

***Conspiracy Theories  
& Secret Societies***

FOR  
**DUMMIES®**

**by Christopher Hodapp  
and Alice Von Kannon**



WILEY

Wiley Publishing, Inc.



***Conspiracy Theories  
& Secret Societies***

FOR  
**DUMMIES®**

**by Christopher Hodapp  
and Alice Von Kannon**



WILEY

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

## **Conspiracy Theories & Secret Societies For Dummies®**

Published by

**Wiley Publishing, Inc.**

111 River St.

Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

[www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com)

Copyright © 2008 by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, 978-750-8400, fax 978-646-8600. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Legal Department, Wiley Publishing, Inc., 10475 Crosspoint Blvd., Indianapolis, IN 46256, 317-572-3447, fax 317-572-4355, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Trademarks: Wiley, the Wiley Publishing logo, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, A Reference for the Rest of Us!, The Dummies Way, Dummies Daily, The Fun and Easy Way, Dummies.com and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates in the United States and other countries, and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Wiley Publishing, Inc., is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

**LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: THE PUBLISHER AND THE AUTHOR MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS WORK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ALL WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION WARRANTIES OF FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES OR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS. THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR EVERY SITUATION. THIS WORK IS SOLD WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING LEGAL, ACCOUNTING, OR OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. IF PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED, THE SERVICES OF A COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL PERSON SHOULD BE SOUGHT. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR THE AUTHOR SHALL BE LIABLE FOR DAMAGES ARISING HEREFROM. THE FACT THAT AN ORGANIZATION OR WEBSITE IS REFERRED TO IN THIS WORK AS A CITATION AND/OR A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FURTHER INFORMATION DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE AUTHOR OR THE PUBLISHER ENDORSES THE INFORMATION THE ORGANIZATION OR WEBSITE MAY PROVIDE OR RECOMMENDATIONS IT MAY MAKE. FURTHER, READERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT INTERNET WEBSITES LISTED IN THIS WORK MAY HAVE CHANGED OR DISAPPEARED BETWEEN WHEN THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN AND WHEN IT IS READ.**

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 800-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002.

For technical support, please visit [www.wiley.com/techsupport](http://www.wiley.com/techsupport).

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2008923595

ISBN: 978-0-470-18408-0

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



## About the Authors

**Christopher Hodapp** is a 32° Freemason and a member of the Masonic order of the Knights Templar. His first book, *Freemasons For Dummies*, has quickly become the most popular modern guide to the ancient and accepted fraternity of Freemasonry. He's also the author of *Solomon's Builders: Freemasons, Founding Fathers and the Secrets of Washington D.C.*, and co-author of *The Templar Code For Dummies*. He attended Indiana University, the University of Southern California, Los Angeles Valley Community College, and California State University Northridge. In 2006, Chris received the Duane E. Anderson Excellence in Masonic Education Award from the Grand Lodge of Minnesota. He has written for *Templar History Magazine*, *Masonic Magazine*, *The Scottish Rite Journal*, *The Indiana Freemason*, and *Indianapolis Monthly*, and he's a monthly columnist for *Living Naturally First* magazine. Chris has also spent more than 20 years as a commercial filmmaker.

**Alice Von Kannon** has been an advertising executive, a teacher, a writer, and even a greedy and villainous landlord. A history junkie beyond the help of an intervention since the age of 14, her studies of Near Eastern religious cults and sects led to her first book, *The Templar Code For Dummies*, co-written with Chris Hodapp. She's studied film production at Los Angeles Valley Community College and history at California State University Northridge, and she's worked for many years in advertising as a writer and broadcast producer. Alice has traveled widely in Europe and the Middle East and written on the subject of the Barbary Wars and the birth of the U.S. Navy. She's a member of Romance Writers of America and the Order of the Grail, the fraternal body of the International College of Esoteric Studies.

Both authors live in Indianapolis, Indiana.



# *Dedication*

To Norma for her boundless help, support, confidence, and love.

To Charlie who was at Roswell before the aliens took over.

And to Bob and Vera, who somehow always knew.

# *Authors' Acknowledgments*

Our deepest appreciation goes to the many friends and authors who unselfishly shared their knowledge with us.

To the unrelenting Ed King of [www.masonicinfo.com](http://www.masonicinfo.com) for his kind assistance; and to Trevor McKeown and others who make the vast Web site of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon such an invaluable resource.

To Nathan Brindle, Jim Dillman, Jeffrey Naylor, Eric Schmitz, R.J. Hayes, Stephen Dafoe, and all the “Knights of the North” for their constant support and input, and to Phillip A. Garver for his incredible knowledge of Gnosticism, Martinism, Catharism, and all things esoteric.

To Tom Atkins for making the Federal Reserve seem like a simple concept to understand. To Dr. William Moore for pointing us in directions we may not have otherwise looked; and to Mark Tabbert for pointing us at William. To Dave Pruett who graciously (and bravely) acted as the Technical Editor of this volume. To Carolyn Steele and Rex DeLawter for caring for our business when we weren't able to be there.

To Norma Winkler, without whose love and support our lives would be a much lonelier place.

To Tracy Boggier at Wiley Publishing for being a tireless champion of this book, and those that preceded it, through a long and sometimes tortured route to completion; to our patient and eternally unflappable editor Natalie Harris; to Carrie Burchfield for helping us cram a 500-page book into 348 pages; to Jack Bussell for his cheerful assistance, usually at the last minute with absolutely no notice whatsoever; to Rich Tennant, the great unsung hero of the *For Dummies* world; and to the entire *For Dummies* team that works behind the scenes to make this process simple.

## **Publisher's Acknowledgments**

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Dummies online registration form located at [www.dummies.com/register/](http://www.dummies.com/register/).

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

### ***Acquisitions, Editorial, and Media Development***

**Project Editor:** Natalie Faye Harris

**Acquisitions Editor:** Tracy Boggier

**Copy Editor:** Carrie A. Burchfield

**Editorial Program Coordinator:**  
Erin Calligan Mooney

**General Reviewer:** Dave Pruett

**Editorial Manager:** Christine Meloy Beck

**Editorial Assistants:** Joe Niesen,  
Leeann Harney, David Lutton

**Cover Photos:** © Todd Gipstein/National  
Geographic/Getty Images

**Cartoons:** Rich Tennant  
([www.the5thwave.com](http://www.the5thwave.com))

### ***Composition Services***

**Project Coordinator:** Patrick Redmond

**Layout and Graphics:** Reuben W. Davis,  
Stephanie D. Jumper, Christine Williams

**Proofreaders:** Laura Bowman,  
John Greenough, Catie Kelly,  
Todd Lothery

**Indexer:** Potomac Indexing, LLC

---

## **Publishing and Editorial for Consumer Dummies**

**Diane Graves Steele**, Vice President and Publisher, Consumer Dummies

**Joyce Pepple**, Acquisitions Director, Consumer Dummies

**Kristin A. Cocks**, Product Development Director, Consumer Dummies

**Michael Spring**, Vice President and Publisher, Travel

**Kelly Regan**, Editorial Director, Travel

## **Publishing for Technology Dummies**

**Andy Cummings**, Vice President and Publisher, Dummies Technology/General User

## **Composition Services**

**Gerry Fahey**, Vice President of Production Services

**Debbie Stailey**, Director of Composition Services



# Contents at a Glance

---

<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b><i>Part I: Conspiracy Theories and Secret Societies: The Improbable Wedded to the Inscrutable</i></b> .....	<b>7</b>
Chapter 1: Everything You Know Is Wrong .....	9
Chapter 2: Conspiracism and the Origin of Modern Conspiracy Theories .....	19
Chapter 3: Building the Perfect Beast: Secret Societies through the Ages .....	33
<b><i>Part II: A Colossal Compilation of Conspiracy Theories</i></b> .....	<b>45</b>
Chapter 4: Everybody Knows About It: The World's Most Common Conspiracy Theories .....	47
Chapter 5: JFK and Other Presidents: The Conspiracies Behind the Guns .....	67
Chapter 6: The World Ends Monday — Racial, Religious, and Apocalyptic Conspiracies .....	95
Chapter 7: Not of This Earth: Innocent Pawns in an Intergalactic Imbroglio .....	117
Chapter 8: Tracking the Evolution of the 9/11 Conspiracy Theories .....	137
<b><i>Part III: Secret Societies and Societies with Secrets</i></b> ....	<b>157</b>
Chapter 9: The Freemasons: The World's Longest-Running Secret Society .....	159
Chapter 10: Rosicrucians and the Evolution of Occult Secret Societies .....	183
Chapter 11: The Illuminati: The Bavarian Boogeymen .....	207
Chapter 12: Secret Societies of Terror and Death .....	219
Chapter 13: Frolicsome Fraternalism and Nefarious Foes of Freedom .....	249
Chapter 14: Thugs, Mugs, and Lugs: The Mafia and Other Underworld Societies .....	267
Chapter 15: Banks and Super Committees: Knowing All, Owning All, Controlling All.....	297
<b><i>Part IV: The Part of Tens</i></b> .....	<b>315</b>
Chapter 16: Ten Conspiracy Theories That Skirt the Edge of Madness .....	317
Chapter 17: Ten Conspiracies That Were Absolutely True .....	329
Chapter 18: Ten Weirdest Secret Societies of All Time.....	343
<b><i>Index</i></b> .....	<b>351</b>



# Table of Contents

.....

<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
About This Book.....	2
Conventions Used in This Book .....	2
What You're Not To Read .....	3
Foolish Assumptions .....	3
How This Book Is Organized.....	4
Part I: Conspiracy Theories and Secret Societies:	
The Improbable Wedded to the Inscrutable .....	4
Part II: A Colossal Compilation of Conspiracy Theories .....	4
Part III: Secret Societies and Societies with Secrets .....	5
Part IV: The Part of Tens.....	5
Icons Used in This Book.....	5
Where to Go from Here.....	6

<b><i>Part 1: Conspiracy Theories and Secret Societies: The Improbable Wedded to the Inscrutable</i></b> .....	<b>7</b>
--	----------

<b>Chapter 1: Everything You Know Is Wrong</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Living in the Age of Conspiracy Theories and Secret Societies .....	10
What's Worth Scrutinizing, and What's Not.....	11
Connecting the dots .....	11
Being skeptical about speculative thinking .....	13
The Conspiracy World Tour .....	13
The birth of 20th-century U.S. conspiracism.....	14
Conspiracy theories aren't limited to the USA! .....	17
A Word About Skepticism .....	17

<b>Chapter 2: Conspiracism and the Origin of Modern Conspiracy Theories</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Defining and Recognizing Conspiracism .....	20
Just what is conspiracism? .....	20
Conspiracism and secret societies .....	21
Understanding How Conspiracists Think .....	22
Shall we dance to the left or the right?.....	23
Lack of proof is the proof .....	23
What the behaviorists say.....	23



- Examining Types of Conspiracy Theories .....24
- The French Revolution and the Birth of Modern Conspiracism.....26
  - Attitudes before the French Revolution .....26
  - Off with their heads!.....27
  - The birth of conspiracy literature.....28
  - Dreck Alert! Dreck Alert!.....31

**Chapter 3: Building the Perfect Beast:  
Secret Societies through the Ages ..... 33**

- Defining Secret Societies .....34
- The Difference Between a Secret Society and a Religious Cult .....35
  - Examining the fine lines.....35
  - Examining the specifics .....35
  - Organizations that straddle the fence .....37
- The Second-Oldest Profession: Secret Societies in Ancient Times .....38
  - Egypt: Source of the first secret society? .....38
  - Greece: Ancient cults and mystery schools.....38
  - Rome: Cults and paranoia .....40
  - Europe: Secret societies from the Middle Ages onward.....43
  - United States: Societies and fraternalism .....43
  - A new interest in secret societies.....44

***Part II: A Colossal Compilation of Conspiracy Theories ...45***

**Chapter 4: Everybody Knows About It: The World's  
Most Common Conspiracy Theories .....47**

- Technological Terrors .....48
  - Fluoridated water and the Cold War Communist Plot.....48
  - Chemtrails .....50
  - Nikola Tesla and “free electricity” .....51
  - Peace ray or death ray? .....52
  - HAARP — The electromagnetic superweapon .....52
  - Philadelphia Experiment’s vanishing ship .....53
- Dirty Work Down Below — Underground Government Installations .....55
  - Alleged underground bunkers .....55
  - Denver International Airport: The New World Order’s subterranean HQ.....57
- Night of the Living Dead — A Conga Line of Corpses .....59
  - Elvis Presley still walks among us! .....59
  - “Paul is dead” .....61
- Stifling Innovations that Threaten Corporate Profits .....63
  - Subliminal advertising .....63
  - The ten-wiener, eight-bun conspiracy .....65

**Chapter 5: JFK and Other Presidents:  
The Conspiracies Behind the Guns . . . . . 67**

JFK: The Very Model of a Modern Major Conspiracy Theory .....68  
 Just the facts, please.....68  
 Lee Harvey Oswald .....69  
 Examining the conspiracy background .....70  
 Taking style over substance.....72  
 Considering the source.....73  
 The pansy plot.....74  
 Okay, so why did Jack Ruby shoot Oswald?.....80  
 Looking at Other Presidential Assassinations.....81  
 Abraham Lincoln .....81  
 James Garfield.....90  
 William McKinley.....91

**Chapter 6: The World Ends Monday — Racial,  
Religious, and Apocalyptic Conspiracies . . . . . 95**

Picking on the Jews: History’s Most Common Blame Game.....95  
 Turning Jews into conspiracy scapegoats .....96  
 The Dark Ages get darker .....97  
 The Jews as moneylenders .....99  
 Extending the blame to the present day .....99  
 Catholic Conspiracy Theories .....101  
 The 3rd secret of Fatima.....102  
 Pope Pius XII and the Nazis.....104  
 The Vatican Islam Conspiracy theory.....105  
 Islamic Conspiracy Theories .....106  
 African Americans and Conspiracy Theories .....108  
 COINTELPRO.....108  
 The King Alfred Plan .....109  
 The Willie Lynch Letter .....110  
 Memorandum 46.....111  
 Common urban legends.....112  
 Cocaine and the CIA.....113  
 The AIDS epidemic .....114  
 Apocalyptic Conspiracies .....115

**Chapter 7: Not of This Earth: Innocent  
Pawns in an Intergalactic Imbroglia . . . . . 117**

Earth versus the Flying Saucers!.....118  
 The Roswell Incident .....119  
 Unidentified debris discovered .....119  
 Roswell resurrected .....121  
 Tracking the government’s paper trail .....122

Area 51 .....	124
Strange aircraft .....	125
The UFO connection .....	126
Government Investigations of UFOs .....	127
Project Sign .....	127
Project Grudge.....	128
Project Blue Book.....	129
The Brookings Report.....	132
Britain’s “Flying Saucer Working Party” .....	133
NASA’s “Phony” Moon Landings.....	133

### **Chapter 8: Tracking the Evolution of the 9/11 Conspiracy Theories .....137**

September 11, 2001 .....	138
Tracking the Origins of 9/11 Conspiracy Theories .....	138
The 9/11 “Truth Movement” .....	140
Examining the Main 9/11 Conspiracy Theories.....	141
The terrorist pilots weren’t trained well enough to do what they did .....	141
Terrorists can’t hold passengers at bay with simple plastic knives or box cutters .....	144
The Air Force was ordered to stand down.....	145
The Twin Towers were brought down by bombs, not the airplanes.....	148
Fire can’t melt steel! .....	149
The gobbledygook over WTC 7 .....	150
The Towers Struck an Iceberg .....	152
The neocon menace .....	153
The “proof” is in the poetry .....	154

## ***Part III: Secret Societies and Societies with Secrets ..... 157***

### **Chapter 9: The Freemasons: The World’s Longest-Running Secret Society .....159**

Examining the Origins of Freemasonry .....	160
So what’s the big secret? .....	161
Dating back to the Old Testament.....	164
Evolving into modern Masons: Operative and speculative periods.....	165

Modern Mason Methods and Memberships.....166  
     Hints of suspicion.....167  
     The basic Masonic degrees of membership .....168  
     Aspiring to more and “higher” degrees .....169  
 Worldwide Distrust of Masonry .....170  
 Templars = Masons = Illuminati = Jews? .....171  
     How the Knights Templar got involved .....172  
     Mixing in the Illuminati .....173  
     How the Masons and Jews wound up controlling the world .....173  
     Who’s in charge? Seeking Masonic authorities .....175  
     Looking at Masonic plots that were real .....176  
 Popular (And Untrue) Masonic Conspiracy Theories.....178  
     The satanic map of Washington, D.C. ....180  
     The Masonic dollar bill.....181  
     Scottish Rite 32nd degree rings .....182

**Chapter 10: Rosicrucians and the Evolution  
of Occult Secret Societies .....183**

    Before Rosicrucianism: Hermeticism versus the Enlightenment .....184  
 The Rosicrucians.....185  
     The tale of Christian Rosenkreutz .....186  
     Johann Valentin Andrae.....186  
     The birth of Rosicrucian societies .....187  
     Modern Rosicrucianism .....188  
 Rosicrucianism and “Fringe Freemasonry” .....189  
     Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA) .....190  
     Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis (SRICF) .....190  
 Martinism .....191  
     Martinism revived .....191  
     Synarchy hijacks Martinism.....192  
 The 19th Century and Occult Societies.....192  
     The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.....193  
     The influence of Spiritualism .....194  
     The Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO) .....195  
 20th-Century Occultism and the Rise of the Nazis .....198  
     Madame Blavatsky’s Theosophical Society.....199  
     German occultism, secret societies, and the Nazis .....203  
     Heinrich Himmler’s Nazi Knighthood .....205

**Chapter 11: The Illuminati: The Bavarian Boogeymen . . . . .207**

The Original “Illuminated Ones” .....	208
The Bavarian Illuminati: Short Life, Long Legacy .....	208
Adam Weishaupt.....	209
Spartacus and the Areopagites.....	209
The Masonic connection .....	210
The Congress of Wilhelmsbad .....	211
The Illuminati cracks up .....	212
Illuminati in America? .....	213
Building a Boogeyman: The Illuminati as All-purpose Evil .....	214
The Illuminati and the occult.....	214
Nesta Webster and the Illuminati’s conspiracy	
against civilization.....	215
The Illuminati today: All things to all people.....	216

**Chapter 12: Secret Societies of Terror and Death . . . . .219**

The Ancient Brotherhoods of Death.....	220
The Sicarii.....	220
The Assassins .....	221
The Thugs.....	226
The ninjas .....	228
Murder, Incorporated .....	231
Hate Group Assassins .....	233
The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan .....	234
Birth of the first Klan .....	234
“Birth of a Nation” and the rebirth of the Klan.....	235
The politics of change .....	236
A nation of joiners .....	237
Hijacking the Klan .....	239
The Klan goes underground.....	243
Mississippi burning.....	243
The Klan today.....	245
The spawn of the KKK .....	245
Black Supremacism.....	246

**Chapter 13: Frolicsome Fraternalism and Nefarious Foes of Freedom . . . . .249**

The Golden Age of Fraternalism.....	249
The birth of the fraternalism movement.....	250
What about women? .....	254
The fraternal military orders .....	255



College Fraternities and Secret Societies.....255  
     Fraternities with a Masonic connection .....255  
     Skull and Bones .....256  
 Revolutionary Brotherhoods.....258  
     Copperheads and the Knights of the Golden Circle.....258  
     The Fenian Brotherhood .....260  
     The Shield Society.....261  
     Operation Werwolf .....262  
     Al-Qaeda .....263

**Chapter 14: Thugs, Mugs, and Lugs: The Mafia  
 and Other Underworld Societies .....267**

    Birth of the Mafia — Queen Mother of Criminal Secret Societies.....268  
         Sicily: Mafia’s motherland .....268  
         The birth of the Cosa Nostra .....270  
         Vendetta!.....271  
 The Mafia and Organized Crime in America .....272  
     Tales of the Five Points gangs.....272  
     Paddywhacked — The Irish Mafia.....273  
     The Kosher mob .....274  
     Shadow of the Black Hand.....275  
     Prohibition and the birth of the Rackets.....275  
     The FBI, RICO, and the Decline of the Mafia .....282  
 The Big Five Families of the Commission .....282  
     The Gambino Family .....283  
     The Genovese Family .....284  
     The Colombo Family .....284  
     The Lucchese Family .....285  
     The Bonanno Family .....285  
 Welcome to the Family! Mafia Rituals .....286  
 The Ongoing Struggle to Crush the Mafia .....287  
     Taking the fight back to Sicily .....287  
     Two real “men of honor” .....288  
     We’re mad as hell, and we’re not going to take it anymore! .....289  
 Other Mafias, Lost and Found .....290  
     Going Italian .....290  
     Going International .....292  
 The Impact of the Mafia on Popular Culture .....293  
     Early gangster films.....294  
     The Godfather myth cycle.....295

**Chapter 15: Banks and Super Committees:  
Knowing All, Owning All, Controlling All . . . . . 297**

Bankers and Nefarious Banking Plots.....	297
Why do the Jews get the banking blame? .....	298
The Rothschild banking family.....	300
Perils of the Federal Reserve.....	301
Supersecret Committees.....	303
Cecil Rhodes and the Rhodes-Milner Round Table.....	303
Council on Foreign Relations.....	306
The Trilateral Commission .....	308
The Bilderberg Group.....	308
Bohemian Club and Bohemian Grove.....	309
The Committee of 300.....	312

***Part IV: The Part of Tens*.....315**

**Chapter 16: Ten Conspiracy Theories  
That Skirt the Edge of Madness . . . . . 317**

There's More than One Pope.....	317
Space Shuttle Columbia's "Deliberate" Destruction.....	319
Richard Hoagland and the Face on Mars .....	320
Polio Epidemic Spread by a Conspiracy Theory .....	321
David Icke, Reptilian Humanoids, and the Babylonian Brotherhood.....	321
The "Murder" of Princess Diana.....	323
The Bombing of New Orleans's Levees .....	324
Scientology and the IRS.....	325
The Pentagon Cruise Missile of 9/11 .....	326
Deniers of the Holocaust.....	327

**Chapter 17: Ten Conspiracies That Were Absolutely True . . . . . 329**

The Aaron Burr Conspiracy.....	329
The Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male .....	333
The General Motors Streetcar Conspiracy .....	334
Project MKULTRA — The CIA's Mind Control and LSD Experiments ...	334
The Ford Pinto Memorandum .....	335
The FDR Putsch Conspiracy.....	336
The P2 Masonic Lodge Conspiracy.....	337
NATO, Nazis, and the Gehlen Conspiracy.....	338
The CAN Coverup.....	339
The Dreyfus Affair .....	340

---

**Chapter 18: Ten Weirdest Secret Societies of All Time . . . . .343**

    Bohemian Grove.....343

    Carnation-Painted Eyebrows Society .....344

    E Clampus Vitus .....344

    Fils d’Adam (Sons of Adam).....345

    The Khlysty.....345

    Los Hermanos Penitentes .....346

    Order of the Peacock Angel.....348

    The Skoptzy .....348

    The Vril Society .....349

    Worshippers of the Onion.....350

***Index* . . . . .351**



# Introduction

---

Napoleon said, “What is history but a fable agreed upon?” Of course, what nobody seems to remember is that Napoleon said a whole bunch of really questionable things. What’s wrong with it is that it implies that history is just a matter of opinion.

Entering the world of conspiracy theories and secret societies is like stepping into another dimension — a distant, parallel, alternate universe where the images, words, and names that surround you are vaguely familiar, but where the laws of physics have completely changed: Black means white; up is down; do-gooders are really Beelzebub’s Satanic waterboys; and the world seems to be viewed through a giant funhouse mirror.

We stepped into this alternate universe while Chris was working on *Freemasons For Dummies* (Wiley). In the alternate universe of conspiracy theories, the fraternity that he wrote about bore no resemblance whatsoever to the version found in stacks of conspiracy books and endless Internet information of anti-Masonic accusations.

Our exploration of the world of conspiracies and secret societies after working on the book about Freemasons led to extended discussions with Wiley’s *For Dummies* folks, and the proposal for this book grew and grew as our research became more extensive.

Researching a book about conspiracy theories and secret societies is a frustrating experience, most notably because it’s all *supposed* to be a secret. But it’s a balancing act, as well. Too little skepticism risks falling down Lewis Carroll’s rabbit hole into a twisted wonderland of circular logic, but too much skepticism risks overlooking something critical that may become tomorrow’s tragic headline. We talk a lot in this book about secretive and suspicious groups that are at the center of conspiracy theories around the world, but we also let you know what you can do to spot truly malevolent secret societies and tell the real conspiracies from the fakes.

## About This Book

For the millions of people who are true believers in their own favorite conspiracy theories, the type of information we cover in this book is all *very* important. Of course we feel that the material is important, but you don't have to read it in order. This book is intended to be a reference for you, so you don't need to read the chapters in order from front cover to back (even though we suggest it). So if you want to read about all the secret societies before you read about the conspiracy theories, or vice versa, that's fine with us. It's all interesting stuff!

Moreover, just because you may not believe the overwhelming majority of the conspiracies cited in this book, it doesn't make them all wrong. There have been *real* conspiracies in the world, as well as real secret societies that were seeking to accomplish real evil. Or amass power. Or money. Or both. We try to separate fluff, fear, and fantasy from the facts, and we endeavor to present them with a minimum of personal commentary so you can decide for yourself.

But there's a much more vital reason we've come to feel this book is important, and it's not because we believe the world is about to end in an ultimate showdown between the forces of Good and Evil. No, it's a lot simpler than that. It's a question of what can happen when the lit match of a fiery, professional conspiracist touches off the powder keg of a susceptible believer.

## Conventions Used in This Book

This book is unconventional in a whole lot of ways, but we do follow a few rules:

- ✓ We *italicize* new terms, closely followed by an easy-to-understand definition. You also see names secret societies in italics.
- ✓ We **bold** important keywords in bulleted lists as well as the action parts of numbered lists.
- ✓ We use `monospace` for all Web addresses.

## What You're Not To Read

This is a reference book, which means no one is going to whack your hands with a ruler if they catch you skipping ahead. In particular, anything marked with a *Technical Stuff* icon (more about those below) may make your eyes glaze over from information overload. Not that it isn't interesting, but feel free to skip ahead if you find yourself getting woozy.

## Foolish Assumptions

We don't know most of you, but we make a few assumptions about you and why you picked up this book:

- ✔ **You're confused and want the unvarnished scoop on secret societies and conspiracy theories.** You've watched the History Channel documentaries on codes, conspiracies, and secret societies until your eyes have swollen shut. This book puts it all together for you. It gives you the tools to tell the difference between the big players, the small fries, the truly scary stuff, and the piles of pernicious piffle.
- ✔ **You're a complete skeptic.** All the rumors about the Illuminati, UFOs, and underground government bunkers beneath the Denver Airport strike you as balderdash from a weak *X-Files* episode. We separate fact from fiction and let you know when to really put on your tinfoil helmet.
- ✔ **You're a true believer.** You just know that at any minute black helicopters are going to land on your lawn and the Men In Black will bash down your door. We're here to help you sort through all the conspiracies. We'll help you come to grips with what's real, what's made up, who made it up, and why.
- ✔ **You're a member of what the rest of the world calls a "secret society" and you want to know why everyone is talking behind your back.** Does everybody shut up when you walk into the room? Is your daughter asking why people on the Internet claim you're the spawn of Satan. We examine the origins of secret societies and the more benign groups that have become the major suspects in the New World Order.

## *How This Book Is Organized*

If you just plowed in here without bothering to look at the neatly organized Table of Contents, we don't mind. We prefer you to start at the top, but we won't call out the black helicopter guys if you don't. We're about to tell you all the important stuff about the way this book is laid out. It's chopped up into four neatly packaged parts, and you can read them in any order.

### *Part I: Conspiracy Theories and Secret Societies: The Improbable Wedded to the Inscrutable*

About 99.9 percent of all respectable conspiracy theories are tied hand and foot to some sort of secret society or organization. This part lays out easy-to-understand models, with no cryptic double talk about all the "theys" out there, and all the dark conspiracies behind them. Chapter 1 is an overview of the world of conspiracies and secret societies, while Chapters 2 and 3 get down to the nuts and bolts of defining and identifying them.

### *Part II: A Colossal Compilation of Conspiracy Theories*

This part covers the best and the brightest in terms of conspiracy theories — from the sublime to the ridiculous. Chapter 4 discusses some of the most common theories, the conspiracies *so* secret that *everybody* knows about them. Chapter 5 is the hit parade of, well, hits — conspiracies related to famous assassinations. Chapter 6 covers the range of race, genocide, and apocalyptic doom, just to bring a little cheerlessness to your humdrum life. Chapter 7 covers conspiracies not of this Earth — from Roswell to the Moon-landing hoaxes. And finally, Chapter 8 covers the unsettling growth of the ever-wilder 9/11 conspiracies.



## *Part III: Secret Societies and Societies with Secrets*

You can't tell the players without a program. This part exposes the major secret societies of the last century and a half — the ones that still haunt every conspiracist cubbyhole in the bookstore and on the Internet. Chapter 9 discusses the Freemasons, the world's least kept secret society, and Chapter 10 ventures into the world of Rosicrucian and occult groups, while Chapter 11 explores the origin and modern incarnations of the Illuminati. Chapter 12 delves into the tales of secret societies of assassins like the, well, Assassins, along with the Invisible Empire, the Ku Klux Klan, and other hate groups. In Chapter 13 you find a gallery of both frivolous and frightening secret societies, from the golden age of fraternalism and college groups, to a lineup of military and revolutionary cabals. And Chapter 14 rounds out the list with the criminal underground and the godfather of all secret societies, the Mafia.

## *Part IV: The Part of Tens*

A *For Dummies* book wouldn't feel right without the Part of Tens — chapters divided into quaint lists of ten items of importance. In this part, we serve you ten conspiracy theories that skirted the edge of madness; ten conspiracy theories that really turned out to be true; ten secret societies with the goofiest names; and ten of the drop-dead weirdest secret societies of all time.

## *Icons Used in This Book*

Throughout this book, you spot certain icons hanging around in the margins. They're there to help you navigate the conspiracies, conspiracists, and conspiratorial plots.



This icon indicates little-known or “unusual” information or facts that were originally kept secret. Consider the info in these icons to come from a legendary group or inner circle of an all-seeing, all-knowing Master within any number of secret societies. Think of him as the Mister Know It All on all things secret or conspiratorial.



This icon marks key points that are vital to understanding truly important topics. Don't skip them!



This icon highlights stuff like additional data or side trips with more detail than you may be interested in. They can be ruthlessly skipped without missing the really important topics of the chapters.



This icon gives you handy tidbits and helpful advice.



This book stinks with conspiracies. It's loaded with them. They're all over the place. This icon points out the ones that are the bedrock of conspiracy thinking — either the most important allegations, the best known, or in some cases, the most ridiculous.

## *Where to Go from Here*

The best part of a *For Dummies* book is that you can start at page 1, or you can go all the way to the Part of Tens and read the book backwards. So, start with any chapter you want. Each chapter and section is pretty much self-contained, and if we think there's stuff you should've read about in order, we warn you and cross-reference other chapters as those instances pop up.

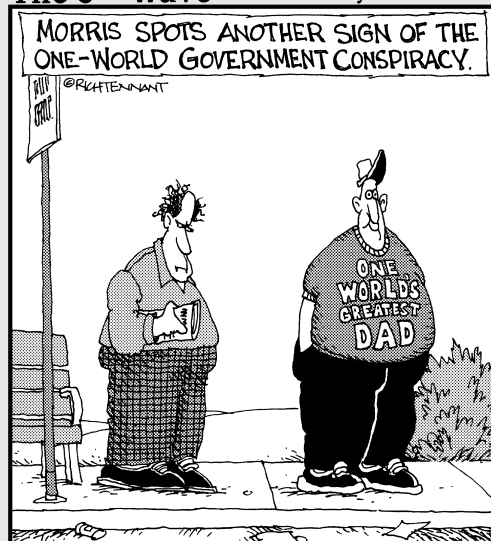
A *For Dummies* book isn't supposed to be the last book you pick up on a subject — it should be the first. But we hope that what you ultimately say about this book is that we've lifted the veil on topics you may have only vaguely heard of and presented you with enough facts to make up your own mind, or to study further. Or to just creep out your relatives.

# Part I

# Conspiracy Theories and Secret Societies: The Improbable Wedded to the Inscrutable

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



## *In this part . . .*

**A**bout 99.9 percent of all respectable conspiracy theories are tied hand and foot to some sort of secret society or organization. This secret society or organization is the *they*, as in “*they* hid the wrecked alien spacecraft in Roswell in 1947.” This section lays out easy-to-understand models, with no cryptic double talk, about all the “theys” out there, and all the dark conspiracies behind them.

# Chapter 1

## Everything You Know Is Wrong

---

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Believing the unbelievable: The age of conspiracy theories and secret societies
  - ▶ Figuring out what's worth believing
  - ▶ Touring the world, one conspiracy at a time
- 

**J**ournalist H. L. Mencken once said, “The most costly of all follies is to believe passionately in the palpably not true. It is the chief occupation of mankind.”

A conspiracy theory is the idea that someone, or a group of someones, acts secretly, with the goal of achieving power, wealth, influence, or other benefit. It can be as small as two petty thugs conspiring to stickup a liquor store, or as big as a group of revolutionaries conspiring to take over their country's government. Individuals, corporations, churches, politicians, military leaders, and entire governments can all be conspirators, in plots as evil as secretly developing nuclear weapons, as creepy as smuggling stolen human transplant organs, or as annoying as cornering the market on neighborhood \$4-coffee joints.

The conspiracy theory is absolutely inseparable from the secret society. They go together like Minneapolis and St. Paul. Face it: Everyone hates secrets. You didn't like it when the kids kept secrets from you in gym class, and you've never gotten over it. Neither have we.

Secret societies are the repositories of the hidden knowledge that spins the conspiracy theory. But the term *secret society* covers a lot of ground — everything from college fraternities and the lodge your grandpa belonged to, to the lesser known, powerful groups that stay out of the eyes of the press, like the Bilderbergers, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the legendary Illuminati (if they really exist at all).

This chapter begins the process of teaching you how to tell the truth from the manure, at least where conspiracy theories and secret societies are concerned. Throughout this book, we also set out to simplify what at least sounds staggeringly confusing. We clarify conspiracy theories that are coming at you from all sides nowadays on everything from the Mafia running the Vatican to

aliens landing in New Mexico (or is it the aliens in the Vatican and the Mafia in New Jersey?). Consider this chapter your warm-up exercise!

## *Living in the Age of Conspiracy Theories and Secret Societies*

The popularity of the conspiracy theory as a way of explaining society and world events is a pretty recent phenomena, a product of the time since the French Revolution of 1789, which was the first real marriage of paranoia and the printing press. But it's just within the last 40 years that the philosophy of conspiracism has become like a wall of noise, an assault on the collective consciousness, and the most common way to explain complex world events. In many respects, conspiracies are a way of simplifying history into good and bad, right and wrong.

A *conspiracy theory* is a way of looking at a single event and postulating that maybe there's a lot more to it than can be seen on the surface, with darker forces behind the whole thing. *Conspiracism* expands on this, becoming an entire philosophy, as a way of viewing the world. For the professional *conspiracist*, a person who studies the conspiracies, there isn't much going on in the world that *doesn't* have darker forces behind it, from the price of a gallon of gasoline to the three ounces of hand lotion you can't ever seem to extract from the bottom of a 16-ounce bottle. Of course, in a way, even the term *conspiracism* is too respectable to apply to much of what is floating around the Internet and the tabloids these days. Since the middle of the last century, academic, postmodernist researchers have found it fashionable to refer to all psychological states and moods in German. It's a Sigmund Freud thing. Author Thom Burnett in the *Conspiracy Encyclopedia* (2005, Chamberlain Bros.) points out that the Germans have a great term, *Verschwörungsmythos*, which means *Conspiracy Myth*, and in many ways, it has lots to recommend it as a descriptive label.

"Perhaps the conspiracy world is an updated version of ancient myths," Burnett says, "where monsters and the gods of Olympus and Valhalla have been replaced by aliens and the Illuminati of Washington and Buckingham Palace." In other words, the new wave of jitters over conspiracies and secret societies has beaten up the *zeitgeist* with their *weltschmerz* over *weltpolitik* (the spirit of our times has had the crap kicked out of it by anxiety over global domination). See, we can do the German thing too. *Gesundheit*.

What makes the study of conspiracy theories and secret societies unusual is, when boiled down to their most common elements, the overwhelming majority have grown or been adapted from the same few original sources. Historian Daniel Pipes has said that almost all conspiracy theories have as their origin the same two boogeymen — Jews and secret societies, most notably the