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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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USA Today's Across The USA

Directorboy and I were trolling for offbeat news stories that might inspire a "Law & Order" episode and that led me to read a section of USA Today I'd always skipped over: a 50 state roundup of local news tidbits compiled from AP stories by some cub reporter. It's a crazy, entertaining melange of true crime stories, dull press releases, desperate attempts to find SOMETHING newsworthy for every state and the delightfully odd. It's not available online as far as I can tell, but here are the highlights from yesterday's column.

In Santa Cruz, California, military recruiters left a job fair when about 60 anti-war demonstrators bullied them into going away. Shouldn't the military be better at fighting than granola-eating war protestors?

In Tallahassee, Florida, they're proposing legislation about pythons. 95 pythons were captured last year in Florida after being set free and that doesn't count "a 13-footer that exploded after trying to eat an alligator."

In New Bedford, Massachusetts, a former teacher pled guilty to faking cancer and collecting more than \$35,000 from friends and coworkers. 27 year old Heather Faria used the money to go on vacation and buy a big-screen TV, jewelry and other stuff.

In Montana, absolutely nothing happened and they were reduced to reporting that students in Billings raised \$189 to buy a new "therapy dog" for their school counselor.

In Williston, North Dakota, students who want to enter their prom will have to take a Breathalyzer test.

In Ogden, Utah a charter school thought it had booked Jon Stewart for a lecture when in fact it had booked Jon A. Stewart, a businessman and part-time professional wrestler. Now that's the place where I want to

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