

Randolph bans bunny suits

Only in New York

Like most people, you probably often ask yourself: "What, exactly, are my legal rights if I am wearing a bunny outfit?"

The answer, you will be relieved to learn, is: "It depends."

To understand why this is, let us first consider a 22-page legal decision filed in October by U.S. District Judge David G. Larimer and sent to me by alert attorney James G. Vazzana of Rochester, N.Y. Here, according to Judge Larimer's decision, are the Facts of the Case (and I want to stress that I am not making ANY of this up):

On April 23, 1992, Timothy Wagner and John Payment were traveling on holiday through western New York state. They stopped their van in a Cattaraugus County town called Randolph to eat breakfast, and they noticed a little girl in the restaurant. This, according to Judge Larimer, gave them an idea:

"The men decided it would be a treat for the girl if one of them went to the van, put on the 'Easter Bunny' mask and walked the window of the restaurant to surprise the girl."

It seems that Wagner and Payment were traveling with (Why not?) a large papier-mache bunny head. Each time they entered a new county, one of them would put on the bunny head and pose for a photograph next to the county sign on the roadside (Judge Larimer notes that "They also had a seven-foot stuffed dog in the van which apparently also posed for some of these roadside pictures.").

So Payment got the bunny head out of the van, put it on and waved into the restaurant window until the little girl saw him. Then he put the bunny head away and went back to finish his breakfast.

In some towns, Wagner and Payment might have gotten away with this. But Randolph is not "some town." Several alert citizens observed the Easter Bunny; they thought that it might have been looking into the windows of local banks. So a bank employee called the Cattaraugus County Sheriff's Department, which

So here is the situation:

1. Two strangers had been hanging around Randolph, and one of them had been wearing a bunny head in a possibly suspicious manner.

2. One of the men had been convicted of something.

3. There were banks around.

Lt. Travis, according to a deposition he gave later, as summarized by Judge Larimer, concluded that "the men were bank robbers." So he issued an All Points Bulletin to apprehend the suspects, who were described as "armed and dangerous."

Wagner and Payment were arrested at gunpoint by state police, handcuffed, and returned to Cattaraugus County. There the bank-robbery case against them - which up to that point probably looked airtight - began to fall apart. For one thing, as Judge Larimer noted in his decision, no actual bank had been robbed. Also, Payment and Wagner did not flee, and they were not armed (unless you count the stuffed dog). Also, as the judge pointed out, robbers casing a bank probably would not wear a two-foot-high bunny head featuring "enormous pink ears."

"Generally," observed the judge, "stealth is preferred when engaging in such activity."



So after a couple of hours in custody, Wagner and Payment were released, and everybody had a good laugh, and then Wagner and Payment sued for \$2.1 million. Judge Larimer ruled that Lt. Travis acted improperly, and a jury will determine what the damages are.

This case reaffirms our fundamental right - not specifically mentioned in the Constitution, but clearly on the minds of the Founding Fathers - to look into bank windows while wearing bunny outfits. But that does not mean that we have carte blanche (literally, "hors d'oeuvres") to do whatever we wish. I have here a Nov. 3 Los Angeles Times story sent in by alert reader Cathy Perlmutter, concerning a 35-year-old, 225-pound man who dressed as a "Samurai Bunny" for Halloween, meaning that he carried a wooden sword and had (I am still not making any of this up) "a stuffed bunny on his head." This man was arrested on suspicion of assault after he allegedly almost wacked off another man's ear with his sword when the man asked if he wasn't too old to be trick-or-treating.

So we see from these two cases that there is a "fine line" between legal and illegal bunny-outfit conduct, and the distinctions become even more blurred when we enter the arena of wearing giant chicken heads or - this can be a legal nightmare - two-person horse suits. So in this or any other legal matter, I strongly recommend that before you do anything, you pay a qualified attorney to give you advice that neither you nor he really understands. And make darned sure you register your stuffed dog.

— by Dave Barry —
syndicated columnist

Stone Soup

I never would have expected to be sitting in a room in Niagara Hall on a Tuesday evening holding a deep and diverse conversation with people I had just met, except for my significant other and one or two of his buddies, regarding various current issues of everyday life.

The issues I have chosen as ingredients for a great big cauldron of stone soup in the form of a column for you to read, digest and possibly spit up later, may be attributed to the topics touched upon during the discussion in Niagara Hall.

The recipe is as follows:

- 4 quarts water
- 1 bag frozen mixed conservatives
- 3 cups NCAA
- 3 tablespoons national lottery tickets
- 4 cups college course requirements
- 2 cups increased speed limit
- 1 quart O.J. (orange juice that is)
- 1 lb. Pittsburgh Steelers
- 3 cups parking spaces



1. Fill a large pot with 4 quarts water. Bring to rapid boil adding dash of salt. Dump bag of frozen mixed conservatives into boiling water, stirring thoroughly. Cover with lid. Simmer until conservatives lighten up and are no longer as anal retentive. Once their views are no longer comparable to a horse drawn by the Amish population, remove lid.

2. Take 3 cups NCAA women basketball players and slowly add to pot. Stir occasionally until regulations no longer hand women in sports the shaft with no where to go to continue executing their skills after college years. When the rules include women in programs comparable to the National

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Basketball Association (for men only), replace lid and continue to simmer at low heat.

3. Add 3 tablespoons national lottery tickets. Continue to stir mixture and wait for our national government to take this ingredient into consideration. (Note that the

sale of tickets would complement the rest of the mixture for the stone soup as columnist and seven-time Pulitzer nominee Mr. Dale Van Atta spoke in Reed Lecture Hall on Tuesday evening. He discussed the fact that the U.S. government has no so-called trust fund, and that it spends our tax dollars on ridiculous issues including one amounting to \$1,000,000 spent on a program to teach folks in Utah how to safely cross the street. Also, we paid \$100,000 on a study to determine why some people don't like beets, and \$57,800 on a study of body measurements of airline stewardesses.)

4. Add 4 cups college credits required for graduation for any and all majors on campus. This will appear to cause the soup to overflow. In order to avoid this, strain classes to separate the relevant from the irrelevant.

Candidates for the irrelevant course load include Music 005, Art History 111, some of the ESACT classes, etc. These have little nutritional value now, as plenty were provided during high school years. Unless courses like Political Science 001 is mandated (which would teach students about their government and its procedures thus dispersing new and worthwhile information) and left behind in the colander, allowing courses to go down the drain.

5. Turn heat to high; add 2 cups increased speed limit for Pennsylvania. Let boil for five minutes, stirring occasionally.

Candidates for the irrelevant course load . . . have little nutritional value now, as plenty were provided during high school years.

6. Pour 1 quart O.J. into rapidly boiling mixture. Stir briskly until O.J. can no longer be seen. Money, time and energy spent here is wasted on a mentally challenged celebrity.

7. Carefully add 1 lb. Pittsburgh Steelers to soup. This pot will have to suffice since the team couldn't make it to the other "super bowl."

8. Add 3 cups parking spaces while pouring through strainer. This will prevent freshmen from parking on campus.

Cook conglomeration for at least two hours. Goes well with anything made in the U.S.A. Serves about 23.

— by Laura Borawski —
8th semester / Communication Major

Like most people, you probably often ask yourself: "What, exactly, are my legal rights if I am wearing a bunny outfit?"

sent two officers to Randolph to investigate.

By then Wagner and Payment had left town, but one of the officers, Lt. Ernie Travis, was able to trace Wagner's van from its license plate; he learned that Wagner had a criminal conviction (which later turned out to be related to income-tax-evasion charges).