time of year for you to prank your friends or coworkers with gags like dipping an onion in caramel and offering it as a candy apple or loosening the tops of the salt and pepper shakers. It's also the one day of the year when big companies get to join in the mischief as well. Check out these company-wide April Fools' jokes that left millions of people scratching their heads.

### NETFLIX'S PSA

In 2015, everyone's favorite online streaming company issued a PSA that warned binge-watchers all over the world of the social, physical, and psychological dangers of watching too much TV. In fact, if viewers watched more than two consecutive episodes of a show on April 1, they were greeted with a PSA from popular actors, like Michael Kelly from "House of Cards" or Taylor Schilling from "Orange Is the New Black." Some stars even told Netflix users to "Turn off the TV and take a shower. You stink!"

### BURGER KING'S CHOCOLATE WHOPPER

Just last year, Burger King fooled hungry customers by creating the Chocolate Whopper. The imaginary fast-food treat is made with chocolate cake buns,



a chocolate "beef" patty, raspberry syrup as the ketchup, rings of white chocolate as the onions, milk chocolate as the lettuce, vanilla frosting as mayo, and candied blood oranges as the tomatoes. This prank was quite a creative feat by Burger King staff, and merely watching the advertisement spiked glucose levels everywhere.

### EARMONY'S 'FUREVER LOVE' DATING SERVICE FOR DOGS

Perhaps the most wholesome prank that's ever been peddled to the masses was the launching of eHarmony's FURever Love: Canine Compatibility Companion Service. The dating website claimed that based on the algorithms they use for creating compatible human relationships, they built this service to "create robust profiles for dogs based on key dimensions of their personality." The biographies they created for the pups' profiles included canine mate preferences, like "Looking for a tug-o-war partner," "Must love squirrels," and "It's been ruff finding a quality stud to go on walks with."

While these April Fools' Day jokes were all made in jest, the pranks certainly kept audiences guessing long after April 1 had passed, and it's not hard to see why.

## TAKE A BREAK!



Inspired by Food & Wine magazine

## OPENING DAY HAMBURGERS

### Ingredients

- 1 pound ground chuck, 80 percent lean
- 4 soft, white hamburger buns, split
- 4 1/4-inch thick tomato slices
- 12–16 pickle rounds
- 4 small leaves iceberg lettuce
- 4 1/4-inch thick yellow onion slices
- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Condiments of your choice

### Directions

1. Lightly grease a small nonstick skillet with oil. Heat over medium-high.
2. While heating, gently shape meat into four patties 3 1/2 inches in diameter. Be careful to handle the meat as little as possible to prevent tough burgers. Season liberally with salt and pepper.
3. Sear patties on each side, about 1 minute per side. Reduce heat to medium-low and continue cooking until desired doneness, about 1 more minute per side for medium-rare, 2 more per side for medium-well.
4. Let meat rest for a minimum of 3 minutes.
5. To assemble, place patty on bottom bun and top with tomato, pickles, lettuce, and onion (in that order). Spread condiments on top half of bun and place on top of onion. Serve.



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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

From the Desks of Razumich & Delamater

**PAGE 1**

The Ballad of George P. Burdell

**PAGE 1**

The Bright Side of Dark Tourism

**PAGE 2**

3 Hilarious Pranks Played by Businesses

**PAGE 3**

Take a Break

**PAGE 3**

Opening Day Hamburgers

**PAGE 3**

A Chilly Legal Case Study

**PAGE 4**

## 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.

