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Asides

Prize-Winning Rumors

Omni, a glossy science fiction magazine, recently announced the winners of its contest for the best unconfirmed rumor. Rules were that the canards had to be outrageous, widespread and totally immune to proof or rebuttal. (Some items from this genre, the magazine notes, have actually inspired major motion pictures, such as the tale that the CIA retrieved a crashed UFO from northern Mexico in 1948, thus obtaining the technological

breakthroughs for the space program.) Of the thousands of entries, our favorite is the runner-up from Dan J. Hicks of Orlando, Florida:

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

As Omni notes, one of the elements of a truly classic rumor is plausibility.