FOAFTALE NEWS

No. 13 (March 1989)

AN OCCASIONAL NEWS SHEET ON CONTEMPORARY LEGEND RESEARCH

EDITOR'S COMMENT

As this issue goes to press, some of us are preparing to head for Texas A&M for the first American version of the successful seminars on the contemporary legend. Organized by Paul Smith in 1982, they have been held (in some form) at the University of Sheffield every year since then. We appreciate the efforts of Tom Green and Sylvia Grider in putting together this American cousin and hope that it might introduce the pleasures of friendly disagreement to researchers who find it difficult to go to Sheffield. I have always returned from the previous seminars with a keener appreciation of what I DON'T know about legends.

One disappointment is that NEH, after initially reacting favorably to the project, ultimately failed to put up any money for the seminar, which forced a number of planned participants to cancel. Again, Tom and Sylvia came through with some creative financing, so the event will go on as planned, though we shall miss several incisive minds. Let’s hope that this setback is not a sign that NEH is turning toward the elitist attitude that defines folklore as the study of trivia.

This issue, like the last, is heavy on announcements and news items, both of which we encourage you to send. Almost every publication I read contains some item that connects up with contemporary legend. But we also need some analysis and commentary, particularly along these lines: contextual study of legends and rumors; close observation or transcription of legends told in natural or close-to-natural contexts; past analogs of modern legends; demographic studies of legend-tellers; and use of contemporary legends in other media: novels, short stories, films, popular songs, and the like. I would be interested in seeing the work of graduate or undergraduate students who have done tightly focused projects along these lines (as others that show promise). Let’s share methods and ideas, not just texts.

BULLETIN BOARD

PERSPECTIVES ON THE CONTEMPORARY LEGEND:
THE PUBLIC FACE OF THE CONTEMPORARY LEGEND

Texas A&M University
March 30-April 1, 1989

Preliminary Program

THURSDAY, MARCH 30

9:00 a.m. Linda Degh, Folklore Institute, Indiana University: Opening Keynote Address, "What Is the Legend After All?"

10:30-12:00 p.m. Session #1, Theoretical Issues
(Danielle Roemer, Chair)

Danielle Roemer, Northern Kentucky University, "Appropriated Vices and Confrontive Signs: The Use of the Other in the Contemporary Legend"

William "Bill" Clements, Arkansas State University, "Interstitionality in the Contemporary Legend"

Sandy Hobbs, Paisley College, "A Behavior Analysis Model of Contemporary Legend"

2:00-4:00 p.m. Session #2, Collection and Analysis
(Bill Ellis, Chair)

Graham Shorrock, Memorial University of Newfoundland, "Some Reflections on the Problems of Transcribing Contemporary Legends"

Candace Slater, University of California at Berkeley, "Saints Lives as Contemporary Legends"

Bill Ellis, Penn State-Hazleton Campus, "Towards a More Consistent Taxonomy of Legends"

Dick Sweterlitsch, University of Vermont, "Belief and Satire: Creative Tension for the Survival of a Legend Complex"

4:30-5:30 p.m. Session #3: Open discussion of issues involving the Contemporary Legend
(Keith Cunningham, Chair)

FRIDAY, MARCH 31, 1989

9:00-11:00 a.m. Session #4, Case Studies
(Keith Cunningham, Chair)

Brian McConnell, London Daily Mirror, "The Killing of a Murder Legend"

William A. "Bert" Wilson, Brigham Young University, "Urban Narrative as Religious Legend: Mormon Examples"

Jan Brunvand, University of Utah, "A Blast Heard 'Round the World"

Keith Cunningham, Northern Arizona University, "The Morton Hall Ghost: A Morphological Case Study of Seven Years in the Life of a Contemporary Legend"

11:30-1:00 p.m. Session #5, Contemporary Legend and the Cultural Complex
(Mark Glazer, Chair)

Mark Glazer, Pan-American University, "Women as Tellers of Contemporary Legends"

Linda Milligan, Ohio State University, "Folklorists' Performance of Folklore in the Academy"

Joel Best, California State University at Fresno, "Endangered Innocents: Contemporary Legends About Threats to Children"

2:30-4:00 p.m. Session #6, Study of Contemporary Legend (Paul Smith, Chair)

Paul Smith, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Sheffield University, "Cutting the Cake: Analyzing the Contemporary Legend Corpus"

Leea Virtanen, University of Helsinki, "The Collecting Methods of Modern Legends in the Light of Finnish Materials"
Michael J. Preston, University of Colorado, "Computer Viruses in the Media"

4:30-5:30 p.m. General Discussion (W.P.H. Nicolson, Chair)

SATURDAY, APRIL 1, 1989

9:30-11:00 p.m. Session #7, Contemporary Legend, The Media, and Literature (Pat Mullen, Chair)

Pat Mullen, Ohio State University, "Media Presentation of the Contemporary Legend: Jan Brunvand on 'Late Night with David Letterman' and Other Shows"

Frances Cattermole-Tally, University of California at Los Angeles, "Erroneous Reports of Death"

1:30-3:00 p.m. Session #8, Contemporary Legend and Mass Institutions (Gary Alan Fine, Chair)

Janet Langlois, Wayne State University, "Hold the Mayor: Cultural Inversion in an AIDS legend"

Ms. Anna Davis, Sam Houston State University, "Coffee, Tea, or Mediums? The Role of Legend in the Airline Industry"

Gary Alan Fine, University of Minnesota, "Mercantile Legends and the World Economy: Dangerous Products from Abroad"

3:30-5:00 p.m. Frederick Roening, Tulane University, "Closing Keynote Address, "Humor in the Marketplace"

JUST IN!

Advice to the Legendary

DEAR ABBY: I just received a letter from my daughter, Kathy, who is attending school in Provo, Utah. She related the following story that I found so horrifying. I want to share it with you so that you can warn others:

"A 17-year-old girl won a trip to Hawaii. She wanted a really nice tan for the trip, so last week she went to a tanning parlor. She'd never been to one before, so she asked how long was the maximum time she could stay in, and they said half an hour. Well, she wanted a really dark tan, fast, so she went to seven places and spent a half-hour in each—one-three and a half hours total! Well, this poor girl is now in Utah Valley Regional Medical Center. They estimate she has about 26 days to live. She's totally blind, and they say it's as if she had 'microwaved' herself—it's basically the same principle. Anyhow, she just cooked herself from the inside out. And the worst part is, there's not a thing they can do for her. Not a thing. Her poor family!"

Of course, the girl was foolish. But most of us do things that are foolish sometime in our lives, but we live to laugh about them. This girl will not. Please warn your readers, Abby. You may want to verify these facts on Provo.--ANITA HALLOCK

DEAR ANITA: Thanks for writing. I wondered how "they" could estimate the number of days "this poor girl" had to live, so I called the Utah Valley Regional Medical Center in Provo and its spokesperson, Mr. Clark Cares, stated that there was no such patient in the facility, but that the story had been circulating at the Brigham Young University. Joan, secretary to the medical director, said that she had just returned from Pocatello, Idaho, where she had heard the same story. In checking with The Provo Daily Herald, Rene Nelson told my staff that they had also heard the rumor, but were unable to verify it.

Well, friends, so much for the "tanning" story.

DEAR ABBY: You recently printed a letter from a lady regarding the horrible consequences suffered by a young woman when she overused the facilities at a tanning salon. The story she told was obviously farfetched. Why did you print the lady's story? You must have known it would embarrass her. I have read your column for many years, and while I don't always agree with you, I have always looked forward to seeing what you had to say. No longer. I think printing the lady's name, when you knew it would make her look foolish, was just plain mean! Now every time I read your column, I feel resentment. Please notice, I am not signing my name. You are not to be trusted with it.--UNSIGNED IN OREGON

DEAR UNSIGNED: I'm glad you wrote because other readers may have felt as you did, and I welcome the opportunity to publicly state that before I published the woman's letter, I obtained permission to use her name. Furthermore, if I had thought she might be embarrased by the publicity, I would not have identified her.

And incidentally, after that item appeared, I heard from folklorist Jan Harold Brunvand... He wrote (in part): "I was pleased to see that you debunked the tanning story. I have heard many different versions of that legend—it's been around for a long time..."

DEAR ABBY: How right you are to point out that constant tickling of a person by a cruelly mischievous would not be tolerated. My Irish mother told me at least 50 years ago of a situation that took place near her hometown on Iceland. A neighbor had at least two wives pass away before he found one who would endure it. Then another neighbor reported hearing hysterical laughter coming from that house. Well, it was later learned that the man had been tying his wives to the bedpost, and tickling the soles of their bare feet with a feather! He continued until the hysteria did them in. In truth, they were tickled to death. [Note: This sounds like "one of ours"--can anyone in the British Isles confirm?]--ED.

Vanishing Hitchhiker Update

HAWAII. They call her Pele, the volcano goddess. I first heard about her from a friend. While he was exploring Volcanoes National Park with his wife, the two came across a young woman perched on the edge of a crater, making an offering to the deity. My friend snapped some pictures of the ritual. He sent in the film to be developed but it was reported lost.

Just a coincidence, you may say, yet there are people on the Big Island, where volcanoes are still active, who swear that Pele exists. Fiery, impulsive and unpredictable, this goddess is said to be one of the most elusive. Hawaiian religion is said to appear as a hitchhiker, sometimes young, sometimes old, often smoking a cigarette or sipping coffee or gin. Not to pick her up is bad luck but when you do, she vanishes to the vehicle before the destination is reached.

Removing anything volcanic from the goddess's domain is considered a surefire way of incurring Pele's wrath. Every year, tourists return souvenirs to Volcanoes National Park. One letter on display at the park says: "I read with some amusement all the letters in your case from Okinawa who are trying to get rid of one of the objects from the goddess's domain. Unfortunately, I'm not finding it amusing anymore. After we returned with a vial of black sand my husband has been hospitalized twice and had lost his job. The various household appliances have broken down and we seem to have a streak of bad luck as we never had before." It's in the quiet of the hot afternoon, tiny Paehohee Beach Park on Alii Drive, south of Kailua-Kona on the Big Island, looked uninhabited. Partially shaded by the spreading branches of a banyan tree, the little beach is a salt-and-pepper affair of mixed white coral fragments and black volcanic stones. I noticed a young woman in a great bathing suit, using a faucet on the beach to rinse the salt from her 2-year-old daughter.

"Is it all right," I asked her, "to take the coral but just as wise to leave the lava alone?" Ellawyn Kumitomo, a soft spoken hotel clerk who lives not far from the beach, explained. "It's real Pele," she told me. Pressed a little, she admitted that she "believes" in Pele, despite the fact she is a practicing Mormon. "I don't think the Hawaiians are any different to disregard the superstitions of your culture."

Ellawyn, who is part native Hawaiian, said her family has encountered the goddess. Her father tells them that, one night, "he picked a goddess up one night. As the aunt who was driving pulled away, she peered into the back of the pickup through the rear-view mirror and observed the middle-aged woman dragging on a cigarette and sipping a cup of coffee. When the aunt looked back a few minutes later, Ellawyn said, the hitchhiker was gone."

After our visit Ellawyn and her daughter drove home. I caught a flight to Honolulu that afternoon, with not a grain of volcanic sand in my suitcase. (Paul

SOUTH AFRICA. As Easter approaches the people of the little town of Uniondale in the Eastern Cape will be wondering if she will return to them ever since, she returns to haunt the lonely stretch of road where she was murdered. Marie Roux’s story is bizarre. Twice motorists could only have to her abruptly vanish a few kilometers down the road. It is also unique. It is perhaps the best story in the world.

Marie was killed 19 years ago, on April 13, 1948 at 4:30 on Easter morning. She was the only passenger in a long journeyed by her fiancé, Mr GM Pretorius, who was 21. According to the Pretorius when he reopened the road at 8:00 a.m., he was driving between Willowmore and Uniondale at a speed of about 100 km/h. Marie was asleep in the front passenger seat. Mr Pretorius removed his right hand from the steering wheel and lost control of the car. Marie was flung from the vehicle and killed.

It was a tragedy but one which might have been forgotten now by most people if only two people started seeing Marie’s ghost. Not everyone who has encountered the spirit is prepared to talk about their experience or even believe there is one. Of those Mr and Mrs Leonard Pretorius, who live in Willowmore and have seen the ghost, saw a girl standing at the side of the road, he stopped his motorcycle and offered her a lift. She climbed on and when they got to the Uniondale she felt his bike shudder. He then checked his passenger and found that she had vanished. When he saw the photograph of Marie Roux . . . he identified her immediately as the girl to whom he had given a lift.

She was pale and dark-haired," said Dawie recall the encounter. "She was in her early twenties, neatly dressed in a dark top and pants. She spoke to me, but I had no crash helmet on, my bike was not very close to her. The only word I could hear was 'strat'. So I told her 'Look, I can’t hear you, just nod if you want a lift.' She nodded and I took her. I could hear my crash helmet from the luggage carrier, heater, and I was placed the helmet on her head. As I did so she stared straight at me without changing her facial expression. There was something about her which made my flesh go cold.

The girl climbed on my bike and we started off. As we rode along I started to get really cold, unnaturally so. I accelerated to about 120 km/h and then I felt something bumping lightly against my back. The original rear wheel shifter slightly on the road and I had a moment’s fear and glanced in my rearview mirror to see if the girl was all right and she wasn’t there.

I thought I had fallen off and I saw my bike in a U-turn to go back and look for her. I was really frightened. I must have gone about two kilometres before I realised I was still feeling the gentle bumping against my back and for some reason I was seeing the bumping was caused by my spare helmet which was clipped to the luggage rack. Then I got a real fright and I took off like a bullet, I touched 190 km/h on my way to Uniondale.

So many people encountered Marie Roux that Andries Vermeulen, who was then Uniondale’s magistrate, launched an investigation. He interviewed six men and showed those involved pictures of Marie to come to the conclusion that the ghost exists. "The people involved are honest, reliable people with no cause to lie," he says. Charles van Rensburg, a Uniondale resident, who the police will not be seen again. Charles helped some University of Pretoria scientists investigate the hauntings. "One of those cases came from the town of Pretoria and eventually contacted the ghost," he says. "He talked to her and explained that she was dead and that she was free of life. I am afraid that details of what they encountered out there on the roadside are confidential."

If the scientist succeeded in their attempts to set Marie’s spirit at rest, then Easter motorists on the Uniondale road have nothing to worry about. I have decided, though, that I’d think twice before stopping if I saw a pale faced girl standing at the side of the road. David Bartlett, "Will the Uniondale Ghost Strike Again?" Sunday Times Magazine (29 March 1987): 22-23. See also Michael
Goss, The Evidence for Phantom Hitch-Hikers

Life Imitates Legend

SHOPPING MALL ABDUCTIONS. Police are searching for clues after two men grabbed a 2-month-old infant from his mother’s arms outside a shopping center in northeast Philadelphia and then sped away in a waiting sedan.

The FBI and homicide unit of the Philadelphia police joined in the investigation. Detective Paul Morrell of the homicide unit said police have not found the child. Tanya Dacri, 20, of Philadelphia, told police she was standing behind the Northeast Shopping Center in the 8:15 p.m. on Friday, near a public library, when two young men ran up to her, stole her pocketbook and grabbed her son, Zachari, Capt. Thomas Seamon said. Ms. Dacri said the men then jumped into a waiting Ford Crown Victoria.

Police were looking for a third man, according to Seamon. According to Ms. Dacri, the car had no license plate. . . .

The baby was wearing a white zippered pajamas, a light blue cap and a white, blue and yellow snowsuit, police said. He was wrapped in a blue and white blanket, according to police. Seamon said one suspect was in his 20s and described him as having broad shoulders, tall and weighing 180 pounds. The second man, in his 30s, was described as being 5-foot-8, 160 pounds and wearing a white ski jacket and a multi-colored hat. Police said the men searched the baby’s diaper bag for clues.

Dacri, 20, and her husband Philip, 22, were at the couple’s home with their other child, Christine, about 13 months old, when the baby was taken, according to Seamon. (AP Press release, 10 January 1989.)

A woman accused of drowning her 2-month-old son, dismembering his body and dumping the remains in two creeks reportedly told police she couldn’t cope “because he was always crying,” authorities said. Tanya Dacri, 20, and her husband Philip, were being held today pending an arraignment, authorities said.

Police divers searching murky Neshaminy Creek in suburban Croydon on Wednesday found five green plastic bags containing Zachary Dacri’s head, hands and feet, said police Capt. Robert Grasso. A search for the torso in Pohopoco Creek near the Lehigh River in Carbon County, about 40 miles west was called off at dusk, Grasso said. The search was to resume today.

Mrs. Dacri is charged with murder, false reports, hindering apprehension, tampering with evidence, obstruction of justice and conspiracy in tampering with a corpse, police said. If convicted, she could be sentenced to death. Mrs. Dacri initially told police her baby was kidnapped at a mall Tuesday, authorities said. She later told investigators she drowned Zachary in a bathtub Saturday, cut the corpse up with a knife Sunday and stuffed the remains in plastic trash bags, The Philadelphia Inquirer reported today, quoting unidentified police sources.

Mrs. Dacri said the she and her husband drove to bridging crossing to show the bags in the sources said. She took officers to both locations to show them where to search, the sources said. Police searched a trash can outside the Dacri’s apartment building in Northeast Philadelphia found a knife believed to have been the one used to dismember Zachary, the newspaper said.

Police said the Dacri’s lost custody of Christine for eight months last year following allegations of child abuse. They underwent counseling before the child was returned to them in September, authorities said. (AP news release, 11 January 1989.)

SATANIC CHILD ABUSE. A Glendale retiree was arrested after he allegedly molested a 10-year-old boy and assaulted another boy who refused to look at explicit adult literature, police and court records show. James Albert Stevens, 63, wore a veil and a wig when he allegedly struck and kicked the second victim, a 6-year-old boy, after the child refused to view "bad" books, according to Glendale City Court records. Stevens was arrested Monday afternoon at his apartment in the 5000 block of North 55th Avenue, said Marshall Downen, a Glendale police spokesman. (Retiree Suspected of Child Sex, [Phoenix] Arizona Republic 1 March 1989.)

DISCARDED REPTILES. Those silver-dollar sized turtles that used to swim in plastic dishes adorned with plastic palm trees have grown into dinner-plate sized reptiles sunning themselves on real logs at the Phoenix Zoo. The large population of "red-eared sliders" surprised zoo officials during a recent cleaning of the man-made lake on the zoo grounds at 5810 E. Van Buren St.

The turtles were intended to be sent home as gifts from the zoo for the children who took summer classes at the facility soon after it opened in 1962. "Apparently, many of them didn’t make it past the front gate," said Dick George, public-information director for the zoo. George said others came to pick up their children (from zoo classes) they saw a turtle and said ‘you’re not taking that home’ and it wound up in the lake.

The lake turned out to be an ideal home for the reptiles, who thrive on the moisture, insects and brush around the zoo. They not only grew bigger, but they also grew larger. "We’re seeing families that also grew from the coin size to Frisbee- disk size over the years. George said there were more than 100 large turtles in the lake when it was drained recently; all of them were hiding holes in the Papago Park during the cleaning, he said. (Edythe Jensen, “Zoo Staff Cleans Lake, Discovers ’62 Turtle Giveaway Back-fired,” The [Phoenix] Arizona Republic (28 February 1989.)

HILARIOUS ACCIDENTS. A man who was prowling at his ex-husband’s house [in Jones, Oklahoma] spent the night in her chimney and so got he was unable to thank his rescuers. "This is the first time I’ve ever worked [on] someone overdosing on soot," said Oklahoma County Undertaker Sheriff Jerry Biggers.

The man, whose name was not immediately released, was discovered inside the chimney about 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, but authorities believe he had been there since about 11 a.m. Monday. The occupant of the house called about a prowler. The man apparently had been trying to get into the house through the chimney and became stuck, said . . . a spokesman . . . (AP release, 16 March 1989.)

SPORTS PAGE

IGNORANT ARBITRATORS. Arbitrators hold the baseball world in their hands. Just who are these men in the middle? They are the ones who make the binding decisions when no agreement can be reached. Some suggest they are not qualified, that they are ignorant of baseball. A familiar story in baseball circles offers evidence.

An arbitrator was determining one year’s salary for a player last season. Because the rules bind the arbitrator to choose either the team’s offer or the player’s requested salary, both sides placed a mound of statistics in front of him to make his argument.

"Wait a minute," the arbitrator said. "Why do you have all these numbers under 'AB'? Doesn’t that just stand for Atlanta Braves?"

It stands for at-bats, and most arbitrators know that, but while no management officials would comment for the record, spokesmen for some clubs say these arbitrators have never ever been to a ballgame. "We know what ERA’s and ABs are and so forth," said arbitrator George Nicolau, who said he has heard the horror story about doing this. The arbitrators are often asked, "Most know what an 'AB' is, batting averages, stolen bases and all the abbreviations," Anderson said. "We may not be familiar with a name on a particular team, but I would say we know the elements of the game. The fans wouldn’t know the intricacies of the game, but he knows who’s a good player and who’s a flash in the pan. He’s had real good numbers all the way."

Sands, who decided a 1988 case against Braves pitcher Zane Smith, isn’t worried that arbitrators are considered ignorant. "My history is. ‘My brain is on surgery. What we don’t know, the parties can teach us.‘" Sands said. "If I’m uncomfortable with the facts making decisions, if they can’t make decisions once the facts are explained. What the arbitrator sells is curable ignorance, which is all right. There’s a saying: ‘Ignorance we can cure. Stupidity is forever.’" (Darryl Maxie, "Playing the Money Game," Atlanta Constitution (31 January 1989): F1, F6.)

THE JOYS OF HACKING. Chambers dictionary has several different definitions for "Hack." The ones that concern us are: (i) to break into or rob; break into by force; go about on horseback; and (ii) to journey on horseback. Until fairly recent times, if you wanted to go hunting, you rode your horse to the place of meeting, hunted, and then rode home. Afterwards, often in the dark: you "hacked" . . .
The foreman looked and scratched his neck and said in a thoughtful way
"We'll never get him in a coffin!
We'd be scraping the house all day!
I'll tell you what—We'll back a truck and drop a load of rubble.
Then grade it out and roll it flat.
It'll save a lot of trouble!"

That's what we did. There's a lonely cross out there in the empty plain.
Three hundred metres from Jack's fence just after you pass the drain.
But the Traffic Controller, the ranger and me and all the rest of the men
Will never forget poor Lazy Jack.
Or eat raspberry jelly again!

RE MICKEY MOUSE LSD RUMOUR. News item in the Brisbane Courier-Mail, 17 August 1967.
KIDS SOLD DRUG LACED BISCUITS. Police along Sydney's northern beaches have stepped up their hunt for someone they call "the bread licker" who has been lacing biscuits with deadly drugs to school children for $1 each. The cookies are home-made and contain everything from heroin and LSD to heavy amphetamines and pot, police said yesterday. Several young people who have eaten the cookies have had to have emergency treatment at Manly Hospital. Constable Trevor Otten said 'the Baker' had become a police target for almost a fortnight. "We know he's been selling the things from a lime-green Holden (car) or sometimes a Ford," Constable Otten said.

RE MOLESTED CPD DOLL. The following was told to me by a salesman returning to Australia from a visit to Hong Kong. He heard the tale there.
There was a fellow who was manager of a copra plantation on a remote island in the New Hiresides, the only white man on the island, no other men let alone white women. He couldn't stand the native women, so he just had no comforts at all. Well, his company he worked for were pretty good, he used to get ten week leave every two years, and one year he went to Hong Kong instead of going home to Australia. He went into a sex shop there and he found that you could buy an inflatable rubber woman; you just took her out of the box and blew her up and Bob's your uncle, she had all the fittings she needed. So he bought one to take home to the island with him; I don't suppose he'd have needed it in Hong Kong.
Anyway he sailed home to his plantation, and after he'd done home work and worked very little he got the box out. Well, it worked all right, but about a fortnight later he found that he had a dose of the clap! It turned out that the Indonesian cabin steward he had on the trip home had found the thing and used it without him knowing anything about it, and that's where he got the dose from. [Note: This is also known as a dirty joke; see also Legman, Rationale of the Dirty Joke, 9.111.1 (p. 746).]

Focus on Sewers and Rats

PARIS. The Phantom was laid to rest long ago in the cellars of the Opera, but figures nearly as macabre still haunt the catacombs that wind through the belly of Paris like entrails and conceal millions of human bones.

Each weekend, dozens of people slip out of their city skins and into the maze on which the city rests. They descend as far as 90 feet into a world where night is eternal, the unexpected waits at each turn and the game is to the fearless. Some are history buffs seeking the dank breath of ancient Paris, others are adventurers and still others inhabit a marginal world whether above ground or below. They are finally called "cataphiles" and are drawn, as if by enchantment, to the darkness beneath the City of Light. They tread in the footsteps of sorcerers, bandits, smugglers, the
trailing crawler passed out. Both had to be pulled out of the pipe by the safety ropes crawlers wear on the job.

Lofton is a stout man—he has a 36-inch waist—so he confines his inspections to large sewers. Still, occasionally finds himself in a tight squeeze. "A lot of times, I've gotten scared, I mean really scared. I started swelling like a balloon up to the Creator. I talk myself through those sewers." The sewers have brought Norman Lofton closer to God.

Many of the stories about underground creatures are also more than a decade ago when students of the Ecole Nationale des Mines nearly made it a ritual. "We ended up spending..."

PHILADELPHIA. Not many people keep count, but the average Philadelphian flushes a toilet about six times a day... After flushing, said the police inspector, the water is collected in a network of about 188 miles of accessible catacombs, are assigned to the dead. The galleries are lined with the skulls and other bones of 6 million people, some quizzically..."Sometimes a skull doesn't"现在的那座地下浩劫还远没完。它们是生前的行尸走肉，是死后的流浪汉。

People tend to drift into the sewers because it is a way to escape the monotony of their lives. Many have been found in the sewers, some alive, others dead..."They are between the walls..."they told us that we were..."we are not free..."

The University of Arizona wildlife management graduate student sent TV funnyman David Letterman a T-shirt and a book, the secret order of Neotoma Eater (SNE). Neotoma is the biological name for rat. The card and T-shirt feature a picture of a rat grabbing a knife and fork and the group's motto: "All for rat and rat for all." Said Duncan: "We told Letterman that if he is ever in the Tucson area, we'd be happy to make him a regular member."

But the zany comedian would first have to swallow a morsel of rat meat in front of six SNE cofounders, Duncan added. A rat meat meal need not fear catching any strange diseases from eating rat meat...you are not as interested in the meat as the habitat. A rat meat meal need not fear catching any strange diseases from eating rat meat...

WASHINGTON. RARE HERB LOCATED BY BIRO. In India, Sri Lanka, China (People's Republic, Taiwan, and Hong Kong), a legend circulates about a bird that locates a medicinal herb. The story appears to have been brought to South Africa around 1860, and is also widely known there among blacks and East Indians. The bird is a variety of coucal (Centropus rufipennis Illiger), and the herb is variously known as sanjivini kaddi (India) and kaly nika (Sri Lanka). References from either Africa or Asia would be welcomed. Address: P. O. Box 31126, Nerebank, 4059 Durban, Natal, SOUTH AFRICA.

CHAIR OF DEATH. According to Weekly World News, a US tabloid of dubious reliability, there is a chair in a local museum in Thirsk, Yorkshire, that has caused the deaths of 61 people. A 17-year-old Londoner, a rogue named Thomas Bussy, said before his execution that anyone who dared sit in his favorite chair would die within a day or two days... "Incredible Chair of Death." [17 June 1978]

Can any British friends confirm this story or provide analogous? Address to Editor, FOAPALTE News.

WALTERS' LEGENDS ABOUT GAUCHE CUSTOMERS. Sandy Hobbs sends along this clipping and comments, "At least some of these sound apocryphal and might qualify as contemporary legends. I would welcome confirmation by..."
These pages are normally devoted to the opinions and prejudices of the customer. For a change it is the turn of the consumed to have their turn. I have recently been talking to head waiters and chefs from some of our better restaurants about the occasions when the customer was not right. The most frequent and liveliest of certain head waiters, my informants must remain anonymous.

There is an oft-repeated joke about a young man in Glasgow. A restaurant waiter would like to have a screwdriver which he would like ginger with his meal. He replies that he will stick to the red wine, the same as the rest of the company. [Note: In modern Glasgow, "ginger" can also mean "lémantine".] There is a memorable instance of this happening but the spirit of the untutored diner lives on with the person who ordered steak tartare and then complained that it was rare. Or the customer who asked for his steak tartare well done.

Not to mention the lady who complained to the manager of an Italian restaurant about the extreme care of providing powdered milk which had made her coffee taste disgusting. Not surprising, he replied, since she had just put two spoonsful of parmesan cheese into her cup.

Or the customer in a wine bar who ordered soup followed by a main course with a side salad. The waitress placed his cutlery and a bowl containing French dressing on his table and went to the kitchen to fetch his soup. She returned to find the customer eating the bowl of French dressing. She left him to finish the rest of the soup course and was not surprised when he took refuge in the toilet and was unable to tackle the rest of his meal. Compared to this, quite common practice of drink the water from fingerbowl pales into insignificance.

There was another obvious connoisseur who told a waiter that there was a leaf floating in the French dressing. It must have flown through the open door she added. Unhydrostatic, the waiter might have said, if he were into elaborate puns.

Most head waiters will tell you that they do not mind dealing with diners who, faced with a menu bungling with gastronomic goodies, admit that they just want something simple. A well-known Glasgow lawyer is famous for bypassing entrées, main courses, and sundry other cuisines in favour of a regular lunchtime order of plain omelette and mashed potatoes, albeit washed down by a bottle of fine wine costing about 20 pounds. Another customer on whom the niceties of a la carte, table d'hote and surprise menus are obviously lost, plumped for smoked salmon from the list of starters. Asked what else he would like he ordered and received on a side plate, a portion of chips and peas. It is the customer who thinks he or she knows all about good food and fine wines that causes the most heartache to the chef and head waiter. The owner of an establishment which prides itself on value for money quality wines still remembers with sorrow the Chamberlain in 1959 in which he bought an apparently knockdown price of 19.95 pounds a bottle. A customer consulting his wine diary discovered that it was an exceptional year and ordered a bottle only to return the next day, with the bottle of wine, which was half empty. It was cold. The customer who was also in the restaurant. The wine waiter, unable to resist a comment to the offending diner, asked him if he had managed to retain the nice colour he had been born with. The same chief has had his wild strawberries, brought in from the market, rejected by a diner, who said they were too small.

There is a school of thought among head waiters that there is a growing band of professional complainers; people who are convinced they can get a free meal, a reduced bill, or even a free drink just by being difficult. One person complained that the pheasant was of a poor standard. He took his complaint as far as the complaints department of the newspaper before admitting that it was in fact the first time he had ever tried pheasant and had no idea how it should taste.

Another difficult customer demanded a 50% reduction on his bill. The food had been excellent, he said, but the waiter should have informed him of the various other menus he could have had. Where other diners produce a credit card to pay the bill, he placed his lawyer's card on the table. The waiter stood firm, phoned the police, received full payment and is still awaiting the writ.

Other customers of skullduggery which are by no means uncommon in restaurants are by mistake with waiters swamped for the Burberry is a good trick. One restaurant in Glasgow is still trying to remedy the situation where a regular and valued customer is using a new umbrella he inadvertently picked up instead of his own. An item some months ago.

There is an international belief which is not altogether unfounded that certain diners are fine art collectors. The old 101 Restaurant in Glasgow recalls an upmarket but a well-dressed lady diner who plunged down a flight of steps. Only slightly hurt but in a state of considerable shock she was asked by a member of the wait staff comforting her as she lay on the floor, if she would like a medicinal brandy. "Make it whiskey and soda," was the reply.

Also from the 101 days comes the story of a beautifully turned out woman who had also enjoyed too much wine. She went to the ladies' toilet and asked back through the restaurant with the back of her skirt tucked inside her knickers. It fell to the poor head waiter to inform her of the situation.

But when it comes to bad behavior in restaurants the Americans lead the field. A Texan complete with boots and stetson was not prepared to wait his turn in the cocktail bar alongside other customers who had not booked a table in a busy hotel restaurant. When a table became vacant he jumped the queue and sat down. The waiter walked in a scene reminiscent of a Scotch and Wry sketch ignored until he was served his drink and was given a menu. Eventually the head waiter simply walked up and took away the table leaving the Texan sitting in a chair in the middle of the restaurant. He got the message and returned to the bar.

Another American customer resident in one of Scotland's better hotels was getting firmly on the waiter's nerves. He asked the waiter to bake him a pie. "Hey boy, get me a pitcher of water," One morning he made this request in his usual loud voice to a waiter who was not used to this kind of thing. The waiter walked over to an oil painting of a river scene and handed the man a restaurant menu. He took it down and handed it to the American with the words: "Here is your picture of water, sir." The American didn't get the joke. The waiter was suspended for a week. (The Glasgow Herald, "Faux Pas Among the Clientele", Glasgow Herald (6 March 1987): 11.)

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