

The 14 Greatest Hoaxes of All Time

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Anyone can toilet paper a house or slip a whoopee cushion onto a chair. Pulling off a truly legendary prank is harder. To fool the media, crowds, and even the military, you need patience, planning, and more than a little genius. But when everything comes together into one big victimless laugh, it's a thing of beauty. Here are history's greatest hoaxes, each one proof that with effort and a little luck, you can fool a lot of the people, all of the time.

10. A Bordello of Barks



Joey Skaggs is a professional prankster who plays the media like his instrument. He's made waves posing as an outraged gypsy hell-bent on renaming the gypsy moth. He launched Walk Right!—a fictional group dedicated to enforcing proper walking etiquette through militant tactics. But perhaps the best illustration of his life's work is the brothel for dogs that he opened in 1976. The prank started when Skaggs ran an ad in *The Village Voice* offering dog owners a chance to buy their pets a night with alluring companions, including Fifi, the French poodle. To Skaggs's surprise, he began getting calls from people wanting to drop \$50 for his service.

It didn't take much for the media to bite, and when reporters showed up with questions, Skaggs reeled them in by staging a night at his "cathouse for dogs." The stunt worked; TV stations issued breathless reports of the wanton acts of canine carnality. The ASPCA launched an investigation, a veterinarian publicly condemned the brothel, and the New York Health Department raised concerns about Skaggs's licensing.

Skaggs eventually admitted the whole thing was a goof, but not everyone believed him. To this day, a television producer for WABC New York argues that the brothel was real and that Skaggs's hoax claims are just a clumsy attempt to cover his trail. Of course, WABC has good reason to insist that Skaggs was running a genuine poodle prostitution ring: The station won an Emmy for its coverage of the story.