FOOLING SMART PEOPLE

That's what they get for using their brains all the time.

THE AMAZING TOMATO-WHEAT-COW

In September 1984, *Omni* magazine ran a story about "an amazing tomato-wheat-cow," a single plant-animal hybrid that had been created by two biologists at the University of Hamburg in West Germany. "With all the characteristics of a giant stalk of wheat," *Omni* wrote, "the skin can be tanned and used as leather, and several udder blossoms provide the grower with a steady supply of tomato juice." *Omni* attributed the genetic breakthrough to "Dr. Barry MacDonald and William Wimpey of the Department of Biology at the University of Hamburg."

It turned out that *Omni* got the story from the April issue of *New Scientist* magazine…which turned out to be the April Fool's issue. The "cow" was an obvious hoax—Wimpey's and McDonald's are the two largest hamburger chains in England—but *Omni* somehow missed the joke. According to one account, "Fact-checking for the article was limited to leaving a message for Wimpey and MacDonald at the University of Hamburg. The message was not returned."

THE FAMOUS UBIQUITOUS ALGORITHM HOAX

In 2005 Massachusetts Institute of Technology student Jeremy Stribling submitted an academic paper to a leading technology conference. The paper, entitled "Rooter: A Methodology for the Typical Unification of Access Points and Redundancy," was accepted, and he was invited to speak at the World Multiconference on Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics in Orlando, Florida. One problem: The paper was nothing but gibberish. Generated by a computer program written by Stribling, it was sentence after sentence random important-sounding nonsense, such as: "We can disconfirm that expert systems can be made amphibious" and "We concentrate our efforts on showing that the famous ubiquitous algorithm for the exploration of robots by Sato et al. runs in $\Omega((n + \log n))$ time [22]." So why'd he do it? Because he was tired of all spam e-mails soliciting research papers for the conference. When the ruse was discovered, Stibling's conference credentials were revoked.

Apes laugh when you tickle them.