

Psssst!
Have you heard...?

COMPETITION

By Scot Morris

Last November, when we announced our Competition #17 for Unconfirmed Rumors, we had no idea of the mass-market appeal that a good rumor can have. At that time only one major rumor had "gone Hollywood": The canard that no astronauts ever went into space and that all the "moonwalks" were secretly filmed in a Nevada desert became the inspiration for the 1978 film *Capricorn One*, starring James Brolin, Hal Holbrook, and O. J. Simpson.

Almost immediately after we announced our contest, three other famous rumors made their screen debuts. Within weeks we saw the release of *The Formula*, which had George C. Scott vs. Marlon Brando and the secret of the cheap fuel that is being kept from the public by greedy oil companies; *Hangar 18*, about the crashed UFO and those alien bodies in deep freeze at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, in Ohio; and *Alligator*, the real truth underlying the manhole coverup in the New York City sewer system.

If the trend continues, other rumors mentioned when we announced this contest are soon to become motion pictures. First out will be *Scallop!*, about a ruthless restaurateur who serves cut-out shark or skate to unsuspecting customers who have ordered shellfish. We are currently negotiating the screen rights to our rumor that reading *Omni* will make one multiorgasmic. (It's probably because of the sex pheromones we add to our ink.)

THE RUMOR HALL OF FAME

What makes for a classic rumor? The best are paranoid, plausible, provocative, officially denied, and outrageous.

Solid paranoid thinking underlies the very best rumors. The truth is known only to a few because the powers-that-be are covering it up. Paranoia is the easiest mental aberration to slip into and the one that appeals to the most creative, intelligent minds. If you can't find conspiracies all around you, you're not paying attention. A good rumor must be plausible, of course, but to the truly imaginative there are few situations that aren't.

Plausibility then provokes investigation.

It was a classically provocative rumor that Paul McCartney was dead. That rumor inspired diligent, creative people to investigate it and uncover new "evidence." They were then able to say, "If it *isn't* true, explain *this*..." And then they would



recite a catalog of substantiations.

Investigation sometimes leads to an official denial, which, for a rumor, is the equivalent of being nominated for an Oscar. After all, those stories about rat parts found in a bucket of chicken, worm meat in hamburgers, and spiders' eggs in bubble gum had only moderate word-of-mouth circulation. Most of us first heard of these outrages when the companies' official denials were carried nationally by the news media.

Finally, if any of the above qualities are lacking, an outrageous sense of humor is the saving grace.

For purposes of our contest, another quality was looked for, namely, originality. It didn't matter whether the rumor was "real" or made up. If too many versions of a rumor came in, we discarded all of them.

'RUMOR THEMAS'

After sifting through thousands of rumors, we began to notice recurring themes. The most commonly overdone categories were:

1. **They're Still Alive!** Hitler, the shah of Iran, Howard Hughes, Jim Morrison, Elvis Presley, Bruce Lee, even John Lennon, are



RUMORS GO HOLLYWOOD. Terror from the sewers (top) ... a phony astronaut landing (bottom) ...

all still with us, in hiding. We saw so many resurrections of J.F.K. (always "a vegetable") that we had to give a prize to the second-order rumor that finally lays him to rest.

2. The Aliens Are Among Us! Known extraterrestrials: Einstein, Heinlein, Sagan, and at least one *Omni* editor. Recently discovered: Senator William Proxmire, who is trying to keep earthlings from learning the real secrets of the universe.

3. They're All Impostors! None of them are the real *them*: Ronald Reagan (he died in 1952; the man in the White House is a fifty-five-year-old stand-in, possibly his own illegitimate son); Jimmy Carter (the switcheroo came when he changed the part in his hair); Ayatollah Khomeini (in exile he had nine fingers; the impostor in Iran has ten); and Isaac Asimov (who is known to be *at least* triplets).

4. They're Suppressing the Miracle Patents! Everyone has heard about the 100-mpg carburetor that Standard Oil bought for millions of dollars and then buried. But what happened to the inventor? Some say he was bumped off. Others suspect that he became a specialist and went on to produce other suppressible inventions, such as the 50-year light bulb, the permanent battery, the million-mile tire, the tooth-decay preventative, and the runless nylon stocking.

5. The Secret Ingredient. Girl Scout cookies are laced with hashish; Famous Amos uses pure THC. Addictive drugs are added to pizza, gum, and, of course, cola ("Why do you think they call it Coke?").

6. The Real Purpose of *Omni* and Competition #17. Several sneaky entrants hoped to win the money by mentioning *Omni* or this contest. One succeeded (Corrie J. Bergeron, Jr., below), but most didn't. Some claimed that this contest was a thinly disguised attempt by the American government to find out who knows what is really going on; any entrants who divulged real government secrets would be eliminated quietly.

Another invidious claim was that the government paid *Omni* to run this contest in order to convince people that stories about the AMA's subsidy to the tobacco industry and the alien bodies on ice at Wright-Patterson are "just rumors." Several real conspiracies are planted in the results as well, so that people will associate them with crackpot ideas and dismiss all of them as untrue.

Don't believe a word of it.

GRAND-PRIZE WINNER: \$100

There is a strain of albino marijuana growing in the New York City sewer system. The nutrient-rich sludge has germinated the seeds that were flushed down the toilet during drug raids, resulting in extremely powerful plants, known locally as Manhattan white or subway silver. It is hard to harvest, however, because it is guarded by all those alligators.

—Daniel Cohen, Port Jervis, N.Y.

RUNNERS-UP: \$25

It is widely rumored that John F. Kennedy was not killed in Dallas. His brain was destroyed, but he is "alive"—as a human vegetable—on the Greek island of Skoprios. Jackie "married" Aristotle Onassis on the condition that he provide a secret place where J.F.K.'s body could be kept alive for as long as possible. I have heard that J.F.K.'s body *did* die in 1978, although that is still unconfirmed.

—Kathy Hurley, New York, N.Y.

Someone found that the red M&M's can be used as an aphrodisiac. So the FDA ordered most of them taken out of the mix. If you find any, save them. You need at least five.

—Kevin L. Clark, Crown Point, N.Y.

Popular arcade games such as Asteroids, Space Invaders, and Tail Gunner are programmed to record the initials of the highest-scoring player. When you enter your initials, a photograph is secretly taken of you. The "games" are actually mechanisms for selecting, sorting, and training slave labor for duty in military spacecraft and on star bases. People who get good at these machines disappear under suspicious circumstances. You won't find *my* initials in one of those things, no matter how good I get!

—Larry Pike, Portland, Ore.

The U.S. government secretly is trying to increase inflation. Eighteen percent inflation could double your income every four years, placing you in a higher tax bracket, without increasing your real income at all.

—Dan J. Hicks, Orlando, Fla.

I have heard that a man in Kerry [Ireland], on his deathbed, expressed a desire to be buried at sea and that three of his sons

drowned trying to comply with his wishes.

—William Anderson, Calkey, Ireland

Seeking the reputation of a visionary—like Heinlein, Wells, and Verne—a certain well-known science-fiction writer has paid enormous sums of money and has even put innocent lives in danger, just to make sure that a wild prediction he made in a short story several years ago will come true on schedule.

—P. J. Veber, Mount Pleasant, S.C.

David Berkowitz obtained his pseudonym by listening to Jimi Hendrix whisper, "Son of Sam, Son of Sam," halfway through "Purple Haze" on the right channel.

—Robert Rudd, Danbury, Conn.

Killing turkeys causes winter.

—Brian Siano, Cherry Hill, N.J.

The *National Enquirer* is paying Scot Morris \$1 for each item he receives for *Omni* Competition #17. They expect to get at least two years' worth of cover stories from this investment.

—Corrie J. Bergeron, Jr.,
College Station, Tex.

HONORABLE MENTION

Humpty Dumpty was pushed.

—Michael Martin, Brisbane, Australia

Lee Harvey Oswald shot John F. Kennedy.

—Kurt Friedman, Oxon Hill, Md.

We Chinese believe that one's destiny is determined by one's physical features. In the case of a politician, the fate of a country can be predicted. Take Sun Yat-sen, for instance. China under Sun Yat-sen was divided into the Nationalist and Communist camps because he parted his hair in the middle. Chiang Kai-shek lost the whole of mainland China because he shaved off all his hair.



... And the secret deep freeze at an Air Force base, where alien corpses are being kept on ice.

Chairman Mao Zedong was able to sweep across China and unite the country because his hair is swept back without any parting. He had one problem, though: the island of Taiwan, as shown by the mole on his chin.

— S. T. Quah, Singapore

The Antichrist prophesied in the Bible (Revelations 14:18) has arrived. He is Ronald Wilson Reagan. Count the letters in each name to get "the number of the beast": 666. I realized this on election night, 1980, when the winning number in the Maryland State Lottery was—you guessed it—666.

— David Chiarenza, Columbia, Md.

The SAT scores are low because educators who make the tests have added more difficult questions to get more federal funding for their projects.

— Bill Loercher, Manheim, Pa.

If nobody voted in a U.S. presidential election, a candidate would still win because big business computers have the winners of each election taped 12 years in advance. This explains why no one admits he or she voted for Nixon: No one did.

— Jennifer R. Habersaat, San Jose, Calif.

In the background noise of the Ohio Players' song "Love Rollercoaster," one can hear a girl being stabbed to death. It

was recorded in a thin-walled studio in New York City, and the screams couldn't be edited out completely.

— Vernon Nelson, Springfield, Ill.

"Max," the eccentric millionaire who had himself cloned in David Rorvik's book *In His Image: The Cloning of a Man*, was, in reality, Alex Comfort.

— Ken Stein, Baltimore, Md.

If you drink the water from the Charles River, in Boston, it will cause you to be unable to pronounce your *r*'s.

— Ben Edelhart, New York, N.Y.

Dr Pepper is carbonated prune juice.

— Bryan McLane, Hollywood, Fla.

Prehistoric man did not associate childbearing with intercourse because of the long delay between the two events. He did, however, understand the hair on his palms.

— Chris Doyle, Burke, Va.

NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle's main job is to keep pro football honest so that people will continue to bet on it.

— Eugene H. Bales, Savannah, Mo.

In the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*, there is a description of a technique whereby one can learn to tickle oneself.

— Stuart S. Denrich, Baltimore, Md.

Colonel Sanders's "Extra Crispy" chicken is yesterday's "Original Recipe" chicken. If this isn't so, explain why "Extra Crispy" usually costs less than "Original Recipe."

— Laurie M. Young, Decatur, Mich.

The movie *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* was a documentary.

— Richard Green, Livermore, Calif.

The main ingredient in toothpaste is sugar.

— Janet Jacobsen, Scottsdale, Ariz.

The Peoples Temple cultists did not commit suicide in Guyana. They were murdered by the CIA in order to create an anticult hysteria that would aid the FBI in its war against the Church of Scientology.

— David Palter, Hollywood, Calif.

The reason why Anita Bryant hates homosexuals is that when she was in kindergarten three gay boys tied her up naked after school and gang-rejected her.

— Mike Stasko, Columbus, Ohio

The U.S. government is reluctant to fund the space program because it doesn't want to lose taxpayers to L-5-type colonies.

— Donald R. Gentry, Independence, Mo.

Isaac Asimov, Martin Gardner, and James Randi are aliens with psi powers and are debunking flying saucers and paranormal

CONTINUED ON PAGE 122

The Soligor 80-200m

Expand Your Horizons By Getting Close.

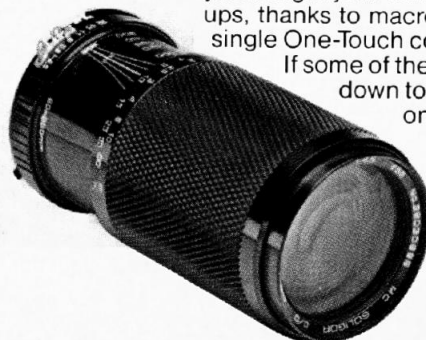


You've got a terrific 35mm SLR camera, but not all of your shots are terrific. Some suffer from too much unwanted scenery, some from tiny people in big frames... shots that didn't work because your creative I.Q. was more than your *lens* could handle.

That's right, lens. But, Soligor has a solution: the affordable, innovative Soligor 80-200mm One-Touch Zoom + Macro lens that lets you and your camera turn blah into beauty.

Zoom in to crop out extraneous details. Bring your subjects up to 4 times closer than a standard lens can. Frame your shots exactly as you want them, and Soligor quality captures them faithfully. Create exciting portraits, instead of just pictures of people; capture a still life or sports action as the kind of picture you bought your camera to get; experiment with amazing close-ups, thanks to macro ability. And it's all so easy with Soligor's single One-Touch control for zoom, focus and macro.

If some of the zip has gone out of your picture taking, zip down to your Soligor dealer and try our 80-200mm on your Canon, Minolta, Pentax, Olympus, Nikon or other fine camera. Or, write for full information.



SOLIGOR®
MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

AIC AIC Photo, Inc. Carle Place, N.Y. 11514
In Canada: Kingsway Film Equipment, Ltd., Ontario

powers to protect their secret.

— Susan Daniels, Moab, Utah

On August 1, 1981, one person will be randomly selected from the list of charter subscribers to *Omni* and awarded room aboard the space shuttle *Columbia*.

— P. Demarest, Pensacola, Fla.

Jeane Dixon predicted that a mass murder would occur in the basement of a dormitory at a Big Ten university, but her publishers didn't print the prophecy for fear it would cause a panic.

— Steve Banker, Bloomington, Ind.

The nuclear plant that powered *Skylab* separated and stayed in its orbit when *Skylab* crashed. In March 1980 it fell to Earth unheralded and crashed into the dormant crater of Mount St. Helens, where it triggered the eruption of that mountain.

— Dale E. Currier, Portage, Me.

Walter Cronkite has no legs.

— Stan Gilbert, Jr., Austin, Tex.

Einstein solved the unified field theory long before his death, but he carried the secret to his grave because he felt that man was not yet ready for the knowledge.

— Lona Rawlings, Santa Barbara, Calif.

All food in New York City's Chinatown restaurants comes from one huge underground kitchen.

— Francesca Heller, New York, N.Y.

Mystery singer Leon Redbone is actually Frank Zappa in disguise.

— The More Freedom Rhapsodists,
Tipp City, Ohio

Parking meters are designed to speed up during the last ten minutes of an hour.

— Vincent J. Kish, Bellerose, N.Y.

The insignia at the base of J.F.K.'s neck on the half dollar is a hammer and sickle. It was placed there by the coin's designer, a Communist sympathizer, and was not noticed until the coin was in circulation.

— Richard W. Fulton, Walkerton, Ind.

Mae West died of toxic shock.

— Doug Thomson, Soquel, Calif.

Swine flu shots actually were vaccinations against a virulent bacterium that escaped through negligence from government research laboratories.

— Tony Reeder, Bowie, Md.

The Japanese actually bought the 100-mpg carburetor from an unknown inventor in 1952. It was not, as is often said, bought by the big oil companies and then buried. Now, after many years, the Japanese are using this invention against us, but only ten

mpg at a time. This year the 50-mpg car, next year the 60-mpg car, and so on . . .

— Peter Lefferts, San Martin, Calif.

Jimmy Hoffa is alive and helping to organize the labor movement in Poland.

— Gordon Dodge, DeSoto, Mo.

The FBI was responsible for seeding the clouds above the Woodstock Festival.

— Anthony Connolly, West Bridgford, England

Flossing is the only effective way to loosen dental fillings.

— Alan M. Schwartz, Costa Mesa, Calif.

Omni is suing the Four Sigma Society, publishers of "The World's Hardest I.Q. Test" (April 1979), for inordinate delays in processing the score reports of readers.

— A. Fixx, Detroit, Mich.

A few years ago there was an attempt to remove "superglue" (cyanoacrylate) from the market. The reason given was the possible danger to children's skin and eyes. The real reason was that an irate Michigan housewife discovered her husband's infidelity and glued his penis to his leg while he slept.

— Dan Blake, Elkhart, Ind.

There is only one fruitcake in the entire world; it is simply passed around from person to person, changing hands every Christmas.

— A. Baird, Davis, Calif.

Here We Go Again Dept.: Dr. Charles Drew, the black American physician who discovered a way to separate blood for storing, died outside a hospital because it was for whites only.

— Dennis Hotter, Independence, Mo.

East and West Africa have a rift between them.

— Isaac Asimov, New York, N.Y.

Ambrose Bierce, Judge Crater, and Amelia Earhart are living in a *ménage à trois* in Nicaragua.

— Harlan Ellison, Sherman Oaks, Calif.

Corrugated paper clips were taken off the market because they work too well. The manufacturers found that smooth clips slide off and are lost more readily, bringing a faster turnover in sales. So smooth clips are now all they sell.

— Martin Gardner, Hendersonville, N.C.

The *Omni* Games editor is a CIA spy, using the Games column as a tool for hunting out people of a devious enough intellect to pose a possible threat to the U.S. government. Anyone who sends in a really creative answer to a problem or a Competition disappears within a few days and is never heard from again.

— Timothy A. Livengood, St. Louis, Mo. ∞