An Abridged Collection of Interdisciplinary Laws

Last updated January 12, 1979 (July 23, 2002)

Preface

This collection of Truths has been growing since January of 1974, when Conrad Schneiker first typed in Murphy's Laws to explore the workings of a new computer at the University of Arizona Computing Center. He added a couple of pages of other laws encountered in the course of his compulsive use of the campus libraries and campus book stores. When he posted the list on his door, people started adding their own favorites and the list grew quickly.

Just as things were starting to get out of hand, Conrad moved in rapid succession to San Francisco, then Berkeley, and then Silicon Valley. Work continued at the Computing Center with Ric Anderson performing a badly needed major cleanup. Then the laws migrated to Control Data Corporation in Sunnyvale, California, with a new group of people adding another large batch of fresh laws. Work at CDC was done by Gregg Townsend, Ed Logg, Laura Meley, David Forthoffer, and even Conrad, who brought several good laws from Berserkeley and worked at CDC a while before returning to Arizona then Silicon Valley, then Arizona, then Silicon Valley, and so on.

Ages ago (c.1970s) this list was used as the basis of an article in CoEvolution Quarterly and for a national advertising campaign for a now defunct Silicon Valley business minicomputer company. Following the publication of derivative books, this list ceased being maintained although offshoots of it spread on the early Internet, so there are likely to be much larger similar collections that have subsequently accumulated somewhere in cyberspace.

The following books may be of further interest. Several additional books, calendars, and posters along these lines have since been published, often incorporating copies of various laws in this list. (Different lists often have idiosyncratic differences in the names and wordings of laws, facilitating educated guesses of their genealogy.)

> Malice in Blunderland
> Thomas L. Martin, Jr.
> New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973
>
> > A very good annotated collection of laws relating to bureaucracies.

Murphy's Law and Other Reasons Why Things Go Wrong
Arthur Bloch
Los Angeles: Price, Stern, Sloan, 1977
A collection based largely on an earlier version of this list.

The Official Rules
Paul Dickson
New York: Delacorte Press, 1978
The best yet. Gems from here and elsewhere.

Air Force Law
2% don't get the word.

Airplane Law
When the plane you are on is late,
the plane you want to transfer to is on time.

Allison's Precept
The best simple-minded test of expertise in a particular area is the ability to win money in a series of bets on future occurrences in that area.

Anthony's Law of Force
Don't force it, get a larger hammer.

Anthony's Law of the Workshop
Any tool, when dropped, will roll into the least accessible corner of the workshop.

Corollary to Anthony's Law
On the way to the corner, any dropped tool will first always strike your toes.

Army Axiom
Any order that can be misunderstood has been misunderstood.

Axiom of the Pipe (Trischmann's Paradox)
A pipe gives a wise man time to think and a fool something to stick in his mouth.

Baker's Law
Misery no longer loves company. Nowadays it insists on it.

Barber's Laws of Backpacking

1) The integral of the gravitational potential taken around any loop trail you choose to hike always comes out positive.

2) Any stone in your boot always migrates against the pressure gradient to exactly the point of most pressure.
3) The weight of your pack increases in direct proportion to the amount of food you consume from it. If you run out of food, the pack weight goes on increasing anyway.
4) The number of stones in your boot is directly proportional to the number of hours you have been on the trail.
5) The difficulty of finding any given trail marker is directly proportional to the importance of the consequences of failing to find it.
6) The size of each of the stones in your boot is directly proportional to the number of hours you have been on the trail.
7) The remaining distance to your chosen campsite remains constant as twilight approaches.
8) The net weight of your boots is proportional to the cube of the number of hours you have been on the trail.
9) When you arrive at your chosen campsite, it is full.
10) If you take your boots off, you'll never get them back on again.
11) The local density of mosquitos is inversely proportional to your remaining repellent.

Barth's Distinction

There are two types of people: those who divide people into two types, and those who don't.

Barzun's Laws of Learning

1) The simple but difficult arts of paying attention, copying accurately, following an argument, detecting an ambiguity or a false inference, testing guesses by summoning up contrary instances, organizing one's time and one's thought for study -- all these arts -- cannot be taught in the air but only through the difficulties of a defined subject. They cannot be taught in one course or one year, but must be acquired gradually in dozens of connections.
2) The analogy to athletics must be pressed until all recognize that in the exercise of Intellect those who lack the muscles, coordination, and will power can claim no place at the training table, let alone on the playing field.

Forthoffer's Cynical Summary of Barzun's Laws

1) That which has not yet been taught directly can never be taught directly.

2) If at first you don't succeed, you will never succeed.

Baxter's First Law
Government intervention in the free market always leads to a lower national standard of living.

Baxter's Second Law
The adoption of fractional gold reserves in a currency system always leads to depreciation, devaluation, demonetization and, ultimately, to complete destruction of that currency.

Baxter's Third Law
In a free market good money always drives bad money out of circulation.

Becker's Law
It is much harder to find a job than to keep one.

Beifeld's Principle
The probability of a young man meeting a desirable and receptive young female increases by pyramidal progression when he is already in the company of (1) a date, (2) his wife, and (3) a better looking and richer male friend.

Bicycle Law
All bicycles weigh 50 pounds:
A 30-pound bicycle needs a 20-pound lock and chain.
A 40-pound bicycle needs a 10-pound lock and chain.
A 50-pound bicycle needs no lock or chain.

Bilbo's Proverb
Never laugh at live dragons.

Blaauw's Law
Established technology tends to persist in spite of new technology.

Booker's Law
An ounce of application is worth a ton of abstraction.

Boren's Laws
1) When in doubt, mumble.
2) When in trouble, delegate.
3) When in charge, ponder.

Breggin's Axiom of Empires

All empires are inherently evil and are inevitably started and controlled by the worst human beings among us.

Brien's First Law

At some time in the life cycle of virtually every organization, its ability to succeed in spite of itself runs out.

Brook's Law

Adding manpower to a late software project makes it later.

Brown's Law of Business Success

Our customer's paperwork is profit. Our own paperwork is loss.

Bucy's Law

Nothing is ever accomplished by a reasonable man.

Bustlin' Billy's Bogus Beliefs

1) The organization of any program reflects the organization of the people who develop it.
2) There is no such thing as a "dirty capitalist," only a capitalist.
3) Anything is possible, but nothing is easy.
4) Capitalism can exist in one of only two states -- welfare or warfare.
5) I'd rather go whoring than warring.
6) History proves nothing.
7) There is nothing so unbecoming on the beach as a wet kilt.
8) A little humility is arrogance.
9) A lot of what appears to be progress is just so much technological rococo.

Bye's First Law of Model Railroading

Any time you wish to demonstrate something, the number of faults is proportional to the number of viewers.

Bye's Second Law of Model Railroading

The desire for modeling a prototype is inversely proportional to the decline of the prototype.

Cahn's Axiom

When all else fails, read the instructions.

Camp's Law

A coup that is known in advance is a coup that does not take place.

Canada Bill Jones' Motto

It's morally wrong to allow suckers to keep their money.

Canada Bill Jones' Supplement
A Smith and Wesson beats four aces.

Cheop's Law
Nothing ever gets built on schedule or within budget.

Chisholm's Law of Human Interaction
Any time things appear to be going better you have overlooked something.

Chisholm's Third Law
Proposals, as understood by the proposer, will be judged otherwise by others.

Corollary 1: If you explain so clearly that nobody can misunderstand, somebody will.
Corollary 2: If you do something which you are sure will meet with everyone's approval, somebody won't like it.
Corollary 3: Procedures devised to implement the purpose won't quite work.
Corollary 4: No matter how long or how many times you explain, no one is listening.

Christgav's First Law
Trust your brother but not too damn much.

Churchill's Commentary on Man
Man will occasionally stumble over the truth but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on.

Clarke's First Law
When a distinguished but elderly scientist states that something is possible, he is almost certainly right. When he states that something is impossible, he is very probably wrong.

Clarke's Second Law
The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible.

Clarke's Third Law
Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.

Clarke's Law of Revolutionary Ideas

Every revolutionary idea - in Science, Politics, Art or Whatever - evokes three stages of reaction. They may be summed up by the three phrases:

1) "It is completely impossible -- don't waste my time."
2) "It is possible, but it is not worth doing."
3) "I said it was a good idea all along."

Cliff's Catalog of the least credible English quotations:

1) "The check is in the mail."
2) "I'm from the government and I'm here to help you."
3) "Of course I'll respect you in the morning."

Cohen's Law

What really matters is the name you succeed in imposing on the facts -- not the facts themselves.

Cole's Law

Thinly sliced cabbage.

Commoner's Three Laws of Ecology

1) No action is without side-effects.
2) Nothing ever goes away.
3) There is no free lunch.

Cook's Law

Much work -- much food, little work -- little food, no work -- burial at sea.

Cornuelle's Law

Authority tends to assign jobs to those least able to do them.

Cushman's Law

A fail-safe circuit will destroy others.

Crane's Law (Friedman's Reiteration)

There ain't no such thing as a free lunch.

e e cummings' summation of politics

a politician is an arse upon which everyone has sat except a man.

Diogenes' First Dictum

The more heavily a man is supposed to be taxed, the more power he has to escape being taxed.

Diogenes' Second Dictum

If a taxpayer thinks he can cheat safely, he probably will.

Dow's Law
In a hierarchical organization, the higher the level, the greater the confusion.

Dunne's Law
The territory behind rhetoric is too often mined with equivocation.

Edison's Axiom
We don't know one-millionth of one percent about anything.

Ehrman's Corollary to Ginsberg's Theorem
1) Things will get worse before they get better.
2) Who said things would get better?

The ERDA Law of Materials Procurement
Never use lead when gold will do.

Ettorre's Observation
The other line moves faster.

Evan's Law of Politics
When team members are finally in a position to help the team, it turns out they have quit the team.

Everitt's Form of the Second Law of Thermodynamics
Confusion (entropy) is always increasing in society. Only if someone or something works extremely hard can this confusion be reduced to order in a limited region. Nevertheless, this effort will still result in an increase in the total confusion of society at large.

Executive Umbrella Law
A businessman needs three umbrellas: one to leave at the office, one to leave at home, and one to leave on the train.

Extended Epstein-Heisenberg Principle
In an R & D orbit, only 2 of the existing 3 parameters can be defined simultaneously. The parameters are: task, time and resources ($).
1) If one knows what the task is, and there is a time limit allowed for the completion of the task, then one cannot guess how much it will cost.
2) If the time and resources ($) are clearly defined, then it is impossible to know what part of the R & D task will be performed.

3) If you are given a clearly defined R & D goal and a definite amount of money which has been calculated to be necessary for the completion of the task, one cannot predict if and when the goal will be reached.
4) If one is lucky enough and can accurately define all 3 parameters, then what one deals with is not in the realm of R & D.

Farber's First Law
Give him an inch and he'll screw you.

Farber's Second Law
A hand in the bush is worth two anywhere else.

Farber's Third Law
We're all going down the same road in different directions.

Farber's Fourth Law
Necessity is the mother of strange bedfellows.

The Fifth Rule
You have taken yourself too seriously.

Finagle's First Law
If an experiment works, something has gone wrong.

Finagle's Second Law
No matter what result is anticipated, there will always be someone eager to (a) misinterpret it, (b) fake it, or (c) believe it happened to his own pet theory.

Finagle's Third Law
In any collection of data, the figure most obviously correct, beyond all need of checking, is the mistake.
Corollary 1: No one whom you ask for help will see it.
Corollary 2: Everyone who stops by with unsought advice will see it immediately.

Finagle's Fourth Law
Once a job is fouled up, anything done to improve it only makes it worse.

Finagle's Rules
Ever since the first scientific experiment, man has been plagued by the increasing antagonism of nature. It seems only right that nature should be logical and neat, but experience

has shown that this is not the case. A further series of rules has been formulated, designed to help man accept the pigheadedness of nature.

Rule 1: To study a subject best, understand it thoroughly before you start.
Rule 2: Always keep a record of data. It indicates you've been working.
Rule 3: Always draw your curves, then plot the reading.
Rule 4: In case of doubt, make it sound convincing.
Rule 5: Experiments should be reproducible. They should all fail in the same way.
Rule 6: Do not believe in miracles. Rely on them.

First Law of Bicycling
No matter which way you ride it's uphill and against the wind.

First Law of Bridge
It's always the partner's fault.

First Law of Canoeing (Alfred Andrews' Canoeing Postulate)
No matter which direction you start it's always against the wind coming back.

First Law of Debate
Never argue with a fool. People might not know the difference.

First Law of Office Holders
Get re-elected.

Fitz-Gibbon's Law
Creativity varies inversely with the number of cooks involved with the broth.

Flap's Law
Any inanimate object, regardless of its position or configuration, may be expected to perform at any time in a totally unexpected manner for reasons that are either entirely obscure or else completely mysterious.

Fortis' Three Great Lies of Life
1) Money isn't everything.
2) It's great to be a Negro.
3) I'm only going to put it in a little way.

Fourteenth Corollary of Atwood's General Law of Dynamic Negatives
No books are lost by loaning except those you particularly

wanted to keep.

Franklin's Rule
Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall not be disappointed.

Froud's Law
A transistor protected by a fast-acting fuse will protect the fuse by blowing first.

Gari Proverb for Senior Management
When two elephants meet in battle, they usually kill the grass they're standing on.

Gilb's Laws of Unreliability
1) Computers are unreliable, but humans are even more unreliable.
Corollary: At the source of every error which is blamed on the computer you will find at least two human errors, including the error of blaming it on the computer.
2) Any system which depends on human reliability is unreliable.
3) The only difference between the fool and the criminal who attacks a system is that the fool attacks unpredictably and on a broader front.
7) Undetectable errors are infinite in variety, in contrast to detectable errors, which by definition are limited.
9) Investment in reliability will increase until it exceeds the probable cost of errors, or until someone insists on getting some useful work done.

Ginsberg's Theorem
1) You can't win.
2) You can't break even.
3) You can't even quit the game.

Golden Rules of Indulgence
Everything in excess! To enjoy the full flavor of life, take big bites. Moderation is for monks. Yield to temptation; it may never pass your way again.

Gould's Two-Shirt Theory of Arctic Exploration
Wear the first shirt until it becomes unbearable; then switch to the second shirt. Wear the second shirt until IT becomes unbearable (by which time the first shirt will look pretty good again). This process may be repeated indefinitely.

Gray's Law of Programming

n+1 trivial tasks are expected to be accomplished in the same time as n trivial tasks.

Logg's Rebuttal to Gray's Law of Programming
n+1 trivial tasks take twice as long as n trivial tasks.

Gresham's Law
Trivial matters are handled promptly; important matters are never solved.

Grosch's Law
Computing power increases as the square of the cost. If you want to do it twice as cheaply, you have to do it four times as fast.

Gummidge'e Law
The amount of expertise varies in inverse proportion to the number of statements understood by the general public.

Gumperson's Law
The probability of anything happening is in inverse ratio to its desirability.

Hacker's Law of Personnel
Anyone having supervisory responsibility for the completion of a task will invariably protest that more resources are needed.

Hagerty's Law
If you lose your temper at a newspaper columnist, he'll get rich or famous or both.

Haldane's Law
The Universe is not only queerer than we imagine; it is queerer than we CAN imagine.

Harper's Magazine's Law
You never find an article until you replace it.

Hartley's First Law
You can lead a horse to water, but if you can get him to float on his back you've got something.

Hartley's Second Law
Never sleep with anyone crazier than yourself.

Harvard Law

Under the most rigorously controlled conditions of pressure, temperature, volume, humidity, and other variables, the organism will do as it damn well pleases.

Heller's Law
The first myth of management is that it exists.

Hendrickson's Law
If a problem causes many meetings, the meetings eventually become more important than the problem.

Hoare's Law of Large Programs
Inside every large program is a small program struggling to get out.

Horner's Five Thumb Postulate
Experience varies directly with equipment ruined.

Howard's First Law of Theater
Use it.

Howe's Law
Every man has a scheme that will not work.

Hubbard's Law
The world gets better every day -- then worse again in the evening.

Hull's Theorem
The combined pull of several patrons is the sum of their separate pulls multiplied by the number of patrons.

IBM Pollyanna Principle
Machines should work. People should think.

Imhoff's Law
The organization of any bureaucracy is very much like a septic tank -- the REALLY big chunks always rise to the top.

Iron Law of Distribution
Them what has - gets.

Italian Proverb
She who is silent consents.

Jacquin's Postulate on Democratic Governments
No man's life, liberty or property are safe while the

legislature is in session.

Jay's Laws of Leadership

1) Changing things is central to leadership, and changing them before anyone else is creativeness.
2) To build something that endures, it is of the greatest importance to have a long tenure in office -- to rule for many years. You can achieve a quick success in a year or two, but nearly all of the great tycoons have continued their building much longer.

Jenkinson's Law

It won't work.

John Cameron's Law

No matter how many times you've had it, if it's offered, take it, because it'll never be quite the same again.

John's Axiom

When your opponent is down, kick him.

John's Collateral Corollary

In order to get a loan you must first prove you don't need it.

Johnson's Corollary to Heller's Law

Nobody really knows what is going on anywhere within your organization.

Johnson's First Law of Auto Repair

Any tool dropped while repairing an automobile will roll under the car to the vehicle's exact geographic center.

Johnson-Laird's Law

Toothache tends to start on Saturday night.

Jones' Law

The man who can smile when things go wrong has thought of someone he can blame it on.

Jones' Motto

Friends may come and go, but enemies accumulate.

Kamin's First Law

All currencies will decrease in value and purchasing power over the long term, unless they are freely and fully convertible into gold and that gold is traded freely without restrictions of

any kind.

Kamin's Second Law
Threat of capital controls accelerates marginal capital outflows.

Kamin's Third Law
Combined total taxation from all levels of government will always increase (until the government is replaced by war or revolution).

Kamin's Fourth Law
Government inflation is always worse than statistics indicate; central bankers are biased toward inflation when the money unit is non-convertible, and without gold or silver backing.

Kamin's Fifth Law
Purchasing power of currency is always lost far more rapidly than ever regained. (Those who expect even fluctuations in both directions play a losing game.)

Kamin's Sixth Law
When attempting to predict and forecast macro-economic moves or economic legislation by a politician, never be misled by what he says; instead watch what he does.

Kamin's Seventh Law
Politicians will always inflate when given the opportunity.

Abraham Kaplan's Law of the Instrument
Give a small boy a hammer and he will find that everything he encounters needs pounding.

Katz's Law
Men and nations will act rationally when all other possibilities have been exhausted.

Kerr-Martin Law
1) In dealing with their OWN problems, faculty members are the most extreme conservatives.
2) In dealing with OTHER people's problems, they are the world's most extreme liberals.

Kirkland's Law
The usefulness of any meeting is in inverse proportion to the attendance.

Kitman's Law

Pure drivel tends to drive off the TV screen ordinary drivel.

Lani's Principles of Economics

1) Taxes are not levied for the benefit of the taxed.
2) $100 placed at 7% interest compounded quarterly for 200 years will increase to more than $100,000,000 by which time it will be worth nothing.
3) In God we trust, all others pay cash.

La Rochefoucauld's Law

It is more shameful to distrust one's friends than to be deceived by them.

Law of Communications

The inevitable result of improved and enlarged communications between different levels in a hierarchy is a vastly increased area of misunderstanding.

Law of Computability Applied to Social Science

If at first you don't succeed, transform your data set.

Law of Selective Gravity (The Buttered Side Down Law)

An object will fall so as to do the most damage.

Law of the Perversity of Nature (Mrs. Murphy's Corollary)

You cannot successfully determine beforehand which side of the bread to butter.

Law of Superiority

The first example of superior principle is always inferior to the developed example of inferior principle.

Laws of Computerdom According to Golub

1) Fuzzy project objectives are used to avoid the embarrassment of estimating the corresponding costs.
2) A carelessly planned project takes three times longer to complete than expected; a carefully planned project will take only twice as long.
3) The effort required to correct course increases geometrically with time.
4) Project teams detest weekly progress reporting because it so vividly manifests their lack of progress.

Laws of Computer Programming

1) Any given program, when running, is obsolete.
2) Any given program costs more and takes longer.
3) If a program is useful, it will have to be changed.
4) If a program is useless, it will have to be documented.
5) Any given program will expand to fill all available memory.
6) The value of a program is proportional to the weight of its output.
7) Program complexity grows until it exceeds the capability of the programmer who must maintain it.
8) Make it possible for programmers to write programs in English, and you will find that programmers cannot write in English.

Laws of Gardening

1) Other people's tools work only in other people's yards.
2) Fanzy gizmos don't work.
3) If nobody uses it, there's a reason.
4) You get the most of what you need the least.

Le Chatelier's Law

If some stress is brought to bear on a system in equilibrium, the equilibrium is displaced in the direction which tends to undo the effect of the stress.

Les Miserables Metalaw

All laws, whether good, bad, or indifferent, must be obeyed to the letter.

Levy's Nine Laws of the Disillusionment of the True Liberal

[Not included here due to copyright reasons.]

Lincoln's Rule

It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt.

Long's Notes

1) Always store beer in a dark place.
2) Any priest or shaman must be presumed guilty until proved innocent.
3) Always listen to experts. They'll tell you what can't be done, and why. Then do it.
4) It has long been known that one horse can run faster than another -- but which one? Differences are crucial.
5) A poet who reads his verse in public may have other nasty

habits.

6) Small change can often be found under seat cushions.
7) It's amazing how much "mature wisdom" resembles being too tired.
8) Secrecy is the beginning of tyranny.
9) It's better to copulate than never.
10) Never appeal to man's "better nature." He may not have one. (Invoking his self-interest gives you more leverage.)
11) An elephant: a mouse built to government specifications.
12) A Zygote is a Gamete's way of producing more Gametes.
13) God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent. It says so right here on the label. If you have a mind capable of believing all three of these divine attributes simultaneously, I have a wonderful bargain for you. No checks, please. Cash and in small bills.
14) Waking a person unnecessarily should not be considered a capital crime. For a first offense, that is.
15) Beware of altruism. It is based on self-deception, the root of all evil.
16) Never underestimate the power of human stupidity.
17) Rub her feet.
18) To stay young requires unceasing cultivation of the ability to unlearn old falsehoods.
19) Does history record any case in which the majority was right?
20) Be wary of strong drink. It can make you shoot at tax collectors and miss.
21) Never try to outstubborn a cat.
22) Natural laws have no pity.
23) You can go wrong by being too skeptical as readily as by being too trusting.
24) Anything free is worth what you pay for it.
25) Pessimist by policy, optimist by temperament -- it is possible to be both. How? By never taking unnecessary chances and by minimizing risks you can't avoid. This permits you to play the game happily, untroubled by the certainty of the outcome.
26) "I came, I saw, SHE conquered." (The original Latin seems to have been garbled.)
27) The greatest productive force is human selfishness.
28) A skunk is better company than a person who prides himself on being "frank".
29) The correct way to punctuate a sentence that starts: "of course it's none of my business, but...." is to place a period after the word "but". Don't use excessive force in supplying such morons with a period. Cutting his throat is

only a momentary pleasure and is bound to get you talked about.
30) Don't try to have the last word. You might get it.

Lord Falkland's Rule
When it is not necessary to make a decision, it is necessary not to make a decision.

Lowery's Law
If it jams -- force it. If it breaks, it needed replacing anyway.

Malek's Law
Any simple idea will be worded in the most complicated way.

Malinowski's Law
Looking from far above, from our high places of safety in the developed civilization, it is easy to see all the crudity and irrelevance of magic.

Marshall's Generalized Iceberg Theorem
7/8 of anything can't be seen.

Dean Martin's Definition of Drunkenness
You're not drunk if you can lie on the floor without holding on.

Martin-Berthelot Principle
Of all possible committee reactions to any given agenda item, the reaction that will occur is the one which will liberate the greatest amount of hot air.

Match's Maxim
A fool in a high station is like a man on the top of a high mountain: everything appears small to him and he appears small to everybody.

Matsch's Law
It is better to have a horrible ending than to have horrors without end.

McClaughry's Codicil on Jone's Motto
To make an enemy, do someone a favor.

McClaughry's Law of Zoning
Where zoning is not needed, it will work perfectly; where it is desperately needed, it always breaks down.

McGoon's Law
The probability of winning is inversely proportional to

the amount of the wager.

McNaughton's Rule
Any argument worth making within the bureaucracy must be capable of being expressed in a simple declarative sentence that is obviously true once stated.

H. L. Mencken's Law
Those who can -- do.
Those who cannot -- teach.
Those who cannot teach -- administrate. (Martin's extension)

Merrill's First Corollary
There are no winners in life; only survivors.

Merrill's Second Corollary
In the highway of life, the average happening is of about as much true significance as a dead skunk in the middle of the road.

Meskimen's Law
There's never time to do it right, but always time to do it over.

Michehl's Theorem
Less is more.

Pastore's Comment on Michehl's Theorem
Nothing is ultimate.

Miller's Law
You can't tell how deep a puddle is until you step into it.

Mobil's Maxim
Bad regulation begets worse regulation.

Modell's Laws
1) Nothing is so serious that it can't be teased until it is ragged at the edges.
3) Nothing is so simple that it cannot be made too complex to work.

Moore's Law
Data density doubles every 18 months.
Processor power doubles every 18 months.
Moore's law may be rescinded by 2020.

Murphy's Original Law
If there are two or more ways to do something
and if one of those ways can result in a catastrophe,
then someone will do it.

Murphy's First Law
Nothing is as easy as it looks.

Murphy's Second Law
Everything takes longer than you think.

Murphy's Third Law
In any field of scientific endeavor, anything that can go
wrong will go wrong.

Murphy's Fourth Law
If there is a possibility of several things going wrong,
the one that will cause the most damage will be the one to
go wrong.

Murphy's Fifth Law
If anything just cannot go wrong, it will anyway.

Murphy's Sixth Law
If you perceive that there are four possible ways in which
a procedure can go wrong, and circumvent these, then a fifth way,
unprepared for, will promptly develop.

Murphy's Seventh Law
Left to themselves, things tend to go from bad to worse.

Murphy's Eighth Law
If everything seems to be going well, you have obviously
overlooked something.

Murphy's Ninth Law
Nature always sides with the hidden flaw.

Murphy's Tenth Law
Mother nature is a bitch.

Murphy's Eleventh Law
It is impossible to make anything foolproof because
fools are so ingenious.

Murphy's Law of Thermodynamics

Things get worse under pressure.

Murphy's Law of Nature
A highly complex system that works
is invariably found to have evolved
from a simple system that works.

Newton's Little-known Seventh Law
A bird in the hand is safer than one overhead.

Nienberg's Law
Progress is made on alternate Fridays.

Ninety-ninety Rule of Project Schedules
The first ninety percent of the task takes ninety percent
of the time, and the last ten percent takes the other ninety
percent.

O'Brien's Principle (The $357.73 Theory)
Auditors always reject any expense account with a bottom line
divisible by 5 or 10.

Oeser's Law
There is a tendency for the person in the most powerful
position in an organization to spend all his time serving
on committees and signing letters.

Olson's Law
A good deed never goes unpunished.

Ordering Principle
Those supplies necessary for yesterday's experiment must
be ordered no later than tomorrow noon.

Osborn's Law
Variables won't, constants aren't.

O'Toole's Commentary on Murphy's Laws
Murphy was an optimist.

Satchel Paige's Rules for Good Living
1) Avoid fried foods which angry up the blood.
2) If your stomach disputes you, lie down and pacify it with
cool thoughts.
3) Keep the juices moving by jangling around gently as you walk.
4) Go light on the vices such as carrying on in society.

5) Avoid running at all times.
6) Don't look back. Something might be gaining on you.

Pardo's Postulates

1) Anything good is either illegal, immoral, or fattening.
2) The three faithful things in life are money, a dog, and an old woman.
3) Don't care if you're rich or not, as long as you can live comfortably and have everything you want.

Pareto's Law (The 20/80 Law)

20% of the customers account for 80% of the turnover,
20% of components account for 80% of the cost, and
so forth.

Parker's Rule of Parliamentary Procedure

A motion to adjourn is always in order.

Parker's Law of Political Statements

The truth of a proposition has nothing to do with its credibility and vice versa.

Parkinson's First Law

Work expands to fill the time available for its completion; the thing to be done swells in perceived importance and complexity in a direct ratio with the time to be spent in its completion.

Parkinson's Second Law

Expenditures rise to meet income.

Parkinson's Third Law

If there is a way to delay an important decision the good bureaucracy, public or private, will find it.

Parkinson's Fourth Law

The number of people in any working group tends to increase regardless of the amount of work to be done.

Parkinson's Law of Delay

Delay is the deadliest form of denial.

Pastore's Truths

1) Even paranoids have enemies.
2) This job is marginally better than daytime TV.
3) On alcohol: four is one more than more than enough.

Peckham's Law
Beauty times brains equals a constant.

Peer's Law
The solution to a problem changes the problem.

Peter Principle
In every hierarchy, whether it be government or business, each employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence; every post tends to be filled by an employee incompetent to execute its duties.

Peter's Corollaries
1) Incompetence knows no barriers of time or place.
2) Work is accomplished by those employees who have not yet reached their level of incompetence.
3) If at first you don't succeed, try something else.

Peter's Inversion
Internal consistency is valued more highly than efficiency.

Peter's Paradox
Employees in a hierarchy do not really object to incompetence in their colleagues.

Peter's Perfect People Palliative
Each of us is a mixture of good qualities and some (perhaps) not-so-good qualities. In considering our fellow people we should remember their good qualities and realize that their faults only prove that they are, after all, human. We should refrain from making harsh judgements of people just because they happen to be dirty, rotten, no-good sons-of-bitches.

Peter's Placebo
An ounce of image is worth a pound of performance.

Peter's Theorem
Incompetence plus incompetence equals incompetence.

Postel's Rule
Be conservative in what you send, be liberal in what you accept.

Potter's Law
The amount of flak received on any subject is inversely proportional to the subject's true value.

Productivity Equation
The productivity, P, of a group of people is:
$P = N \times T \times (.55 - .00005 \times N \times (N - 1))$
where N is the number of people in the group
and T is the number of hours in a work period.

Professor Gordon's Rule of Evolving Bryographic Systems
While bryographic plants are typically encountered in substrata of earthy or mineral matter in concreted state, discrete substrata elements occasionally display a roughly spherical configuration which, in presence of suitable gravitational and other effects, lends itself to combined translatory and rotational motion. One notices in such cases an absence of the otherwise typical accretion of bryophyta. We therefore conclude that a rolling stone gathers no moss.

Pudder's Law
Anything that begins well ends badly.
Anything that begins badly ends worse.

Puritan's Law
Evil is live spelled backwards.

Puritan's Second Law
If it feels good, don't do it.

Q's Law
No matter what stage of completion one reaches in a North Sea (oil) field, the cost of the remainder of the project remains the same.

Radar's Fundamental Truth
The grass is brown on both sides of the fence.

Rangnekar's Modified Rules Concerning Decisions
1) If you must make a decision, delay it.
2) If you can authorize someone else to avoid a decision, do so.
3) If you can form a committee, have them avoid the decision.
4) If you can otherwise avoid a decision, avoid it immediately.

Rayburn's Rule
If you want to get along, go along.

Riddle's Constant
There are coexisting elements in frustration phenomena which

separate expected results from achieved results.

Ross' Law
Never characterize the importance of a statement in advance.

Rudin's Law
In a crisis that forces a choice to be made among alternative courses of action, most people will choose the worst one possible.

Rule of Accuracy
When working toward the solution of a problem it always helps if you know the answer.

Damon Runyon's Rule
Life is 6 to 5 against.

Sam's Axiom
1) Any line, however short, is still too long.
2) Work is the crabgrass of life, but money is the water that keeps it green.

Sattinger's Law
It works better if you plug it in.

Schultz's Law
No problem is so formidable that you can't just walk away from it.

Segal's Law
A man with one watch knows what time it is; a man with two watches is never sure.

Sevareid's Law
The chief cause of problems is solutions.

Shalit's Law
The intensity of movie publicity is in inverse ratio to the quality of the movie.

Shanahan's Law
The length of a meeting rises with the square of the number of people present.

Shaw's Principle
Build a system that even a fool can use, and only a fool will want to use it.

Simmon's Law
The desire for racial integration increases with the square of the distance from the actual event.

Simon's Law
Everything put together sooner or later falls apart.

Skinner's Constant (Flannegan's Finagling Factor)
That quantity which, when multiplied by, divided by, added to, or subtracted from the answer you get, gives you the answer you should have gotten.

Snafu Equations
1) Given any problem containing n equations, there will be n + 1 unknowns.
2) An object or bit of information most needed, will be least available.
3) Any device requiring service or adjustment will be least accessible.
4) Interchangeable devices won't.
5) In any human endeavor, once you have exhausted all possibilities and fail, there will be one solution, simple and obvious, highly visible to everyone else.
6) Badness comes in waves.

Sociology's Iron Law of Oligarchy
In every organized activity, no matter the sphere, a small number will become the oligarchical leaders and the others will follow.

Somebody's Law
You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time; and that is sufficient.

Spare Parts Principle
The accessibility, during recovery of small parts which fall from the work bench, varies directly with the size of the part and inversely with its importance to the completion of work underway.

Steele's Plagiarism of Somebody's Philosophy
Everyone should believe in something -- I believe I'll have another drink.

Sturgeon's Law
90 per cent of everything is crud.

Swipple Rule of Order
He who shouts loudest has the floor.

Terman's Law
There is no direct relationship between the quality of an educational program and its cost.

Terman's Law of Innovation
If you want a track team to win the high jump you find one person who can jump seven feet, not seven people who can jump one foot.

Theory of the International Society of Philosophic Engineering
In any calculation, any error which can creep in will.

Thoreau's Law
If you see a man approaching with the obvious intent of doing you good, run for your life.

Townsend's Law of Programming
Nothing takes less than a week.

Transcription Law
The number of errors made is equal to the number of 'squares' employed.

Truman's Law
If you cannot convince them, confuse them.

Truths of Management
1) Think before you act; it's not your money.
2) All good management is the expression of one great idea.
3) No executive devotes effort to proving himself wrong.
4) Cash in must exceed cash out.
5) Management capability is always less than the organization actually needs.
6) Either an executive can do his job or he can't.
7) If sophisticated calculations are needed to justify an action, don't do it.
8) If you are doing something wrong, you will do it badly.
9) If you are attempting the impossible, you will fail.
10) The easiest way of making money is to stop losing it.

Truth 5.1 of Management
Organizations always have too many managers.

Tuccille's First Law of Reality
Industry always moves in to fill an economic vacuum.

Vail's Axiom
In any human enterprise, work seeks the lowest hierarchical level.

Vique's Law
A man without religion is like a fish without a bicycle.

Vonnegut's Corollary
Beauty may be only skin deep, but ugliness goes right to the core.

Weaver's Law
When several reporters share a cab on an assignment, the reporter in the front seat pays for all.

Weaver's Corollary (Doyle's Corollary)
No matter how many reporters share a cab, and no matter who pays, each puts the full fare on his own expense account.

Weber-Fechner Law
The least change in stimulus necessary to produce a perceptible change in response is proportional to the stimulus already existing.

Weiler's Law
Nothing is impossible for the man who doesn't have to do it himself.

Weinberg's Law
If builders built buildings the way programmers wrote programs, then the first woodpecker that came along would destroy civilization.

Weinberg's Corollary
An expert is a person who avoids the small errors while sweeping on to the grand fallacy.

Westheimer's Rule
To estimate the time it takes to do a task: estimate the time you think it should take, multiply by 2, and change the unit of measure to the next highest unit. Thus we allocate 2 days for a one hour task.

White's Chappaquiddick Theorem
The sooner and in more detail you announce bad news, the better.

White's Observations of Committee Operation

1) People very rarely think in groups;
   they talk together, they exchange information, they adjudicate,
   they make compromises.
   But they do not think; they do not create.
2) A really new idea affronts current agreement.
3) A meeting cannot be productive unless certain premises are
   so shared that they do not need to be discussed, and the
   argument can be confined to areas of disagreement. But while
   this kind of consensus makes a group more effective in its
   legitimate functions, it does not make the group a creative
   vehicle -- it would not be a new idea if it didn't -- and the
   group, impelled as it is to agree, is instinctively hostile to
   that which is divisive.

White's Statement

Don't lose heart...

Owen's Comment on White's Statement

...they might want to cut it out...

Byrd's Addition to Owen's Comment on White's Statement

...and they want to avoid a lengthy search.

Wiker's Law

Government expands to absorb revenue and then some.

Wolf's Law (An Optimistic View of a Pessimistic World)

It isn't that things will necessarily go wrong (Murphy's Law),
but rather that they will take so much more time and effort than you
think if they are not to go wrong.

Work Rules

1) The boss is always right.
2) If the boss is wrong, refer to rule 1.

Worker's Dilemma Law (or Management's Put-Down Law)

1) No matter how much you do, you'll never do enough.
2) What you don't do is always more important than what
   you do do.

Wynne's Law

Negative slack tends to increase.

Zymurgy's First Law of Evolving System Dynamics

Once you open a can of worms, the only way to recan them
is to use a larger can. (Old worms never die, they just worm their

way into larger cans).

Zymurgy's Law on the Availability of Volunteer Labor
People are always available for work in the past tense.

Zymurgy's Seventh Exception to Murphy's Laws
When it rains, it pours.