



Big Secrets

William Poundstone

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The Book That Gives the Inside Story on Hundreds of Secrets of American Life --Big Secrets.

Are there really secret backward messages in rock music, or is somebody nuts? We tested suspect tunes at a recording studio to find out.

What goes on at Freemason initiations? Here's the whole story, including -- yes! -- the electric carpet.

Colonel Sanders boasted that Kentucky Fried Chicken's eleven secret herbs and spices "stand on everybody's shelf." We got a sample of the seasoning mix and sent it to a food chemist for analysis.

Feverish rumor has it that Walt Disney's body was frozen and now lies in a secret cryonic vault somewhere beneath the Pirates of the Caribbean exhibit at Disneyland. Read the certified stranger-than-fiction truth.

Don't bother trying to figure out how Doug Henning, David Copperfield, and Harry Blackstone, Jr., perform their illusions. *Big Secrets* has complete explanations and diagrams, nothing left to the imagination.

Big Secrets Details

Date : Published June 26th 1985 by William Morrow Paperbacks (first published 1983)

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Author : William Poundstone

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C5 says

My rating represents how much I liked this book as a kid. I guess this type of book wouldn't have quite the same effect now that we have the Internet.

MisterFweem says

This was a quick, 24-hour read; just a book I yanked out of the "recently acquired" pile beneath my desk.

Interesting stuff, from exploring the formulas for Coca-Cola and Kentucky Fried Chicken to the startling revelation that the "secret code" Mom taught us as a kid was also infrequently used by the Freemasons. Weird.

Anyway, the writing could be better. It's pretty dry and clinical; I was hoping for something with a little more lilt and panache than what Poundstone offers. The information is good, but the writing could certainly have been more vivid.

Gary says

Facts about various subjects that you may have wondered about or find interesting. For instance, Recipe for KFC and tidbits about Colonial Sanders life, Mysterious Radio Frequencies, Celebrities real birthdays, how the model ship gets into the bottle, etc.

Phil says

I first encountered this book while in college during the early 90's. Back then, many of the "secrets" revealed in this book seemed nearly clandestine; today, the information therein is hardly shocking. Nevertheless, it makes for a fun read. The section on how to beat several popular tests (e.g., a lie detector) seemed as though it might come in handy some day, and the chapter about "numbers stations" actually creeped me out just a little (and eventually lead to me purchasing a short wave radio)! I keep this book on my bedside book shelves, just in case I want some easy, interesting, and nostalgic reading before going to sleep.

Barry Simiana says

I love these books (there's 4 or more). Had the set and then had them pinched. Recently replaced them and re-reading again. Still love them.

Carol Waters says

This is one of those books to leave in the bathroom for a little interim reading. Nothing terribly useful, but now I have a new code that I can actually remember.

Rich Meyer says

The first volume in William Poundstone's fun series of Big Secrets is still a fun read, even after all this time. Some of the technology-associated "secrets" in all three books are somewhat like fossils now, since these were written long before cell phones and smartphones, but there are a lot of interesting tidbits and strangeness to be perused. This one's great if you want to pull pranks on Masons, and has a lot of interesting info on secret radio stations and the like. An always interesting read.

Don Gubler says

Disappointing.

Victoria says

Read this wayyy back in the early '90s.

Shane Moore says

In these days of the internet, few secrets are still very secret, but this collection of obscure knowledge was still pretty interesting. My favorite parts were the detailed investigations into questions without clear answers, specifically the historical recipes for things like Coca-Cola and perfumes. The funniest bit was the revelation that chemical analysis revealed that rather than 11 secret herbs and spices KFC fried chicken was spiced with salt, pepper, and no measurable quantities of any other spices.

Claudia says

There were some interesting facts in this book, although don't expect to find real BIG secrets (who really killed John F. Kennedy, whether or not aliens really exist, you get my point).

I especially liked the chapters that gave away magician's secrets. I am fascinated with optical illusions, especially those that seem impossible. I don't mind for these secrets to be exposed because once I've seen the trick performed, I want to know how.

Some parts weren't terribly exciting to me, but they were good things to know nonetheless. One example is the chapter that covers the extra protection added to credit cards. Another is the discussion on secret radio stations used by the government.

I finished this book pretty quickly. I was surprised that I enjoyed it so much, especially since it is obviously outdated by now. I would like to read a more recent "tell-all" book if I can find one.

George Scully says

Read this as a teen. The information was cutting edge in the early eighties - today, not so much. That being said, I loved it.

Chris says

One of the formative books of my childhood. Backwards messages on records, subliminal messages in movies, the eleven herbs n spices in Kentucky Fried Chicken, government hiding places in case of nuclear attack, and so much more. Was the reason this phrase was once uttered in my childhood home: "Mom, can you drive me to the library? I need to get a book about shortwave numbers stations."
