ALPHABET SOUP: Laying Down the Laws

By GYLES BRANDRETH

I have been collecting Laws and Axioms and Rules ever since I came across my first, which is still my favorite:

Cole's Law
Sliced Cabbage.

I have others I like almost as much:

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

Billing's Law
Live within your income, even if you have to borrow to do so.

Agnes Allen's Law
Almost anything is easier to get into than out of.

The Air Travel Law
When the airplane you are on is late, the airplane that you want to transfer to is on time or early.

Local Anesthesia, Law of
Never say "Oops!" in the operating room.

Newton's Unknown Law
A bird in the hand is safer than two overhead.

Mark's Law of Monetary Equilization
A fool and your money are soon partners.

Law of Annoyance
If you put away a tool that you're certain you've finished with, you will need it again instantly.

Anthony's Workshop Law
Any tool, when dropped, always rolls into the least accessible corner of the workshop. (There is a corollary to this: on the way to the corner, any dropped tool will always strike your toes first.)

Atwood's Book Law
No books are lost by lending except those you particularly want to keep.

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

Beauregard's Law
When you're up to your nose, keep your mouth shut.

Pipe, Axiom of
A pipe gives a wise man time to think and a fool something to stick in his mouth.

Thurber's Conclusion
There is no safety in numbers, or in anything else.

Since we live in an age when the computer is king, we need axioms to help us cope with the new technology.

Whether you are a scientist, a statistician, or simply a mere mortal like me, you need to know the laws of the computer jungle if you hope to survive in it.

Here are some you should find useful:

Computer Programming Principles:
1. The computer is never wrong.
2. The programmer is always wrong.

Coomb's Law:
If you can't measure it, I'm not interested.

Finagle, The Law of the Too, Too Solid Point:
In any collection of data, the figure that is most obviously correct — beyond all need of checking — is the mistake.

Horowitz's Rule:
A computer can make as many mistakes in two seconds as 20 men working 20 years.

Horowitz's Song for In-House Computer Programmers:
Hi-ho, Hi-ho, it's off to work we go...

Loderstedt's Rule:
Measure twice, because you can only cut once.

Murphy's Law of Analysis:
1. In any collection of data, the figures that are obviously correct will contain errors.
2. It is customary for a decimal to be misplaced.
3. An error that can creep into a calculation, will. Also, it will always be in the direction that will cause the most damage to the calculation.

Murphy's Laws, another:
If mathematically you end up with the incorrect answer, try multiplying by the page number.

Twyman's Law:
Any statistic that appears interesting is almost certainly a mistake.

Wain's Conclusion:
The only people making money these days are the ones who sell computer paper.