EDITOR'S COMMENT

This issue will reflect the expanded concerns expressed in the previous issue. The procedures of getting issues together, printed, and in members' hands need a thorough shake-down, and I apologize if we skipped you. (If I'm sure you didn't get a copy of all, I'm enclosing one.) In any case, I am still interested in getting current, often ephemeral information about actively circulating legends and beliefs, and I solicit reports and comments on legends from all quarters. Continuing reports of public events both popular and academic, are needed, and I hope to include some analysis of legends in the next issue.

But more than anything, I need responses and other voices. Scoffing, as Hawthorne noted in 1837, is as much a part of the legend process as seeking, and so all communication (as space allows) will be included.

JUST IN!

WHITE SLAVERS IN MEXICO. Apparently, solitary sun-bathing can be dangerous on the beach at Cancun, Mexico. According to a Pennsylvania woman, Sharon Mockorlick, she was spending her honeymoon in the Caribbean resort, and was lying on the beach, when she was chloroformed and kidnapped. She says she was dragged to a construction site by her abductors and managed to escape with minor injuries. But she told Pennsylvania state Rep. Michael Gruitzke that she had seen three other American women in the kidnappers' hideout. They were heavily sedated, she said. Gruitzke contacted the U.S. embassy and the FBI, which is now conducting an investigation with Mexican authorities. The FBI says it has no reports of missing American tourists, and has no hard evidence of a possible white slavery operation in Cancun. Without further evidence, the State Department says, it can't issue a travel advisory to American vacationers. (Jack Anderson and Paul Van Arbeek, "Halloween is not afraid to offend groups," syndicated column, 3 August 1987.)

CAN ALLIGATORS ADAPT TO SEWERS? Alligators can live in unusual places if they have to. In theory, they could indeed live for a limited time in the sewers of New York; it's warm enough, and there are rats to eat, and they don't need the sun all year. In 1935, a seven-foot alligator was found in a sewer on East 123rd Street, and there have been various other sightings reported. But alligators couldn't survive there long—only a few months at the most—because they need sunlight eventually, and because salmonella or shigella or E. coli, organisms that one usually finds in sewage, would sooner or later poison them. Also, alligators live at temperatures between seventy-eight and ninety degrees, and caimans need temperatures between eighty-four and a hundred, so if an animal was flushed or dumped into the sewer it might survive the spring, summer, and fall, but winter's cold would kill it. Sewers would do in a pinch, but alligators have preferred landscapes. . . . (Diane Ackerman, "Crocodilians," The New Yorker (10 October 1988): 80.)

MASS MURDER RUMORS ON AMERICAN CAMPUSES. Greg Walker will sleep in an upper bunk on the top floor of Founders Hall this weekend. If a mass murderer comes to the Slippery Rock University campus this Halloween weekend, that will put him at the epicenter of the violence. At least it will according to the version of the rumor he has heard.

But the rumor, he said, "is bull," which he proved by sleeping in the exact same place last year, when the same rumor circulated. Only things missed on campus were a few English tests. As a junior, Walker has seen the rumor disproved. Graduates told him they heard in four or five years ago, and in some form every year, that Slippery Rock would be the site. In the 17 years Chief Eric Thomas has been with the university police he has heard it nearly every year, except "it changes like society changes." Evidently, the rumor reappears like golden leaves and football games each fall, a part of campus lore passed from upperclassmen to gullible freshmen.

But this year, Walker said, there is a difference—people believe it. "It's bad this year," he said. "A lot of people are going home for the weekend or sleeping away from the dorm. Freshmen girls seem to be scared the most. Freshmen girls are petrified,"

Another difference is off campus. While, for the first time, the rumor has spread. Slippery Rock Police Chief Larry Thompson said local residents rarely heard the rumor in previous years, but this year are hearing it and spreading it. He has had calls in the last two days, all from residents asking about the rumor and if Halloween has spread over Lawrence and Butler counties, and Thompson has had calls from 60 miles away. He heard you canceled Halloween, other police chiefs say, should we do it too? No, he says, because we haven't canceled Halloween and the rumor is a bunch of nonsense.

What is the rumor? Well, that is difficult to say. Thompson said he stopped counting at 14 versions and if you ask 30 Slippery Rock students, you will get close to 30 different versions, usually, usually, usually, their dorm room is potently the bloodiest. Always there is a mass murder involved—Thompson has heard anywhere from four to 11 dead. Always, always, always, the police predicts it, but the psychic can never be found, nor anyone who personally heard or read the psychic's prediction. University officials believe the rumor dates back 20 years, when a psychic—nobody knows who—predicted a mass murder at a Pennsylvania campus. "There are over 200 colleges in Pennsylvania," Slippery Rock President Robert W. Ambers told. "If we wait long enough, it might happen someday. But if these psychics know something, why don't they take that knowledge to the lotteries?"

For the last 10 years or so, the rumor has been refined; the college is named after the local town and it has a body of water running through it. "Most of the state's colleges are in a town of the same name," Dawson said. And many Pennsylvania towns have a body of water running through it, even small as Slippery Rock Creek. At Slippery Rock, the rumor says the murders will occur at either the highest or lowest point on campus. Since the highest point is a water tower surrounded by woods, the police has concentrated on the lowest point. Several places, including dormitories and Miller Music Hall, which is already supposed to be haunted by the ghost of its namesake, Emma Duffy Miller, are supposed to be the lowest point on campus, depending on who is telling the rumor.

But Founders Hall seems like a good place for the rumor to be centered, since it is off in the woods, farthest from classrooms, and most of its residents are
freshmen. It is the newest dormitory on campus, but
looks like the oldest, the wind whistles eerily through
the windows and it is shaped like a few acres. At eight
floors, it is the tallest dormitory on campus, which
puts Walker's eighth floor bunk bed at the highest
point of the campus. The first doubts on the
first floor believe the mass murder will happen there,
since they are at the lowest spot. But so do the
residents of the first floor, who heard eighty
people would be murdered. On the eighth floor, they
heard five people would be murdered.

Three weeks before the date of the mass murder
is variable. Some say it will be Halloween, others the
days before (Devil's Night Out), and still others say
victims will be gathered tonight. The murder has
changed over the years, beginning with the lone mass
murderer who was in vogue a few years ago. Now the
murder includes a cult, sometimes religious and often
satanic. And satanic cults are in vogue in popular
music and culture. Although Geraldo Rivera's Tuesday
television special dwelled on satanic cults,
officials know they can't blame it on Rivera—the rumor
has been circulating for over three weeks.

Most versions of the rumor blamed it on a television
show—usually Phil Donahue's. But a spokesman from
the talk show said they have not had psychic
predictions on the show. The spokesperson said there
have been over 1,000 inquiries, mostly from the North-east, but
for as far west as Topeka, Kan., all asking about the
rumor. Others have attributed the rumor to Oprah
Winfrey, Johnny Carson, Jeannie Dixon, Sally Jesse
Fairchild, and NBC's Today show.

Thompson said he has researched every version he has
heard, but he could find no one who personally heard the
"prediction." "Usually someone says a friend heard the
prediction on Donahue or Winfrey or Carson," he said.
"Then you ask the friend, and they say another friend
heard the predictor predict the television shows say no such
prediction was ever made."

Both campus and Slippery Rock police were upset when a
reporter asked about the rumor. Both said they
preferred to wait until after Halloween to discuss the
issue. "We worry if we get too much publicity, it
might cause problems of its own," said Thomas, the
campus security. (Dan Donovan, "Ghostly Rumor Obsesses
College," Pittsburgh (PA) Press (28 October 1988): B1, B4)

OTHER WAYS OF CELEBRATING HALLOWEEN IN AMERICA. An
army of volunteers like the one that helped put the
damper on Devil's Night arson fires last weekend may be
deployed one day to combat crack houses and youth
gunfights, says [Detroit] Mayor Coleman A. Young.
"Anytime an aroused community comes together to deal
with a problem, that problem can be resolved," Young
said Tuesday. "What you've seen is a resolution of the
Devil's Night problem."

About 20,000 civilians joined police and fire-fighters in
patrolling the streets, keeping Detroit's annual Halloween weekend fire well below last year's
total and near the town's lowest rate, Young said.
From Saturday through Monday 229 fires broke out, a
cut of 21 percent from last year, the mayor said.
Devil's Night before Halloween. On Saturday, a below-average number of 56 fires broke out,
and Monday's 69 blazes were typical for any night of
the year in the city, Young said. Officially reported
104 fires Sunday. "This was the quietest Devil's Night
in years," he said. "The youngsters are beginning to
take the message.

A Halloween mob barged through Hollywood (CA),
attacking police shattering storefronts and looting
business before police in riot gear and riding horses
tamed the crush early Tuesday. . . Damage estimates
were incomplete. At the Brown Derby restaurant, youths
broke the front window and reached in to steal wine,
said maitre d' Jose Quintanilla. "All the glasses and
the spoons, it's just their day," said Edward Chahill,
who sought safety in the basement of Hollywood
Billiards.

A ghastly Halloween prank gone awry, a man trying
to stage a fake hanging shoked to death in a [CA]
bridge, MA bar full of revelers who didn't realize he
was dying before their eyes. He had done some sort of
Halloween attire that was going to make it look
though he was hanging himself when he really wasn't,
said Police Detective Doug Dwyer. "The hanger
slipped and he really was hanging, but it took
the crowd a while to realize what was happening.
When police officers arrived, he had cut him
down—but it was too late. [AP Press releases, 2
November 1988.]

BRIEDEST LEGEND PERFORMANCE OF 1988? His brother had
just come in from trick-or-treating and was almost
delirious with excitement.

"Almost done," Nate he exulted. "Popcorn balls
that are orange!"

"You can't eat the ones that aren't wrapped. Throw
away the popcorn balls," "Why?"

"Razor blades," said Nathan. . .

"Yeah," said Raisin. "Halloween Razor
blades. Oh, my God, Nate, someone gave me rasing
blades."

[From Michael Chenbon, "The Halloween Party." The New
"The Razor Blades.in AppleJack's Halloween," Perspectives
on Contemporary Legend ed. Paul Smith (Sheffield: CECTAL,
1984): 128-40.)

BRIEDEST LEGEND PERFORMANCE OF 1929? His eyes fixed on
the clean concrete wall, Gant strophe on, muttering
dramatically, composing a narrative of the picture...

The window on the corner was filled with rubber
syringes and thermos bottles. Drink Coca Cola. They
say to the formula the old mountain woman
$50,000,000 now. Rats in the vats. Dope at Wood's
better. Too weak here. He had recently acquired a
tap for the beverage and drank four or five glasses a day.

[From Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel (New York:

MICKEY MOUSE LSD RUMOR. Parents of young children were
advised by the attorney general's office on Tuesday not to be unduly concerned about a drug alert
rumor that has surfaced in the Hazleton area. The
flier urges parents to "spread the word" that paper sheets of LSD-laced
tattoos, tabs and stamps are being sold to school
children in the area. Copies of the flier have surfaced from time to time in Pennsylvania and other
states, and recently began circulating for at least a second time in Hazleton area schools, pediat-
ricians' offices and other locations.

Although information contained in the circular has
some factual merit, the Bureau of Narcotics in the
to attorney general's office said the message is exag-
gerated and no cause for alarm. While LSD is sometimes
sold on sheets of paper, according to spokesmen, we
don't see any evidence that would cause us to issue a
warning."

According to the circular, small sheets of white
paper containing blue, star-shaped "tattoos" are being
sold to Hazleton area school children. Purportedly the
stars, which are about the size of pencil erasers, are
soaked with lysergenic acid diethylamide (LSD), a hallow-
cinogenic drug. "Each star can be removed and placed
in the mouth, the body will absorb it. The LSD can
also be absorbed through the skin simply by handling

The circular goes on to state that school
children also have been given brightly colored
paper tabs that resemble postage stamps bearing images of
butterflies, clowns, Superman, Mickey Mouse and
other Disney cartoon characters. "This is a new way of
selling acid (LSD) by appealing to young children," the
circular states, advising that the stamps are packed in
red cardboard boxes and boxed or taped up.

Also described in the flier are red pyramid stamps,
micro dots in various colors, and cutout "window
panes," or grids. These are laced with drugs and
some are laced with strychnine (a poison), the
circular warns. The flier urges its readers to alert
their children and their communities to the alleged
threat, stating: "A young child could happen upon
these and . . . " It also warned that little children
could be given a free 'tattoo' by other children who want to have some fun, or by others
cultivating their own children.

The origin of the circular is listed simply as
"Cumberland County Sheriff's Department 5/26/88." No
state is described, but the sheriff's department is in
Cumberland County, PA., and in Cumberland County,
N.J., said on Monday they did not prepare or circulate the
flier. The attorney general's office said it has
encountered instances in which LSD is sold on 8 1/2-
in x 11-inch sheets of paper that bear repeated
symbols or designs representing words and
cartoon characters. A drop of LSD is placed onto each
character. The spokesman explained that, aside from
being easy to carry and inexpensive, the format is a
"marketing thing" that provides LSD manufacturers with
a way of identifying their product. Because LSD is a
manufactured drug, its quality, and price, varies. The symbols used in the sheet form of the drug are somewhat of a trademark. According to the spokesman, a single "hit" of LSD sells for $3 to $5, with a sheet of 20 going for as much as $100.

Concerning the circular's warning that dealers or manufacturers may give out free samples to "cullivate new customers," the spokesman said that would be expensive and is not a normal practice. We do not see that," the spokesman said. "These people are in business to make money. We don't see any evidence that would cause us to issue a warning." [Bob Salzta, "Concern over LSD Tattoos Unfounded, Officials Say," Hazleton (PA) Standard-Speaker, 2 November 1988.]

SATAN-WORSHIP AND TV RATINGS. [TV journalist Geraldo Rivera's NBC special on devil worship] turned out to be the highest-rated two-hour documentary ever presented on an American network television. It also set off an interesting controversy between Rivera and NBC programming head Brandon Tartikoff, who, following the broadcast, publicly questioned the scheduling of the program. That annoyed Geraldo, who told NEWSWEEK that Tartikoff "called me and said, 'You did everything you said you would do.'" NBC, looking for a Rivera ratings fix, apparently clashed with its own journalistic sensibility. A week before the infamous Satanism show ran, both sides were at a grueling standoff over its content. In dealing with a ritualistic murder, for example, Rivera wanted to mention air everything from the dressing and drinking of the victim's blood to his castration. "The compromise is ultimately struck," he recalls. "was that we would only talk about the sex scene of the murder and the carving on the chest. It's all a question of taste." ["Trash TV," Newsweek (14 November 1988): 73-74.]

EARLY VERSION OF "THE FIVE-POUND NOTE? On Wednesday afternoon a married woman, living in Masmorh, was standing in a crowd at a sale by auction in Parton Lane, Rotherham, when, putting her hand to her pocket, she noticed her pocket-book, containing three sovereigns and three crowns pieces. A policeman was called in, and she told him that her pocket had been picked, and pointed out three young men who stood near her as being likely to be the guilty parties. The young men protested their innocence; but, with two others, they accompanied the policeman to an adjoining beerhouse. The landlord asked for the door, and a general rush out of pockets took place. The missing purse, however, could not be found. The door was unlocked; the suspected pickpockets were not at liberty, and the lady returned to Masmorh disconsolate. When she got home she found her pocket-book on the chest of drawers. --Sheffield Times. ["A Lady's Memory," London Times (8 May 1855): 815. Cf. Baughman Motif N360(a)].

HAVE YOU HEARD...?

Beware! Vicious Guard Snake! Another syndicated column by Anderson and Van Atta, run 23 September 1988, summarized a "confidential intelligence report" produced by the US government on clandestine marijuana growing. Among the methods allegedly used by growers to protect their crops is the following: "In Florida... growers tie rattlesnakes on the trails leading to the pot patches. The guard snakes, bound to be cranky because they are tied up, strike out at unsuspecting passersby. Some Georgia growers have improved on this technique by cutting the rattles off the snakes so there is no advance warning." I respect the US Government's information-collecting agencies—but do sounds suspiciously like "one of ours." Can readers supply variants? Contact Editor, FOIA News.

THE MICROWAVED SIGNET RING. In 1949 Ron Edward heard a "true" story from an Engineering student at Swinburne Tech (Australia) about a machine that used "a new form of energy" to melt metals! Strangely, it appeared to give off no heat, and, since it had no door on the front, a hand could be put into it while it was operating without any feeling of warmth. One day a student placed a plate with metal on it while its heating runs, and suddenly the heavy gold signet ring that he was wearing melted around his finger. As a result of the horrible burns that resulted he lost the ring. One suspects this is an early form of the various microwave legends (See Brunvand, Vanishing Hitchhiker, especially p. 63, which mentions "scientific" versions of the legend in which technicians cook their own insides by operating microwaves with the door open). Can anyone supply variants? Contact Ron Edwards, Box 274, Kuranda Q 4872, Australia.

BULLETIN BOARD

AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY/FOIL NARRATIVE SECTION.

Proposed APS Paper Session: Emergent Legends: How Do We Handle Them? Elvis is alive! Satan is alive! MIA's are alive! Aliens are here! Nonsense. This is all just folklore. Or is it? Do we have the right to make prescriptive claims of these beliefs' falsehood? On the other hand, all these materials show strong links with earlier tradition and are mainly passed around in small groups? Recently emerged corpuses of belief often invoke polarized responses: what kind of middle ground can the folklorist strike? Should we ignore such material or should we try to respond to it as professionals? The Folk Narrative Section of the APS wishes to organize one or two paper sessions around this general topic. We are interested in proposals dealing with any belief or narrative complexes that have recently emerged and whose status as "folklore" is genuinely debatable. Contact Editor, FOIA News by March 15.

Proposed APS Forum/Workshop: Folk Narrative and Social Problems.

This forum would focus on ways that narratives deal with a range of social conditions seen as dysfunctions, for instance, AIDs, crime, poverty, war, prejudice, and the like. Folklorists should draw from their own research to spark discussion of the ways in which folk narrative expresses public attitudes in direct or disguised form. The plan is to permit each presenter a few (2-5) minutes at the beginning of the session for whatever comments the public they wish to make, then throw the floor open for discussion. Contact Gary Alan Pine, Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455, USA, by March 15.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE 1988 PERSPECTIVES ON CONTEMPORARY LEGEND CONFERENCE

Gillan Bennett, 28 Brownsville Road, Stockport, SK4 4PP, United Kingdom.

Veronica Campion-Vinet, 27 rue de Liege, 75008, Paris, France.

Frances Cattermole-Tally, Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology, Kinsey Hall, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

Carol Coates, Department of Folklore, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, A1C5S7.

Ann Cockburn, 10 Gorse Hill, Ravenshead, Nottinghamshire, United Kingdom.

David Cornwall, 5 Kersland Drive, Milngavie, Glasgow G62 2DG, United Kingdom.

Keith Cunningham, Department of English, Box 6032, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, Arizona 86011.

Christie Davies, Dept. of Sociology, University of Reading, Whiteknights, Reading, RG6 2AA, United Kingdom.

Araf Elbough, School of Humanities, I'mo State University, P.M.B. 2000, Ilesa, Ilesa, Nigeria.

Bill Ellis, Penn State--Hazleton Campus, Highacres, Hazleton, Pennsylvania 18201.

Mark Glazer, Department of Behavioral Sciences, Pan American University, Edinburg, Texas 78539.

Michael Goss, 57 Belmont Road, Grays Thurrock, Essex RM17 5YJ, United Kingdom.

Alana Greene, Department of Folklore, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, A1C5S7.

John Harries, Department of Folklore, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, A1C5S7.
FOAPTALE NEWS: AN OCCASIONAL NEWS SHEET ON CONTEMPORARY LEGEND RESEARCH

All members of ISCLR receive this news sheet free. Others wishing to be on the mailing list should send $2.00 or the equivalent to cover postage. All contributions, material for publication, and inquiries should be sent to Bill Ellis, Penn State—Hazleton Campus, Hazleton, PA 18201 USA. (717-450-3026 or 788-2021)