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THE MOUSE IN THE COORS BEER CAN:
Goliath Strikes Back

Michael J. Preston
Center for Computer Research in the Humanities
University of Colorado at Boulder

We all know about mice in coke bottles. Gary Fine (1979) used this legend to illustrate the multiple origins of urban legends. Another of his essays (1985) described "The Goliath Effect": the tendency for the folk to attach a corporate legend to the brand that dominates the market, arguably to level the market. These are key ideas, but as one legend-related episode illustrates, the modern Goliaths win many more battles than the biblical account suggest.

This episode concerned a rodent discovered in a can of Coors beer in Jacksonville, Florida, and was widely reported in the popular press in Colorado (Coors' corporate headquarters) and in northern Florida. The story first appeared in the Business Section of The Denver Post on Aug. 4, 1988, under the headline: "Rat allegedly found in can of Coors." Its first newspaper appearance in Colorado was on October 26, 1988: "Mouse in beer lands stuff in prison."

The first Denver Post account read:

Adolph Coors Co. officials hope to meet today with a man who claims to have found a rodent in a 16-ounce can of Coors premium beer. James Harvey, a New York City chef visiting his ex-wife in Jacksonville, Fla., took the can to the Jacksonville Health Department Wednesday, according to health department officials.

Health department officials opened the can and seized the contents, a dead animal fell out, according to Jacksonville environmental health director Jon Cole.

Cottle said the animal appeared to be a baby roof rat or a mouse. He said the rodent and the beer would remain in his lab's refrigerator until Harvey and his attorneys determined what they wanted to do with the contents.

Earlier, Coors representatives offered Harvey $1,500 to either turn the can over for testing by company officials or to take it to a Florida laboratory for testing, said Coors spokeswoman Becky Winning. Harvey rejected the offer. He said he was concerned that the company intended to "hush up" the incident.

Harvey said his ordeal began Friday afternoon when he bought a couple of cans of Coors to share with a friend. With his second sip, Harvey said he "felt something against my mouth. I looked in the can in the sunlight and saw feet and a tail."

Winning said the company merely wanted to know what happened, when it happened and how it happened."

The following day, another article appeared in The Denver Post: "Coors wants rodent in can tested. This contained a photograph of the mouse, the can, and what appeared to be a glass half full of beer.

Adolph Coors Co. went to court Thursday to obtain the mouse a New York City man claims he found in a can of beer.

Coors wants the mouse, the can and the beer to determine how the animal got into its product.

It is the second time in the last six years someone has claimed they found a rodent in a Coors product. The brewer settled a 1982 case out of court after a Texas man claimed he found a rodent in a bottle of Coors. "There was no evidence the rat was in the bottle," said Coors spokesman Mike Wood. As part of the settlement, both parties agreed to disclose the terms, Wood said.

The one thing you're dealing with is a beer in an image, and if that image is spoiled, that can have a severe effect," said Michael Mazzoni, executive vice president of Bartons Beers in Chicago. Bartons is the major U.S. importer of Corona Extra Beer, which last year battled untrue rumors that Mexican brewery workers were urinating in the vats. Corona traced the source of the rumors to a competitor, won a lawsuit, and embarked on a massive publicity campaign to educate distributors and consumers that Corona was not contaminated. Sales tumbled anyway, and Bartons still occasionally gets questions about the rumor.

"It's a no-win situation. You can go to the marketplace and battle the rumors, or just hope they go away on their own," Mazzoni said.

The next day, Aug. 6, two stories appeared in The Denver Post: "Coors fans smell a rat in 'scandal'" and "Rat chokes Coors sales in Florida." Both of these stories were largely anecdotal, with Colorado beer-drinkers seemingly more on the side of Coors. "They talk about it, but they still drink Coors," said a bartender at the Lone House in Kremmling, Colorado. But beer-drinkers in Florida, where Coors is new to the market, were more cautious: "It doesn't sound possible that he set them up... Accidents happen. One thing you really can't guard against is mice. Same thing with roaches and ants."

The following day editorialists began to appear in Colorado, all loyal to the Colorado brewer. Jack Kilgore published a "dream of rats to riches" in The Denver Post, which began: "I would be a wealthy man today if I had played my cards right in 1979, when I found a grasshopper in a package of frozen broccoli." But the editorial concluded that the Florida mouse-in-the-Coors can case was fraudulent: "The more I study that rat and that can, the more I tend to think it could have been crammed in through the opening in the top."

Bill Jordan, writing "Maybe Coors didn't drown the mouse" for the [Boulder] Sunday Camera (8/7/89), again suspected that something was "fishy" based on his own apocryphal experience: "One time me and my pal Lefty were out fishing... Lefty was very tired and he nodded off in the wee hours with his beer still in his hand, and his bird went over into the stream. During the night a small brown trout swam into the can... He looked at that brown in the beer can and it was like he had purchased the winning lottery ticket... He poured out the water... and then he opened the can... He drank the beer we had left, a Sierra Nevada, and poured it in there with the brown... It will never pass the
taste test,' I said. 'A Sierra Nevada tastes better than a Coors, even with a fish in it.'"

The next day (8/9/88), Dick Trcek wrote "As a public service, let us test your Coors" for The Denver Post. Readers were invited to send me one can of Coors from each of the six packages, and I would test them and send back certification that it contains no stray animal or plant life... I am thinking of expanding this program to Miller, Bud and, later, Rolls-Royce and Cadillac."

A few days later (8/12/89), what appears to be a Denver Post article, "Man making mouse claim collided with Coors truck," this article implied that Harvey was a liar. The piece reported that Floridian James Harvey, who claims he found a mouse in a can of Coors beer July 29, was involved in a traffic accident 2 1/2 months ago with a Coors truck as he was in the process of getting a new car. He had filed a suit against Coors with his insurance company. This suggests Harvey's motive: financial need he was unemployed and he had been in an accident with a Coors truck. The piece also noted that Harvey was not "a New York City chef," but "a Jacksonville construction worker who currently is unemployed." Thus he is revealed to be from a different class--construction worker rather than chef--and from an area with decidedly lower status than New York City.

At this point all of the weight of the 'system' was brought in on Coors' side. The Denver Post reported in "Coors, distributor file suit over claim of mouse in can" on September 3, 1988:

Golden-based Adolph Coors Co. and the brewer's Jacksonvillle, Fla., distributor have filed suit against James Harvey, the man who claimed he found a mouse in a can of Coors July 29. The civil lawsuit, filed Friday in Circuit Court in Jacksonville, seeks damages--the amount to be determined by the court--for product disparagement, defamation, attempted theft by deception, fraud and deceit, and intentional interference with an advantageous business relationship.

A court-ordered autopsy by University of Florida veterinary pathologists later indicated the mouse had died no more than a week before the August 5 examination. Coding on the can indicated the beer was packaged May 13 in Golden.

Coors' second strategy was reported by the Post in "Man charges in beer claim" (9/28/88), a headline topped by the screamer PRODUCT TAMPERING, EXTORTION. The same photograph of the beer can and mouse was reprinted, only enlarged, and the first paragraph picks up on the screamer: "A Florida man who roared about a mouse he found in a can of Coors beer was charged Tuesday with felony product tampering and extortion." The article ended with a statement of Coors' motivation: "Coors beer sales in northeastern Florida dropped about 16 percent in early August, shortly after news reports of Harvey's claim." As part of its image-repairing, Coors recently took out a full-page ad in The Florida Times-Union and Jacksonville to explain the 'mistaking and sterile conditions during packaging.'

The story continued to make local papers as steps toward a legal resolution were taken. On 9/30/88, in "Man surrenders in Coors-mouse case" the Post informs us that Harvey called the Florida State Attorney's office and "voluntarily surrendered." Harvey's public defender "criticized the prosecutor's request for a high bond;"

"The only surprising thing in the case is the $50,000 bond," said Chief Assistant Public Defender Bill White. "He cooperated fully, and yet he had that kind of bond." I haven't read the language of the charges, but I understand there are accusations of putting the mouse in the beer can," White said. "This is the first time we've seen a case like this one under the Florida Anti-Tampering Act."

"If a man admits stuffing a mouse in Coors can" appeared in The Denver Post on Oct. 9, 1988. The first sentence summed up the story: "A Florida man has come forward and admitted he put a mouse into a beer can and then sued Adolph Coors Co. for revenge after his truck collided with his car." In this story, some of the facts vary from earlier accounts. Here the date of the mouse incident is given as July 27, rather than as July 29. Earlier (9/3/88) it was reported that "he first asked for $100,000 from Coors in compensation," but in this story, "Harvey sought $35,000 in compensation from Coors after refusing the Golden-based company's offer of $1,500 to surrender the beer can." It is also pointed out here that "Harvey's police cited a Coors driver with making an improper turn," which was reported in the accident with Harvey. Earlier (8/12/88) Joe Fuentes, a spokesman for the Golden-based Adolph Coors Co. had said: "I am not sure whether it was a company-owned truck or a distributor's truck. He has filed a claim against Coors with the Jacksonville insurance company."

There is no mention of an offer from Coors. On October 11, 1988, The Post reported, "Mouse-in-beer claim disputed." The article said that Harvey could face up to thirty years in prison on child molestation charges. It also noted that Coors has "spent $500,000 defending the company's reputation as a result of the adverse publicity. The Coors distributor in Jacksonville, Neal Tyler and Sons Inc., so far has lost $100,000 in sales." On October 24, The Post printed "Peter Coors makes whirlwind trip to lure back 'mousetail' consumers" in its business section:

It's rare for a member of the Coors family to be so accessible to media, but the "mousetap" apparently calls for unusual action. Sales of Coors products in the Jacksonville area have dropped significantly since early August, when consumer James Harvey reported he found a mouse in a can of Coors premium beer.

Harvey told The Post his next move would be to file a $250,000 lawsuit against the Coors Co. In Jacksonville. But that claim has been disputed. Coors was quoted as saying that Harvey's claim is "absurd and makes no sense."" Our bottom line is that this type of thing shouldn't happen to us or to any other company," said Coors spokesman David Goldberg. "We feel that we not only had to stick up for ourselves, but for our customers, and for the consumer confidence we have built up during the past 17 years."

With all of this background, no one would be shocked to read "Mouse in beer lands stuffer in jail" in The Oct. 26, 1988 Post. The lead paragraphs read:

A Jacksonville, Fla., judge sentenced James N. Harvey to 18 months in prison Tuesday for stuffing a mouse into a can of Coors beer almost three months ago.

Harvey, 30, pleaded guilty to one count of extortion and one count of tampering with consumer products, then he apologized to the Adolph Coors Co. of Golden.

After the sentencing, representatives of Coors and... Neal Tyler and Sons... said the company's reputation was at stake. "Our purpose in filing the lawsuit was not for revenge, but to restore consumer confidence in our products," said Peter H. Coors. What we have wanted to send a clear message that product tampering is a serious crime against consumer confidence and trust that will not be tolerated.

There was no mention of Harvey's having been compensated for the accident with the Coors beer truck. James Harvey must have felt very lonely when he confronted Solisath. Obviously, life was imitating legend. Harvey presumably knew the legend of the mouse in the coke bottle and also knew that finding a mouse in a can of Coors would get the attention of the company, which did not seem in a rush to settle after his accident.

Although no one mentions it directly, the episode with the Texas man in 1962 is mentioned, as are the "rumors" about Coors beer. And the popular response picked up on the traditional elements of this story. In Colorado, jokes were occasionally told about Coors and mice, such as, "Coors is the only beer with a head and a tail," and "Coors is the only beer that makes a beer with a cat in it as a chaser." Xerolore (such as the one reproduced still appears. On an evening newscast on October 31, the next night Halloween was celebrated, there was the customary report of trick-or-treaters with cute shots of cute kids in cute costumes, one of which appeared to be a 90-cent-length Coors beer can; the trick-or-treater's face was made up to look like a mouse, and upon his head was perched a pair of Mousketeer ears. 2
Coors is a company with an image problem, having "busted" a union, having used lie-detectors widely as a part of the process of employment, having frequently searched employees and their possessions, and the Coors family generally—having supported various unpopular conservative causes; there have been various "Boycott Coors" campaigns during my twenty-two years in Colorado. Significant also are such matters as the various spokespeople for Coors, an Anglo man, an Anglo woman, an Anglo man, a Spanish-surnamed man, and a Jewish man. Thus the public face of Coors is carefully maintained while employees grumble privately about discrimination. Logically, then, the very words of the later news stories read almost like news-releases from Coors, carefully shifting the media paradigm from "legends" to "product tampering," thus associating the episode with the Tylenol scare, not the Kentucky Fried Rat. Interestingly, in 1982 and in 1988, Coors was willing to settle quietly for $1500, to "hush it up," as Harvey was quoted as saying. What else is in Coors' files? These conclusions illustrate another "paradigm shift"—what is traditional in one context may be seen as threatening or damaging in another. Thus we may appreciate graffiti artists, but certainly the mayor of Denver does not. In this case, the have-not's confront the have-not's, but where it comes to roost most strongly is in those areas which one cannot touch or count, as with Coors' emphasis on consumer confidence, something we all recognize as of importance. Context does seem to define meaning.

James Harvey is in prison; his public defender [sic] notwithstanding, but the Adolph Coors Company remains extremely vulnerable to another attack. Perhaps that explains why Coors seems to have over-reacted against Harvey. Why the press seems to have sided with Coors is revealing—perhaps because the have-not's don't do the reporting. For a larger context to this conclusion, see Bogdikan (1987).

**Sources**


At this point, the secretary told me, Security and Human Resources agreed that some sort of memo "from a concerning point of view" should be sent to the school and even Merchants' employees. She was somewhat concerned that the memo had reached the high school or the principal's office. After a while, the secretary made a note to try to take it off the memo. While the memo had not been recalled on any feedback on the memo, the important advisor to the principal's office had in fact called to challenge the memo authenticity; he was assured that the information was not a fact.

The head of safety at Mahlenburg College was also quite willing to think: he had gotten the memo from the Allentown Teachers Credit Union and traced it back to the police department in Pottstown, 25 miles south. They had the information from a reliable informant who had assured them that drugs were sold in this area. This is all over that part of Pennsylvania and into New Jersey, especially at rock concerts. The Mahlenburg official then recast the memo and circulated it through the campus, whence it spread to local school districts and police departments. Reaction was somewhat mixed: some schools refused to circulate it, and others circulated it back to say that they too had heard the information, but didn't think it was prevalent here. The safety head admitted that he had not actually seen drugs sold in this form on campus. "But I know that it's supposed to be," he recalled. When I tracked the memo back to the Allentown Teachers Credit Union, I ran into the expected dead end. The error: that one of the members (a teacher) had brought it in and left copies on an office filing cabinet, which was normally used to distribute standardized school records and the like. The copies were removed in January 1989, when one of their Board of Directors called in and said he had checked into the statement, felt it was true, and ordered the copies removed, he unaware that anyone had heard of it in any block of schools and that it was false.

"See, we didn't even know they were up there for a good week," she commented, "and then we're saying, 'Hey, what's this letter?' No one could determine which teacher had brought it in. "It was brought to our attention that it wasn't true, and that there were no records of police stations around here ... so that's why we stopped putting it out." The representative of the School Safety Department of the Allentown Police Department confirmed that "there had been talk about it," but he was unaware of any actual cases in which children had been poisoned. We think we can remember back to that in the areas there was (an incident), but not in the city of Allentown itself. He added. The memo, he felt, had circulated in the school system sometime before Christmas. A call to the local poison center confirmed that no LSD poisonings had occurred in the area, but that the memo was "everywhere." A spokesperson offered to send me their file copy of the memo, a "Cumberland County" version in which the school hadn't had an LSD poisoning and for which there was no record. It's clear that this is a rumor.

It seems that the memo was circulated by a broad circulatory of the legend conduit, with participants ranging from those committed to its truth and willing to trace specific verifications of its content to those who did not feel it deserved circulation on the basis of hearsay, to others who actively challenged the memo and tried to halt its distribution. In general, though, the anonymous transmitter seems to have been the least effective. More often officials in responsible positions, who made good faith efforts to authenticate the information, were the agents who most successfully transmitted the information. Frederick Koenig's hypothesis that "the little guy" is responsible for the information, we can remember back to that in the areas there was (an incident), but not in the city of Allentown itself. He added. The memo, he felt, had circulated in the school system sometime before Christmas. A call to the local poison center confirmed that no LSD poisonings had occurred in the area, but that the memo was "everywhere." A spokesperson offered to send me their file copy of the memo, a "Cumberland County" version in which the school hadn't had an LSD poisoning and for which there was no record. It's clear that this is a rumor.

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On Thursday, last week, a very serious charge was preferred against a man named Michael Puckridge, who resides at Winburn, a small village in Northumberland. The circumstances, as detailed before the board of guardians, are of a harrowing nature.

It appears that Puckridge has lived very unhappily with his wife, whose life he has threatened on more than one occasion. Most probably he had long contemplated the wicked design which he carried out to the success of a fortnight since. Mrs. Puckridge, who is an interesting looking young woman, has for a long time past suffered from varicose veins in the legs. Her husband told her that she possessed an infallible remedy for this ailment. She was induced by her tormentor to allow herself to be tied to a plank, which he placed across two chairs.

When the poor woman was bound and helpless, Puckridge deliberately and persistently tickled the soles of her feet with a feather. For a long time he continued to operate upon his unhappy victim, who was rendered frantic by the process. Eventually she swooned, whereupon her husband released her. It soon became too manifest that the light of reason had fled. Mrs. Puckridge was taken to the workhouse where she was placed with other insane patients. A little girl, a niece of the woman, spoke to one or two of the neighbours saying her aunt had been tied to a plank and her uncle cruelly ill-treated her.

An inquiry was instituted and there is every reason to believe that Mrs. Puckridge had been driven out of her mind in the way described but the result of the investigation is not yet known. [Illustrated Police News (11 December 1868); reprinted in Leonard de Vries, Terrific Murder (London: Macdonald, 1971): 7-24. See FN 11.]

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WARTING!

HYPNOTISM IS DANGEROUS!

Do not believe otherwise?

Hypnotists are frequently prosecuted for hypnotizing female subjects to have sex with them.

You can become pregnant while in a hypnotic trance and not remember how it happened.

The effects of hypnosis can last a lifetime.

Graduate students often play malicious tricks on subjects who volunteer to be hypnotized.

Do not be a victim.

See also: One who has had the experience here at Fresno State.

Flyer spotted by Joel Best posted around the campus of California State University at Fresno, August-September 1987.

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MOBILE STONES. Ian Frazier recently published an informal tour of the Great Plains of the US in The New Yorker. It is filled with fascinating bits of history and part of it decribes the old story about traders giving smallpox-infected blankets to Indians to wipe them out, and witty, personal glimpses of typical life. In one of these vignettes, Frazier describes a Hunkpapa Sioux woman who hitched a ride with him on US Highway 12, just south of McLaughlin, SD. Along the road, between McCaughlin and the Grand River bridge, she pointed to a nearby butte and commented, "That's Devil Butte. High-school kids go up there and try to arrange these white rocks to spell out their initials, but by morning the rocks always rearrange themselves into the shape of a devil's butt." ["A Reporter at Large: Great Plains II (27 February 1989): 52."

See also: Ian Frazier for clarifying the location for me. Any variants? --Ed.]

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TWO REASONS NOT TO EAT SUSHI. Those interested in The Boon Serpent will its forms will want to consult an article by Murray Wittner et al., "Eutreptioidiasis—A Parasitic Infection Acquired by Eating Sushi," in
New England Journal of Medicine 320:17 (27 April 1989); 1287-88. This describes a case in which a 24-year-old college student, admitted to a New York City hospital with abdominal pains, was operated on for appendicitis. The appendix appeared normal, but before the surgical incision could be closed, a pinkish-red, sinusous worm that was 4.2 cm long was noticed moving onto the surgical drapes. The worm was identified as a parasitic worm widely found in freshwater fish, and the patient recalled eating home-made sushi at a friend’s house the day before the abdominal pains began.

The same issue of the NEJM also prints a strongly-written editorial, “The Dangers of Eating Raw Fish,” by Peter M. Schantz of the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta (144-45). This surveys the variety of parasitic diseases associated with consuming sushi and suggests that they may present “a new and important public health problem.” Some worms may perforate the colon, leading to peritonitis, and for others no effective drug therapy has been found. Schantz concludes that “the consequences of infection can be much worse than the unpleasant sensation of feeling the fish move as one bites into it.” Among parallel cases reported are four fishermen infected with the same parasite after swallowing live minnows and guests infected with another parasite after a Washington diplomatic dinner. The article concludes that restaurants have only rarely been implicated, due to the high degree of training and experience of sushi chefs.

This case was also picked up by the Associated Press and widely published on April 27 April in papers under such titles as “Sushi worm strikes surgeon” (Courtesy Dick Sweritzer). Even the most careful preparer may err, however, in preparing the delicacy from a species of pufferfish, as Philip M. Morin notes in his book review in Scientific American (February 1989; 113). When properly prepared, slices of puffer flesh impart “a wonderful tingling euphoria”; when even a trace of skin, liver, or ova is accidentally included, the dish can be fatal. About a hundred cases occur yearly in Japan, and one or more resulting in death due to “an ascending paralysis that ends in asphyxiation.” But sometimes it’s hard to tell if a case is really fatal. Morin notes two Japanese cases from 1860 in which “men judged to be quite dead from puffer poisoning happened to escape burial for several days—and both recovered, proving that they had been conscious during the entire interval.” The book reviewed (Bruce W. Halstead, Poisonous and Venomous Marine Animals of the World [Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1988]) also cites recent cases of near-death, one from Australia.

Linda Dégéh and Paul Smith exchange views during a break.

On March 30 to April 1, 1989, Texas A & M’s Anthropology Department sponsored the seventh Seminar on Contemporary Perspectives on Contemporary Legend and the first to be held outside of Sheffield. Failure to receive the expected NIH funding was discouraging, and it meant loss of several expected presentations from Newfoundland and the United Kingdom. But even so the programs were packed, but disappointing, and discussion surfaced. The seminar ended with the project begun in 1987—finding questions for the future and giving the Sheffield clan some much-needed challenges. In the closing keynote, sociologist Frederick M. Koenig, editor of Rumor in the Marketplace (Dover, MA: Auburn House, 1985), gave insights into his work advising industries how to minimize the impact of corporate legends.

In the meantime a rich banquet of papers and frank discussion. “New” legends, like AIDS-infected semen in Burger King sandwiches (Janet Langlois), were discussed along with “old” legends like “Champ,” the Lake Champlain monster (Dick Sweritzer), and others. Early legends in terms of informants’ psychology were attacked (Sanford Hoffer). We heard traditional approaches to legends in a fine historical analysis of “The Devil’s Atoilet” by Jan Brunvand, and also never, performance-oriented approaches, such as Linda Milligan’s look at folklorists’ own presentation of UFO memorates and Patrick Millonig’s pungent critique of Brunvand on Lettersman. Danielle Keenan explored concepts of “centrifugal” and “centripetal” forces to the legend, while William M. “Spike” Clements discussed “interstitiality” as central to the genre’s essence. No such name appears in Books in Print or the combined collections of OCLC (an American computer-linked association of libraries). Does this volume exist or is it itself a “ghost”? Contact Editor, FOAPale Bog.
ISCLR COUNCIL MEETING, MARCH 31-April 1, 1989. Eight of the nine Council members were able to get together after the sessions as a Colloquium. Among the topics discussed were finance, future meetings and activities, and publications.

April 2, had 71 members plus 2 affiliated organizations. Current balance was $517.00 or $899.00 at $1.70 per UK pound. The current subscription rate of $10 or $15 will continue for the present. Institutions will be allowed to affiliate themselves with ISCLR (though without voting privileges) at the same rate. Given the tight budgets of the last two meetings, however, it was not felt that discounts on conference rates could be offered to members. Discounts on Sheffield Academic Press publications also seemed too complicated to follow up. Instead, the money will be put into new projects.

A general meeting for all ISCLR members will be held during the October American Folklore Society meeting in Philadelphia (specific time and place to be announced). A council meeting will also be held during the October American Folklore Society meeting in Philadelphia (specific time and place to be announced). The next Contemporary Legend Conference will be held at Sheffield; Tom Green and Sylvia Grider are investigating the possibility of hosting a second Texas conference in 1991.

Gary Alan Fine has raised the issue of instituting a Mass-Observation-style diary approach to contemporary legend surveys. A working party, consisting of Gary Fine, Linda DeGree, Mark Glazer, and Paul Smith, is exploring this possibility.

It was decided to maintain FOAPtale News in the present form. The council will publish it four times a year, in March, June, September, and December. It will include short essays or reports (up to 3000 words) and book notices, as well as film and television news (Paul Smith, to the existing columns and bibliography. Additional suggestions (such as columns on UP/D and tabloids) are actively sought.

The conference proceedings/yearbook option will be pursued separately. Sylvia Grider and Tom Green will seek a publisher for selected papers from the Texas conference, perhaps with a joint imprint with ISCLR. The council also resolved to move ahead with a regular publication, along the lines of the existing Perspectives series, still called Contemporary Legend. Paul Smith is exploring the options of working with a professional publisher or of having ISCLR produce and distribute its own publications. Whatever option proves the best, the council will continue to discuss the possibility of a newsletter.

Further details are forthcoming on the structure of the newsletter. The first year of ISCLR has involved much work of a nomenclature nature, and the Council especially recognized the contributions of Gillian Bennett, Publications Secretary, Sandy Robbins, Treasurer, and Bill Nicolaisen, Membership Secretary, for getting the society's activities and finances in order. Sylvia Grider, Tom Green, and their helpers were also thanked for making the Texas conference successful.

FRENCH RUMOR AND CONTEMPORARY LEGEND NETWORK On January 3, 1989, a series of information-sharing sessions was organized at La Maison des Sciences de L'Homme, Paris, by Jean-Claude Campion-Vincent and Jean-Bruno Renard on the topic "Rumors and Contemporary Legends."

"Linking the term "contemporary legend" with the more usual term "rumor" indicated the organizers' desire to integrate the study of rumors with recent work done by English and American folklorists. 2) Focus research on the emergent narrative content of rumors, and 3) treat equally questions about social networks caused by rumors and the consequences of this activity for individuals, communities, and social structures."

The participation of Jean-Noel Rapferer in this developing study group corresponds with a different but complementary point of view, focused on the study of communication processes. That of two social psychologists, Françoise Askevis and Michel-Louis Rouguette, corresponds with more theoretical preoccupations.

Rather than accent the concerns that divide the network's members (academics who have other professional activities than teaching and research relevant to the various disciplines: sociology, anthropology, social anthropology, social psychology, information sciences, linguistics, history) it seems preferable to note that they share these concerns. All are convinced that rumors and contemporary legends are phenomena that must be studied through an interdisciplinary approach, but collecting additional information is not yet necessary.

Informal discussions during the information-sharing sessions have shown that the term "rumor," "contemporary legend," and "marginal belief" are used freely and diversely. The participants came to no consensus about which way to take research. But the network members did agree to extend links made with foreign researchers in the US, in England, in Scandinavia, and in Germany and to encourage and bring together specific studies on legends and rumors current in France during the last 25 years. This will prove fruitful at a later stage to help clarify theory—which no one doubts is necessary.

If you are interested in participating in this comparative project, please contact:

Veronique Campion-Vincent
27 rue de Liege 75008 Paris FRANCE
Telephone: (1) 49 54 21 91

Network members as of February 1989:

Françoise Askevis-Leherpeyre, Université de Paris 5
Jean-Jacques Barcoy, Paris
Jacques Berlitz, CNRS, Centre de recherches historiques, Paris
Jean-Louis Brodou, Paris
Veronique Campion-Vincent, CNRS, Paris
Dominique Cauchon, Lille
Frederic Demerchat, Paris
Jules Gritti, Université de Paris 5
Jean-Noel Rapferer, HEC-ISA, Fondation pour l'étude et l'information sur les reseaux, Paris
Pierre Lagrange, Centre de sociologie de l'innovation, Paris
George Maurand, Université de Toulouse 2
Bertrand Meheust, Bar-sur-Aube
Michel Meurer, Paris
Daniel Percheron, CNRS, Centre d'études transdisciplinaires: sociologie, anthropologie, politique, Paris
Thierry Plividic, Paris
Marie-Anne Polo de Beaulieu, CNRS, Centre de recherches historiques, Paris
Jean-Bruno Renard, Université de Montpellier 3
Michel-Louis Rouguette, Université de Montpellier 3
Marcelle Witting, Université de Lyon 2

RECENT PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

We are always on the lookout for publications on any topic relevant to contemporary legends, particularly those in journals not normally read by professional folklorists. Please forward offprints (if convenient) or abstracts/titles of content to Editor, FOAPtale News. For publications in foreign languages, English abstracts would be quite welcome.

Recent items starred * have been placed in a file in the Editor's office and are available to qualified legens scholars for reference. Books and articles in major folklore journals are not normally starred.
Allen, Barbas, and Lynwood Montell. "Lost Treasure Legends of the Old Louisiana Territory." Fabula 29 (1988): 289-301. [Structural analysis; argues that the legends provide Anglos with "a vicarious means of attributing to the Indians their rightful possession of the land without the inconvenience of actually having to return it to them."


Campion-Vincent, Veronique. "Comptes et avertissements: legenedes urbaines dans la ville." [Conspiracies and Warning: Urban Legends in the City.] Revue francaise de sociologie 30 (1989): 91-105. [Examines several legends that circulated in France from 1750 to the present as "fables with an implicit moral," similar to the medieval exempla. Ms. Campion-Vincent has also sent me a complete English translation.]


Kvideland, Reimund, and Henning K. Sehmsdorf, eds. Scandinavian Folk Belief and Legend. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. [Includes a chapter on contemporary legends.]


Shehur, Alisa. "Metafolkloristic Additions to Stories by the Artistic Narrator." Folklore 98 (1987): 53-56. [Performance analysis of a legend about a woman whose three husbands died the night of the marriage.]


MANUSCRIPTS WANTED. August House is interested in developing books related to folklore in the US that will appeal to both scholarly and popular markets. Previous publications in their American Folklore Series have included a volume of Native American Legends, and future titles include Folk Legends of the Southwest and New England Ghost Stories. Legend scholars are urged to submit book concepts. Request submission guidelines from August House, P.O. Box 3223, Little Rock, Arkansas 72203-1223.

BACK ISSUES NOW AVAILABLE. We now have a complete file of FOAFATE News dating from its inception. Photocopies of issues 1-10 are available as a set only for $10. Most ISCL members will have issues 11-13, but recently-joined members can order photocopies of these for $4.50 each. My thanks to Paul Smith and Veronica Campion-Vincent for filling in the gaps in my file.

FOAFATE NEWS: THE NEWSLETTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR CONTEMPORARY LEGEND RESEARCH

The International Society for Contemporary Legend Research (ISCLR) was formed to build worldwide links amongst legend scholars. It encourages study, notably of so-called "modern" or "urban" legends, but also of any legend now in existence. The society invites all who have an interest in this research area to join. As a member of ISCLR, you will receive this newsletter, as well as the advance notice of all Society events and publications.

Those wishing to apply for membership should send a check or 1 US dollar or 10 UK pounds sterling to W.F.H. Nicolaisen, Membership Secretary, Department of English, SUNY-Binghamton, Binghamton, New York 13901, USA, or to Sandy Houghton, Department of Applied Social Studies, Paisley College, Paisley PA1 2BE UK. Institutions wishing to receive FOAFATE News may do so at a rate of $24.00 per year, except for ISCLR members at the above price.

Material for publication or queries should be sent to Bill Ellis, Penn State-Harzonton Campus, Harzonton, PA 18021, USA. (717-459-3026 or 788-2021).