


- **Murphy's Laws Origin**

- 
- The following article was excerpted from *The Desert Wings*
- March 3, 1978
-
- Murphy's Law ("If anything can go wrong, it will") was born at Edwards Air Force Base in 1949 at North Base.
-
- It was named after Capt. Edward A. Murphy, an engineer working on Air Force Project MX981, (a project) designed to see how much sudden deceleration a person can stand in a crash.
-
- One day, after finding that a transducer was wired wrong, he cursed the technician responsible and said, "If there is any way to do it wrong, he'll find it."
-
- The contractor's project manager kept a list of "laws" and added this one, which he called Murphy's Law.
-
- Actually, what he did was take an old law that had been around for years in a more basic form and give it a name.
-
- Shortly afterwards, the Air Force doctor (Dr. John Paul Stapp) who rode a sled on the deceleration track to a stop, pulling 40 Gs, gave a press conference. He said that their good safety record on the project was due to a firm belief in Murphy's Law and in the necessity to try and circumvent it. Aerospace manufacturers picked it up and used it widely in their ads during the next few months, and soon it was being quoted in many news and magazine articles. Murphy's Law was born.

The Northrop project manager, George E. Nichols, had a few laws of his own. Nichols' Fourth Law says, "Avoid any action with an unacceptable outcome."

The doctor, well-known Col. John P. Stapp, had a paradox: Stapp's Ironical Paradox, which says, "The universal aptitude for ineptitude makes any human accomplishment an incredible miracle."

Nichols is still around. At NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena, he's the quality control manager for the Viking project to send an unmanned spacecraft to Mars.

Murphy's Law or Sod's Law?

-
- While I admit that the name of Murphy's laws is a pleasant one as is the story of how it came to light, but the original name for 'if anything can go wrong it will' was sod's law because it would happen to any poor sod who needed such a catastrophic event the least. It also removes the ability to say "I coined this phrase!" because sod's law has been around long before any living man and has existed in many forms for hundreds of years. In the English County of Yorkshire I know it to have been around for generations because it has been passed through several Yorkshire families I know. But this original name is dying out because sod over here is a cursory so is not used much. Murphy's on the other hand is nothing insulting or lacking in hope I hope this clears any problems up and while this maybe hard to come to terms with, think about it, would such an obvious piece of logic have only come about in the second half of the 20th century????
- **Chris Monkman** In the late 1960's I read an article that was photocopied from a magazine where I saw the term "Murphy's Law" coined. Should I say, I believe the term was coined in this article. It had a photo of a bearded man in the upper right corner. The article began simply by describing all the things that had gone wrong in Murphy's life. Near the end of the first section of the article it described the formalization of Murphy's Law, as Murphy was waiting for the pending birth of his first child.
-
- Later in the article other formulations/corollaries of Murphy's law were described. The most memorable one was the mathematical formulation. It was pictured in the text as $1 + 1 \rightarrow 2$, where the \rightarrow was a hand with the index finger pointing to the right. The text defined \rightarrow as "hardly every equals".
-
- What prompted me to write this was the foot note on this page, where the author of this comment indicated that the law was not formalized at Edwards Air Force Base, but rather another source.
-
- To the best of my memory, it was in or about the fall of 1968, I saw the photo copied article that presented Murphy's Law. I do not remember the magazine or it's date.
-
- What lead me to this site was the quest for the article described above. To my suprise and disappointment, no one has included the article.
-
- I would be interesting to publish this description and see if anyone else remembers the article or any other facts that would help find

it.

-

- Joe Smith

One more thing about the origin of Murphy Law

-

- One important fact about Murphy's Law was that it was not actually coined by

- Murphy, but by another man of the same name.

- Michael

Another thing about the origin of Murphy Law

-

- can anyone originate a law? I thought that they could only be discovered

- Erin

How Mr. Murphy died:

-

- One dark evening (in the U.S.), Mr. Murphy's car ran out of gas. As he hitchhiked to a gas station, while facing traffic and wearing white, he was struck from behind by a British tourist who was driving on the wrong side of the road.

-

- Terry Maynard

- Lansing, Michigan

Another story about the origin of Murphy's Law

-

- Commander J. Murphy USN was a procurement officer for the US Navy in the 1930's.

- He was in charge of the procurement of aircraft.

- When monitoring the design and development of new aircraft, he tried to instill simplicity of maintenance into the likes of Douglas and Grumman.

- Apparently one of his most belabored expressions was:

- "If an aircraft fitter on one of our carriers can re-install a serviced component wrongly, then one day he will."

- Gradually, this got changed into the more familiar version we know today, according to the version on the origin of Murphy's Law I heard.

-

- Incidentally, a lot of Brits think that Murphy's Law is an Irish joke.

- Murphy is an Irish name of course, and the Irish have been the butt of jokes from Brits for a long time.

- Anyway, a lot of Brits seem to think that what Murphy's Law refers to is that the Irish are to blame for things going wrong because they are careless or stupid or both, at least according to British mythology on the Irish.

-
- Frank Teunissen