

ERIC MARGOLIS



And the, uh, winners are ...

It's that wonderful time again for our year-end awards for outstanding news events.

● **Worst Luck** — A Mr. Udumu of Sudan was taking a steamer up the Nile. It was attacked and sunk by rebels. The unfortunate Udumu, burned and wounded, swam for shore. Along the way he was bitten by a crocodile. He managed to struggle ashore. There, collapsed and bleeding, he was bitten by a scorpion. Some days it pays to stay in bed.

● **Best Tourist Promotion** — French vacationers from the Club Med in Corfu boated close to the friendly Albanian coast. Vigilant Albanian border guards opened fire, killing one and injuring another. Tirana Radio reported an "imperialist sabotage mission had been foiled." Cancel our vacation to Albania — we'll go to Barbados.

● **Keeping The Homefires Burning** — Saudi Arabia, concerned that too many of its men are marrying nubile foreign girls, has set up a special fund to encourage marriage to local girls. Grants are given to marry Saudi girls, described as having "no problems with their morals or virtue — and no less beautiful than women from abroad." What about our own homely girls, the great forgotten minority?

● **Watch Those Dirty Old Men** — Kuwait has set up a commission to study ways of restricting the rising number of elderly Kuwaiti gentlemen marrying young foreign girls. Here's a wonderful new issue for our feminists.

● **It Had To Happen** — The world's first breakdance fatality occurred this fall in Pakistan. An overly exuberant youngster broke his neck in mid-spin. Leave breakdancing to wicked Westerners.

● **Trouble With The Law** — Sajat Mohammed, a Pakistani mercenary, was working in Kenya for the Uganda Freedom Movement — a rebel group. He was drugged by Ugandan agents and kidnapped into Uganda. Hauled into court, he was first charged, of all things, with "being in the country illegally." This charge was thrown out. Then Sajat was charged with treason. The judge rejected this charge when Sajat proved he was Pakistani. Foiled at every turn, the Ugandan prosecutors simply dumped the poor wretch in jail. He has not been seen since.

● **Take That, Col. Sanders** — Those deeply concerned by female rights will rejoice to learn that the movement has finally reached its logical conclusion. Miss Violet Spalding of England has founded a new movement called Chicken Lib. It is dedicated to the humane treatment of hens being oppressed by male farmers. Quick, send the lady a grant!

● **Every Witch Way** — Canada sets the world pace for liberating women; but others are following with elan. From Thailand comes the heartening news that its national council of women is demanding that references to witches and wicked stepmothers be deleted from bedtime stories. Grimm's fairy-tales will be stuck away with *Hustler* and *Penthouse*.

● **Most Dreary City of the Year** — If old blue-nose John Calvin could return to earth he would probably choose to live in Toronto. No latter-day Sodom and Gomorrah here. Toronto is noted abroad as the town that killed happy hour, banned girlie magazines, closes down after dinner and hangs tipsy drivers. It's our own little version of swinging East Berlin.

● **Biggest Hutzpah** — Ethiopia for having the nerve to claim its famine was caused by the West. According to the swarthy Ethiopians, the nasty Western capitalists should have anticipated the famine and sent food in advance. They, of course, were too busy partying to notice.

● **Bad Staff Work** — Upper Volta changed its name this year to the People's Republic of Bourkina Fasso. So everyone had to change maps, file cards, etc. Then came the shattering discovery that an error had been made. The correct spelling was Bourkina Faso. Spelling, in that part of Africa, has never been a strong suit.

● **Wimps Of The Year** — Our late, unlamented Liberal government for refusing to prosecute any Soviet spies in Canada. It seems that Ottawa did not want to "endanger" relations with Moscow. How charmingly meek.

● **Scandal Of The Year** — Bravo Italia. For a second year running the Italians have shown that when it comes to monumental chicanery, nobody does it like them. Now tied into one amazing, mind-bending mess: The collapse of the Banco Ambrosiano, the shooting of the Pope, the Sindona financial melodrama, the Propaganda 2 Masonic Lodge, and movie star Rossano Brazzi's group that dealt in arms, drugs and uranium.

● **The Cats' Meow** — During China's cultural revolution cats were denounced as "bourgeois affectations." So no more cats. Ten years later, China is overrun with rats and mice. Now the party is urging people to adopt cats. China's first cat farm just opened. Party Leader Deng Xiaoping even said, "It does not matter what color a cat is, as long as it catches mice." China's cats have the last meow.

● **Keeping Up With The Times** — Remember the man in Red Bluff, California, who kept a woman chained up for four years, doing unspeakable things to her? She was finally allowed out to look for a job but kept coming back for more bondage. She consulted a local clergyman who reported he did not realize she was being held against her will. "I thought," said the good prelate, "it was just one of those modern marriages."

Happy New Year.

(Eric Margolis is a member of the Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies)