

Story for performance #942
webcast from Sydney at 08:08PM, 18 Jan 08



Source: Paul Richter, 'North Korea-Syria nuke link',
LA Times in *The Age* online, 18/01/08.

Tags: [food](#), [religion](#), [workplace](#)

Writer/s: [Gavin Sladen](#)

© 2008 Barbara Campbell and the writer/s

At a suburban supermarket, people queue for many hours to stand before a honeydew melon that bears a striking resemblance to a major religious figure, who cannot be named for copyright reasons. The peculiar history of this icon has been well-documented, so only a brief account will be given here. A fruit preparation technician in the produce department was slicing melons in half, to meet the needs of those who lack the appetite or social life necessary to dispose of a whole melon. After splitting an especially round and juicy one, the religious significance of this particular fruit was revealed to him in a flash, and, diligently following the instructions in the employee handbook, he immediately alerted his supervisor. After extensive consultation with the legal department, it was finally decided that the honeydew melon should be placed on display, with a view to miraculously healing the sick and boosting sales. Despite the great efforts being made to ensure the melon's preservation, no one knows how long the natural processes of decay can be staved off, and although many understandably think that the melon will be saved from putrefaction by divine forces, people are still anxious to see it before it over-ripens.

The crowds gathering to see the melon have now grown so large that many people leave disappointed, after hours of waiting. A growing number of seriously ill people are arriving in the hope that the melon will provide a cure, leading many to call for their access to the honeydew to be given priority. So far, no one has died while waiting to see the melon, but the collapse and hospitalisation of an elderly woman who stood in the queue for nearly five hours last Friday has given added impetus to the movement to grant special viewing privileges to the sick. At this stage, however, the supermarket has shown no indication that it is willing to coordinate such a scheme, citing the difficulty of vetting potential applicants, and the inability of terminally ill people to put the low low prices of the Monday madness discount bonanza into the appropriate perspective.

Even more controversial has been the proposal to extract the juice of the melon, which would then be flown in an untraceable aircraft to a secure facility in a secret location, to serve as an emergency panacea in the event that a key world leader or highly bankable celebrity fell suddenly ill. Some theologians have hypothesised that the melon juice should have

extremely powerful healing properties, although most have struggled to find strong evidence for this theory in religious texts. Whatever powers the juice of the honeydew possess, there is little doubt that the yield from the melon would be small, raising fears of a protracted legal battle over just who should be able to make use of it. Supporters of various high-profile personalities have already launched campaigns demanding that their troubled idol be given a taste of the melon, hoping that a small amount of the honeydew nectar might be able to accomplish what twenty-eight days at a five-star rehabilitation facility in the Sierra Nevada could not.

Meanwhile, more and more attention is being focused on the site of this mysterious event, the supermarket itself. Sales of fruit and vegetables at the outlet have hit record levels, as people search for religious iconography in everything from cucumbers to Jerusalem artichokes. Many are initially elated upon cutting open their produce, only to be quickly disappointed when they discover that their tomato or pineapple only contains the face of Elvis or Harold Holt. So far, no one has been able to present anything comparable to the face in the honeydew melon, despite several days of searching. Paranormal investigators have begun to widen the scope of their inquiry, probing beyond the fruit and vegetable aisle and digging up everything they can about the supermarket. One prominent author has produced an analysis showing that by taking every third letter from the super specials listed in the supermarket catalogue, sentences emerge that predict the deaths of several famous people, including President Kennedy and River Phoenix. So far, no one has been able to explain why the catalogue would predict the deaths of people who have already died.

And what of the person at the centre of this affair, the unassuming fruit preparation technician who started it all with his amazing discovery? He is currently in hiding, after being mobbed by a crowd of hysterical worshippers, members of the new spiritual movement that has formed around him. The organisers of this movement have plans to release a series of recipe books and motivational DVDs. Interest in the melon looks set to continue for a long time to come.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Gavin Sladen.