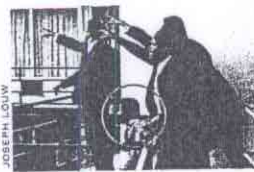


NOTEBOOK

### King Conspiracy Update

For years, conspiracy theorists who believe that the U.S. government plotted the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. have focused on **Merrell McCullough**, an undercover Memphis, Tennessee, policeman who was seen crouching beside King's body moments after the civil rights leader was shot at the Lorraine Motel 29 years ago last week. According to the the-

orists, McCullough was a secret U.S. agent who helped cover up the plot by pointing toward the flophouse from which the FBI maintains James Earl Ray fired the fatal shot, leading police away from a brushy area across the street where several witnesses saw a man who they believe may have been the real assassin.



JOSEPH LOUIS

Last week TIME confirmed from U.S. government sources that McCullough has in fact been a CIA agent since at least 1974. McCullough denies being on any intelligence agency's payroll at the time of the murder and, for that matter, being part of any assassination conspiracy.

—By Jack E. White

### FROM THE ANNALS OF WRETCHED EXCESS

#### Want a Shake with That?

Fast food isn't exactly one of America's more glamorous cultural symbols, but that hasn't put off bag lady to the rich and famous **Kathrine Baumann**. New to her menu of ritzy glass-beaded purses, clutched by such celebrities as Liz Taylor, Melanie Griffith and Barbara Walters, is what she calls "the great American meal," a hamburger, fries and a bottle of Coca-Cola. It's hardly a take-out order for the common gal, however. This little set of McTrinkets costs about \$6,000, which comes to more than 1,000 "great American meals."



MARIO RUIZ FOR TIME (3)

### Say It With a :)

You can chat online until your fingers are raw, but you still can't convey the emotional subtlety of tête-à-tête conversation. That's why emoticons were invented, those clever keyboard images designed to punctuate online palaver with a fillip of feeling. Some have become well known: ;-) is a wink and a smile (in other words, aren't I ironic?). But the art form has spread beyond its first primitive symbols to become an increasingly complex form of Net expression. Herewith a quick sampling of the latest in postliterate sign language:

- :'-) (I'm shedding a tear of joy)
- 3;-) (I'm giving you a devilish leer)
- :-X (My lips are sealed)
- :-O (I'm shocked)
- @} → (Please accept this rose)
- %\*) (I'm drunk)
- :-{ (I have a Mohawk)
- :-P (I'm sticking my tongue out at you)
- +O:-) (I'm the Pope)

A quick quiz. Translate the following conversation:

- Boy: 3;-)
- Girl: :-P
- Boy: @} →
- Girl: :-)

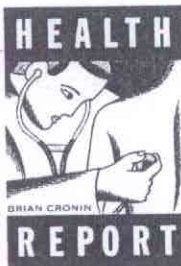
What happens after that is nobody's business but their own—and maybe the Supreme Court's.

—By Michael Krantz

#### THE GOOD NEWS

- ✓ Go ahead, have the vanilla cone. Women who consume foods rich in calcium—milk, cheese and yogurt—may lower their risk of **KIDNEY STONES**.
- ✓ Worried about coronary disease? Take heart. Doctors may have isolated a new risk factor for **HEART DISEASE** and stroke that's simple to pick up with a blood test: chronic inflammation of the arteries. Men with high levels of inflammation may have three times the risk of heart attack and double the chance of a stroke.
- ✓ A new drug for **MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS** called Copaxone reduces the frequency of attacks without causing flulike symptoms or many of the other troubling side effects associated with today's interferon-based drugs.

Sources—GOOD NEWS: *Annals of Internal Medicine*; *New England Journal of Medicine*; Teva Marion Partners  
BAD NEWS: *Journal of the American Medical Association*; *Environmental Health Perspectives*; *Archives of Internal Medicine*



BRIAN CRONIN

#### THE BAD NEWS

- ✓ The unkindest cut? Contrary to current thinking, **CIRCUMCISION** may not protect against sexually transmitted disease, though researchers can't explain why. In fact, the incidence of chlamydia may be 25 times as high among circumcised men.
- ✓ Pregnant women, steer clear of smoke. Exposure to **PASSIVE SMOKE**—even small amounts—can significantly increase the odds of giving birth to a baby whose lungs don't function properly. The damage begins in utero when chemicals from cigarette smoke cause less oxygen to go from mother to fetus.
- ✓ Do you have **HEART PALPITATIONS**? If you're a woman, chances are they'll be misdiagnosed as a panic attack rather than a benign but treatable heart-rhythm disorder.