

Research causes head scratching

Janet Sheridan
FOR STEAMBOAT TODAY

In September 2015, 10 scientists won the satirical Ig Nobel Prize for scientific studies of questionable worth.

When I read about the tongue-in-cheek prize and the dubious research it rewarded, I felt better about my failed attempts to participate in an extra-curricular science fair in seventh grade.



Sheridan

Mr. Hunt, the fair's advisor, whose uniform was a white lab coat and a pained expression, stressed we were to submit original research topics, not something copied from a science text or an encyclopedia. When I wrote I wanted to build a volcano that would burp tiny pieces of newspaper rather than lava, he responded, "Everyone who was awake during elementary school has already seen a home-made volcano."

After long seconds of deliberation, I re-submitted a plan to see whether a slice of bread would develop mold faster in a refrigerator or at the bottom of a dirty-clothes hamper. This idea earned another criticism: "What scientific effort does this 'experiment' require?"

The next day, I handed in another proposal, one that would require persistent effort

from me. I wanted to see if I could make my sister Barbara repeat, in front of witnesses, an awesome stunt only I could verify: While eating watermelon, she laughed so hard at my imitation of a sick cow that she inhaled a seed and blew it out her nose. According to Mr. Hunt, my plan to verify Barbara's unusual accomplishment lacked "scientific rigor."

Now, 61 years later, I learn I had the makings of an Ig Nobel recipient. My proposed topics could have competed quite nicely with an Ig Nobel prize-winner who invented a bra that converts into two face masks, another who found mammals of all sizes empty their bladders in approximately twenty-one seconds and the inquisitive fellow who tried to understand what happens in the brains of people who see the face of Jesus in a piece of toast

True, some of the Ig Nobel findings were interesting: Dogs prefer to position their bodies on a north-south line when urinating; others were amusing: If you attach a weighted stick to the rear end of a chicken, it will walk like a dinosaur. But one honored finding seemed obvious: People who think they are drunk also see themselves as attractive.

The medical field yielded two of the strangest experiments. In one, a researcher studied how listening to opera impacts

heart-transplant patients, when the patients are mice. Another verified doctors could accurately diagnose acute appendicitis by observing the pain of patients driven over speed bumps. I'll run away, screaming, if I ever hear a doctor say, "I think you have appendicitis, but let's make certain. Climb into my jeep, and I'll jounce you at high speeds around a pot-holed parking lot, at the post office maybe. Then we'll know for sure."

I question the IQ of a prize recipient who discovered the longer a cow has been lying down, the more likely it will soon stand up. And once a cow stands up, it cannot be predicted how soon it will lie down again. Raised on a farm, I can't imagine why anyone of normal intelligence would choose to spend enough time in the company of cows to make those discoveries.

Finally, a research group in Thailand studied penile amputations done by the angry wives of philanderers and recommended surgical techniques for reattachment, "Except in cases where the amputated penis had been partially eaten by a duck."

Sheridan's book, "A Seasoned Life Lived in Small Towns," is available in Craig at Downtown Books and Steamboat Springs at Off the Beaten Path Bookstore. She also blogs at auntbeulah.com on Tuesdays.

2 snowmobilers saved on Buff Pass

Matt Stensland
STEAMBOAT TODAY

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Routt County Search and Rescue volunteers rescued two snowmobilers Thursday who got stuck Wednesday on Buffalo Pass.

Incident Commander Delbert Bostock said, after becoming stuck, the snowmobilers spent the night in the woods without a fire.

The snowmobilers were a 56-year-old Rifle man and a 34-year-old Vernal, Utah, man. Their wives reported them overdue Thursday.

Bostock said the 34-year-old hiked out Thursday morning and was able to find some

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backcountry skiers and use their cell phone.

Rescuers met the man, who then guided rescuers to the 56-year-old. Their snowmobiles had gotten stuck in the Bitch Creek drainage.

Bostock said the men were advanced snowmobilers. The 56-year-old had a wrist injury and was partially hypothermic.

Seven Search and Rescue volunteers participated in the mission, along with bystanders and U.S. Forest Service employees.

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