

## The Great \$110,000 Dowsing Challenge

*A dowser claimed to be able to determine the on-off status of an electronic circuit in a randomizer device. Tests revealed auditory and visual clues.*

James Randi

**I**N MID-AUGUST 1983, a letter was received by Dick Smith of Sydney, Australia, from Robert A. Homer of Worcester, England. The writer, organizer of the Worcester Dowzers, revealed that an especially gifted practitioner of that doubtful art, a young student named John Rainbow, had performed a startlingly positive test on videotape and that a copy of that tape was on its way to Smith for his viewing. Said Homer, "I am sure that we are making ESP history." And, indeed, if his claims were correct, that would certainly be true.

Homer had constructed a simple randomizer device mounted in a small box. A 500-ohm resistor was connected to the bottom of the box, and the electronic circuitry delivered a very small amount of current to it in pulses occurring a few times a second. This on-off-on-off action could be viewed on a sensitive meter located on the face of the box by depressing a "read" button, which in its normal position was supposed to short out that meter. After the circuit had been switching for awhile, Homer would activate a "freeze" switch that would hold the circuit either on or off while the dowser tested it with his powers.

Rainbow merely waved a small jeweled pendulum near the resistor and apparently, by watching the movements of that pendulum, was able to determine whether the current was on or off. Homer invited Dick Smith to view this wonder in person and to surrender his offer of \$100,000 upon seeing a successful demonstration.

The videotape arrived in due course, and Smith was amazed to see that Rainbow had beaten the odds of over a million-to-one, calling twenty out of twenty trials correctly! He had reserved the option of refusing to try guessing on any trial by declaring "Void" if he wished to.

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*James Randi is well known to our readers - An internationally renowned magician, he has been actively investigating paranormal claims for the past 35 years.*

# the \$2 **Skeptic**

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 **RESPONSE TO HOAX P.12**

Smith immediately called me and asked if I would go to the United Kingdom in his place to see this demonstration. He offered to pay my expenses for the trip. After seeing the videotape, I agreed. He forwarded his bank draft for \$100,000, to which I added my own \$10,000. I enlisted the help of Carlos Alonso to record the event and Michael Hutchinson (of the U.K. CSICOP) to make all arrangements as well as to witness the tests. We contacted Julian Isaacs, a prominent U.K. parapsychologist, to act as an impartial witness, and the date of the test was set for January 8, 1984.

My viewing of the videotape had aroused my suspicions about certain aspects of the test, and I had alerted Dick Smith to that fact. But suspicions are little if not proven, and I had to await my actual visit in order to test out my theory. I will not go into details of those suspicions, since the modus operandi at the formal tests turned out to be entirely different from what I might have expected. I found that the original box had now been painted and that a handle had been added. Furthermore, any notion that I might have had about there being any trickery employed in the box was negated by Homer's opening declaration to me—he offered to give me the randomizer as soon as the test was completed.

Homer had intended to hold the test in the living-room of Rainbow's home. I refused this, believing that I would have better control of matters on neutral ground. I chose to perform the test in a local hotel in the town of Redditch. It took us a few minutes to get organized, and after Homer and Rainbow had signed a document agreeing that all was suitable for the actual experiment (Homer asked that Rainbow be allowed to sign *after* the test, but I refused), I asked Rainbow to perform a preliminary unofficial run. This consisted of 10 trials. These were to be followed by the 20 formal test trials, on which Rainbow was required to obtain at least 80 percent, or 16 out of 20 correct. Chance for his success at this level was about one in a thousand. As in his videotaped test, he was to be allowed to declare any trial a "void," and that one was to be ignored in the scoring. I was the scorer, while Isaacs watched over my shoulder.

Homer switched on the randomizer and depressed the "read" button temporarily to show that the oscillator was working. Then, after a pause, he threw the "freeze" switch. He then asked Rainbow to make his guess. The dowser sat concentrating and waving his pendulum while sitting well back from the resistor, unlike his position in the videotaped session. He called two "voids" during this run. Due to my recording error (I entered one "void" in a space reserved for actual guesses), only nine trials were done in this preliminary run—but Rainbow scored 100 percent!

But all was not well, for Isaacs had noted, with some puzzlement, that after the first three guesses I began writing down my own guesses—correctly—before Rainbow called out his!

We had called attention at the very outset to a few points that had not been apparent from our viewing of the Homer videotape. First, the rate of oscillation was about 3 to 5 times per second, not at all a sufficiently rapid rate for such a device. Second, there was no assurance that the relay was off for exactly the same period of time that the relay was on, and Homer had not done any large-scale runs to test it for 50/50 off/on efficiency.

The third problem was much more serious. The tiny reed-relay in the box was quite audible to all present, though Homer denied that he could hear anything. It was making pinging and ponging noises as it oscillated from off to on. By listening carefully to that noise, a skilled operator could have been able to note at which position (ping or pong—off or on) the "freeze" switch had been thrown. To get around this possibility, we rapped upon the table while the device was oscillating and left it in that condition long enough that it would not have been possible to "time" the oscillations.

At the conclusion of that startlingly successful run by the dowser, I asked to use the pendulum; and, sitting in Rainbow's chair, I called out ten correct guesses with the same precautions of rapping the table, etc., being applied. I had noted that the meter needle "froze" in a position just slightly (about 1/64") below the zero point when the circuit was off, and the same distance above the zero point when it was on. The "read" button was somewhat less than the electrical short it was supposed to be and offered a certain resistance across the very sensitive meter. By simply glancing at the meter needle, I was able to score 100 percent, and I asked Isaacs to sit before the machine to try his skill in this way. He, too, was 100 percent successful.

The question at this point was whether Rainbow had been using this method to make his guesses or had been using supernatural dowsing powers instead. As we considered this matter, Isaacs took exception to the fact that I had not stopped the proceedings immediately upon noting this feature of Homer's device. I asked him to defer to me in the protocol of the test, and he did so, somewhat unhappily. But I had good reason to act as I did.

To have simply stopped the test would have served less purpose than to allow it to continue. I wanted to observe Rainbow to see if he was actually looking at the meter. What I discovered was quite informative.

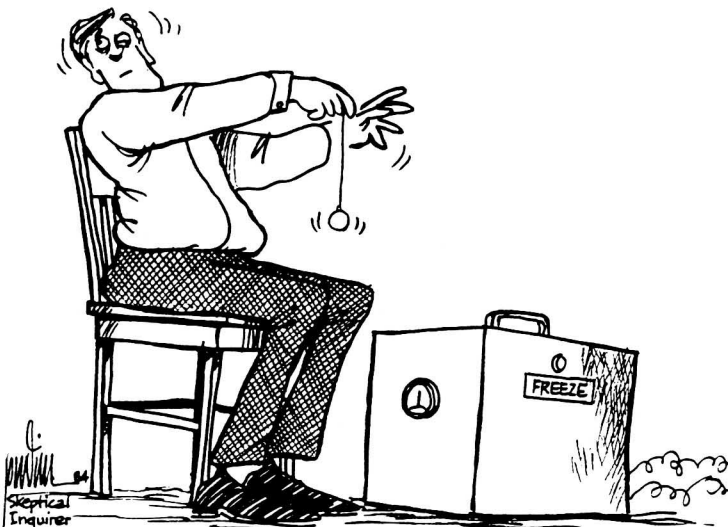
At this point in the procedure, I asked Homer to open his box so that we might verify that the circuitry was the same as that which he had submitted to Dick Smith. He was somewhat annoyed at this and subsequently expressed his feeling that his character was being impugned by this action. But I was in charge of \$100,000 of someone else's money, as well as my own \$10,000, and I was not about to leave anything undone.

We suggested to Rainbow that he now perform the run of 20 formal tests—but with the meter covered over. He announced that he was uncertain, tired, and rather rushed. Homer sympathized with Rainbow's reluctance, objecting that all this was not in accord with the original test procedure and that we were casting aspersions on Rainbow by acting as we did. However, at Isaac's urging, the two agreed to do the run. I now surrendered both prize checks to Isaacs, either to be awarded by him to Rainbow if the test was a success or to be returned to me if not.

With a simple slip of paper covering the meter face, the run of 20 took place. John Rainbow scored 13 out of 20, well within chance expectation. Isaacs returned the two checks to me, and the test was over.

The question remains: Did John Rainbow cheat by noting the position of the needle, which gave away the state of the circuit? Certainly he could have. One fact I have not revealed: On the third trial of the preliminary run, with the meter fully exposed, I had entered, in view of Isaacs, a "V" for "void" just before Rainbow called it out. I had noted, and continued to note, that he always hunched forward a bit toward the box just after the "freeze" switch was thrown, ostensibly to see if it was in the correct position. He then spent quite some time fiddling with the pendulum at a distance from the box, finally making his announcement. But I believe that he was actually getting a glimpse of the needle, which I could clearly see from where I was, above the box, but he could not easily see from his sitting position—unless he hunched forward. When I noted that on this third try he did not attempt to get a close look, I suspected he would announce a "void"—and he did.

The audio-tape record reveals that Rainbow mumbled a great deal during the successful run, asking about the state of the switches and complaining about his pendulum being tangled. All of these ploys would enable him to get a peek at that meter—except when he chose not to, and then he declared a "void." I also find it difficult to believe that Robert Homer designed, built, experimented with, and had that contraption in his possession for more than two years and never knew that it not only audibly "talked" by means of its relay but also showed quite clearly what the state of the circuit was by the position of the meter needle.



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## ARTICLES OF NOTE

### SKEPTICS v. CLAIRVOYANT

#### ★ ON "60 MINUTES" ★

On September 30th the TV programme "60 Minutes" will be showing a segment on English clairvoyant, Doris Collins. Doris has written her autobiography titled "A Woman of Spirit" in which she makes various claims about her psychic healing ability and her gift of communicating with the dead.

Tune in to watch James Randi along with our Phillip Adams and Mark Plummer comment on a video of her performances in Melbourne.

### SKEPTICS MAGIC CONSULTANT

#### IN AMAZING FEAT

Mike Wilton, our magic consultant, performed an amazing escape feat on June 8th. Mike was chained at the wrists and ankles, tied in a sack and padlocked in a steel cage. He was then lowered into the freezing, polluted Yarra River in Melbourne in front of thousands of people.

One minute and forty seconds later he emerged from the deep to the cheers of the crowd and relief from assembled skeptics who were afraid we would have to find a new magic consultant.

It was the first time since the great Harry Houdini came to Melbourne seventy-four years ago that anyone had attempted such an escape.

Mike has served on the Skeptics committee, was on Bob Steiner tour sub-committee and frequently advised us on methods used by Australian "psychics".

If any of Australia's psychics would like to emulate Mike we will arrange for a loan of the sack, cage, padlocks and crane.



### SKEPTICS TESTING OFFER

There is some confusion in the minds of some people in respect of the cash offer for anyone who can scientifically prove that they have paranormal powers.

At the time of the James Randi visit in 1980 an offer of \$50,000 was put up by five people - James Randi, Phillip Adams, Richard Carleton, Dick Smith and another businessman. This offer only lasted for the duration of Randi's visit.

Then Dick Smith put up an offer of \$100,000 and tests of claimants, mostly divining, were conducted for this offer.

Subsequently other people put up offers in Australia and elsewhere in the world.

Clairvoyant Mrs Anna Gray said there could be suspicion about such a large amount as \$100,000 and that she was not interested in this prize. She said more people would take up the challenge if it was for \$1,000 only.

In June this year Dick Smith decided to reduce his offer to \$10,000 and appointed the Australian Skeptics as the official testing body. Our other patron, Phillip Adams also offered \$10,000.

Thus as from the 30th June 1984 the Australian Skeptic's offer is for \$20,000. Would-be claimants should write to us at Box 1555P GPO Melbourne 3001 for details of conditions. Only written claims, testable in Australia, will be considered. A public register will be kept of all claims and tests.



To all people who received our Book Lists Numbers 1 and 2 we regret to inform you that there has been an increase in prices by 15% due to the devaluation of the Australian dollar.



(ALMOST) THE BEST

by Mark Plummer

The last issue of "the Skeptic" revealed that the publicity which preceded Albert Best claiming he had been tested by Glasgow University under rigid scientific conditions by many scientists using modern equipment was false. Best's publicity quoted a Professor Roy of Glasgow University. He was sent copies of the publicity and replied:-

"(1) Mr Best was not tested by me with all the modern equipment available.

(2) He was not tested by me under rigid scientific conditions.

3) Certainly I believe that he scored significantly.

(4) He was certainly not tested by Glasgow University but by me in my private capacity as an investigator of the paranormal.

I have known Mr Best for a number of years and have been present at a number of meetings where he demonstrated his mediumship. I have also had private sittings with Mr Best and the one described below was tape recorded.

On that occasion I made an arrangement to take someone, unknown to Mr Best, to sit with him and was careful not to mention when making the appointment the use of the words 'he' or 'she'; of course I did not mention any names. I chose the person at the last moment before the engagement and then listened while Mr Best ostensibly obtained information about her and her family and about her father (dead). He scored a remarkable number of hits with regard to data concerning her, her family and her father, whilst if these statements had been attributed to me they would have been wrong. In addition the statements he had made to myself would have been wrong if attributed to the person I took but were remarkably accurate for myself and my family.

I am well aware this type of experiment under far less than scientific conditions is worthless as evidence but to the person experiencing such things it is impressive. I feel that Mr Best has a degree of sensitivity but certainly to state that he was tested under rigorous scientific conditions by me or by Glasgow

*University is certainly not true. All too often the account of what actually transpired is garbled and embroidered and does a great deal of damage to the whole spirit of investigating these ostensible paranormal phenomena.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Archie E Roy"*

The letter while destroying the credibility of the publicity raised even more questions.

First that Best had many previous sittings before the latest "experiment. Thus Best has had years in which he could have gathered material about Professor Roy and family, and for Roy to use himself as a subject shows amazing naivete.

Second Professor Roy was both "subject" and "tester" in this experiment.

We asked Professor Roy to forward a copy of the tape but this has not been forthcoming. Roy has stated that the data provided about the subject showed a remarkable number of "hits" (by Roy's assessment) and then measures these "hits" for accuracy if they had been attributed to him. Readers can make their own judgment about this type of assessment.

"Cold reading" can be impressive to a person experiencing the "cold reading". This was clearly shown by the reaction of "Terbot's" subjects but subjective experience of a "mediumship" is not objective proof that mediumship is a paranormal phenomenon.

Given Professor Roy's disclaimer from the publicity it could be expected that Albert Best would be keen to prove his powers by allowing himself to be properly tested in Australia but this proved not to be the case.

I had written to one of the tour organisers, the Victorian Spiritualists Union in February and failed to receive a reply.

Best arrived on March 11th.

Four days later an article appeared in the Melbourne "Sun" repeating the false claims that Best had been tested by Glasgow University under scientific conditions.

I wrote directly to Mr Best on March 19th and received a reply dated March 22nd from a Mrs Joan King, who described herself as organiser for the Best tour. She asked that we establish our credentials by advising details of our organisation, members, committee and office bearers. This information was forwarded by return mail. Evidently Best had been unable to obtain this by clairvoyancy even though publicity leaflets advertising his tour had described him as "acclaimed as one of the world's leading clairvoyants" and "the world's finest medium".

On March 6th Best appeared at the Ringwood Cultural Centre. The booking form for the Terbot Lecture was in the manager's office, skeptics were handing out leaflets outside and one was in the audience continually thinking about the Terbot tour. From these skeptical presences Mr Best or one of the many

spirits who allegedly came through that night should have been able to foretell the Terbot/Steiner hoax. But if Mr Best had that foresight he did not publicly release it. Less than two months later Terbot was to appear in the same hall fooling many of those who had attended Best's meeting.

Unlike Best's meeting on April 6th, Steve Terbot allowed himself to be subjected to a lengthy question and answer session.

Albert Best finally replied personally to my letters stating that "I have made no claims of any kind" and "have already sat a test sitting in Hobart on 'Nationwide'".

Best then followed with an amazing statement apparently ruling out the possibility of telepathy or clairvoyance as a form of communication: "You say I have not replied to your letter but how could I when I was away ...".

Dear Sir,

Since coming to Australia on a strictly non-professional basis, I have made no claims of any kind, and have already sat a test sitting in Hobart on Television in "Nationwide" which no doubt you can obtain a video copy on request.

You say I have not replied to your letter how could I when I was away & I bet I am one of the few who answer your letter

Steps have already been taken to correct by me ~~the~~ certain articles in the press release.

Why on earth do you feel I am under any obligation to your society to do whatever you want?

I am tested every time I give a message and as one who has never made anything out of Spiritualism except travelling expenses, why on earth do you feel I am under any obligation to disclose any information or that secret. To you or do what you say  
Albert Best

In my next letter on April 9th I noted that while he claimed he had not made any claims of any kind, others certainly had made remarkable claims about him in promoting his tour. I stated that I felt certain he would be able to find the time to be tested by the Skeptics in Australia prior to his departure.

Mr Best responded in a second letter stating that "if I sat tests ever again it would be with people who had at least open minds; you keep speaking of your scientists, yet your methods seem quite unscientific to me".

Clearly Mr Best prefers tests like those of Professor Roy to those we might design.

Albert Best closed his second letter asserting that he could no longer afford to answer letters without a Stamped Addressed Envelope. As the tour grossed an estimated \$30,000 - \$40,000, it appears the organisers must have been awfully tight with their purse strings not to give Best a proper postal allowance as part of his expenses.

Meanwhile in New Zealand their "Psychic Gazette" was hinting at dark clouds over the Best Tour. The May 1984 issue stated that "while the tour has done the public image of what we stand for a great service, it has to be also recognised that many Spiritualists found a disappointing shortfall between their expectations and what they experienced."

Surely with so many clairvoyants at their disposal the New Zealand

Psychic Gazette should have been able to get expert advice on what was about to happen. They could have consulted with the clairvoyants who advertise in their Gazette.

The June issue backed down further. first they printed a letter from James Randi which corrected their false publicity about Best. The Editor of the Gazette, Ron Gibbs, apologised to his readers for any misleading statements made in the Gazette about Albert's testing. He wrote: "Whether I misunderstood the publicity material sent to me, this was certainly the impression I had."

Yet the same issue of the Gazette published an advertisement for Video tapes of Best stating "if you were one of the lucky ones to have a reunion with some of your loved ones - re-live that moment again by watching it on your own video." Price \$70!

In Best's tour some of his promoters clearly embarrassed him by getting his publicity wrong.

To prevent a repetition of this, the Australian Skeptics extend Mr Best the following offer:

*Mr Best, next time you come to Australia please allocate your first three days for rigorous scientific tests by scientists using the most modern equipment available. If you pass, the Australian Skeptics undertake to do their utmost to obtain the sort of favourable publicity that will ensure a highly profitable tour - and will include a generous postal allowance.*

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## SPIRITS, SPIRITS EVERYWHERE AND NOT A DROP TO DRINK

by Barry Williams

The night of Saturday April 14th. was fine and crystal clear in Sydney, Hub of the Universe. Just the sort of night to do a little amateur astronomy, or in the case of a Dedicated Skeptic, to attend a meeting with Mr Alfred Best, 'acclaimed as one of the World's leading clairvoyants' if his pre-publicity is to be believed.

The publicity must have been believed by a lot of people because the Lane Cove Town Hall was packed with about 500 presumed Believers. The entry fee of \$9.00 per head would surely have

deterred skeptics that were less than totally Dedicated (or who had Free Tickets, compliments of Dick Smith).

The meeting was opened by a gentleman, who did not identify himself to the audience, but whom the Dedicated Skeptic suspected was the President of the Australian Institute of Psychic Research, Mr Eric Weddell. He commenced the meeting by reading a disclaimer to the effect that Mr Best had not been tested by Glasgow University, as some pre-show publicity had suggested, but by a professor at Glasgow University

who had not subjected Mr Best to 'stringent scientific tests' but nonetheless rated him as '80% accurate'. He also advised that Mr Best had been tested by Nationwide Program on Tasmanian TV and that a copy of the tape of the program was being sought by A.I.P.R..

The meeting was then introduced to the warm-up speaker, Professor John (Raine?) Lewis, who was described as 'a scientist and Professor of Religion'.

Professor Lewis' address was a predictable attack on the 'neurotic suspicion of the supernatural' by scientists and contained many of the shibboleths of para-normalists, i.e. closed minds in science, scientists being shunned by their peers for daring to challenge orthodoxy, (I did not hear Gallileo's name mentioned, but I suspect he was intimated). Prof Lewis seemed to believe that rational thought was something to be deprecated and was particularly scathing about the late Bertrand Russell. He also accused skeptics of using 'hectoring methods' to get their opposition across, and indeed, equated skeptics with 'Hellfire and brimstone preachers'.

He did make a couple of extraordinary claims, one being that investigators of para-normal phenomena often placed unnecessarily stringent controls on their own research (not often enough if James Randi's Project Alpha is anything to go by). Following this, he claimed that if Astronomy was the subject of the same stringent controls, much of today's knowledge would have to be 'thrown out the window'.

Having thus displayed a lamentable ignorance of the difference between observational and experimental science, he compounded this by failing to acknowledge that the history of Astronomy and indeed of all scientific disciplines is littered with ideas that have been 'thrown out of assorted windows', as distinct from pseudo-science, in which all theories, no matter how tenuous, are retained with grim tenacity. In his attack on skeptics, Prof Lewis suggested that they were concerned that researchers into the para-normal were emotionally involved in their research and were

therefore likely to be less than scrupulous. Having set up this straw man, Prof Lewis, predictably, demolished it with references to the hypothetical biochemist who was trying to find a cancer cure, and who could reasonably be suspected of being 'emotionally involved'. The only snort of derision in the room came from the vicinity of the Dedicated Skeptic. One of Prof Lewis' rhetorical questions was that 'as the para-normal deals with people, why should researchers be shackled by such unrealistic requirements as repeatability'. Why indeed? Perhaps medical researchers should consider this attractive proposition.

After this exciting build-up, Mr Best proved to be something of an anti-climax. Describing himself as a "spiritualist medium", thus removed the meeting from any scrutiny as a scientific phenomenon, and firmly placed it in the context of a religious meeting. As an interesting sidelight, the Spiritualist Movement recently celebrated its centenary. In the early part of the 20th century it had a considerable number of adherents, but it tended to lose ground after its expert clairvoyants failed to predict World War II.

After a ten minute introduction, Mr Best began clairvoying. Most of his spirit contacts seemed to be British, with Scots and Irish in the majority. The "spirits" seemed to concentrate on the audience in the the first ten or so rows and these rows seemed to be filled with people who were conversant with the spiritualist jargon. Indeed most of the people at the front seemed to know each other and one might suspect that they were mainly members of spiritualist groups.

One of the early messages came from a spirit called "Pringle", who seemed to have strayed into the wrong meeting, as no one was prepared to admit to knowing any Pringles, alive or "passed over". The Dedicated Skeptic, on mature reflection, decided that this message may have been for him. Not 12 months ago, he attended an Australian Opera performance of Don Giovanni, in which the eponymous role was sung by John Pringle. Opera buffs will →



instantly recall that in the final scene Don G. for his sins, dragged off to Hades by demons. Perhaps that is drawing rather a long bow, but some of the other connections were equally tenuous.

A couple of incidents persist in memory. One man received a message from his late Irish mother, who, Mr Best suggested, was firmly of the Salvation Army faith. The man admitted she had been a Catholic, which seemed to satisfy Mr Best, but which may have given pause to both the Pope and the successors to General Booth. Mr Best then revealed that the mother had a neighbour called "Crangle", which presumably laid the Pringle wraith to rest, but seemed to be news to the recipient. Mr Best did not say so but the confusion over names may, one suspects, be due to poor communication facilities. Does this mean that Telecom pursues us into the afterlife?

Mr Best may have been in contact with the departed. In the context of a public meeting, with no controls whatsoever, who can say? As a religious experience, the exercise may have been beneficial to the faithful. It certainly would not have converted even the mildest of sceptics. To a Dedicated Skeptic it all seemed like a waste of good amateur astronomy time, and to anyone of a more devious frame of mind, it would have encouraged the belief that the floating of shares in the Sydney Harbour Bridge would not suffer from a lack of investors.

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### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

*Skeptics are Investigators*

In his article "To Believe, To Disbelieve or To Investigate" (June '84), Mark Moravec makes the point that it is important for skeptics to investigate and test paranormal claims. To make the point he has portrayed skeptics (and by implication the Australian Skeptics) as firm disbelievers in the paranormal. I feel Mark has over-simplified the skeptics position and I would like to give another view of skepticism.

I see a skeptic as being a doubter who refrains from committing him/herself to a belief until there is sufficient evidence to justify that belief. With regard to the paranormal the doubts are very strong because (a) from experience, claims of the paranormal generally don't stand up to investigation, (b) most paranormal events are inconsistent with the well tested and well integrated theories of science. Hence a skeptic will regard a paranormal event as most unlikely. However most skeptics will concede that we cannot say definitely that a paranormal event is impossible. So we keep an open mind but insist that claims of paranormal events be investigated scientifically.

I refer Mark to the Aims of The Australian Skeptics in this issue of The Skeptic. It can be seen that the main aim is "to investigate scientifically and with an open mind, claims and events of a paranormal nature."

Mark has also made some serious accusations about the conduct of some CSICOP members when dealing with Micheal Gauquelin's research on astrology. Apparently Mark's source of information is an article in the "Zetetic Scholar". I would point out that it is the policy of that journal to be an open forum for both skeptics and believers. Hence I think it would be unwise to rely too much on this source without further supporting evidence.

Peter Hogan



## BELIEFS, A RESPONSE

by Mark Moravec

I was pleased to see that my paper, "To Believe, to Disbelieve or to Investigate?". ("The Skeptic", 4:2) has provoked comment on some of the issues raised.

I agree with at least one point in James Gerrand's critique. That is that psychologists have a relevant role to play in examining claims to the paranormal. Indeed, in a number of my published papers, I have strongly advocated the involvement of behavioural scientists, both to ensure quality control of the data derived from human subjects as well as to research possible psychological explanations. My statement advocating the involvement of "objective and courageous scientists" most certainly includes the potential contributions of behavioural and social scientists. Magicians, too, have a useful role to play in a consultative capacity, especially in controlling against fraud in parapsychological experiments.

On other points of Gerrand's critique, I will have to disagree. I think that James confuses my criticism of science as practised (or malpractised) for criticism of the scientific method itself. There is nothing wrong with the ideals of science. The objective application of scientific method is absolutely essential if any progress is to be made in researching alleged paranormal phenomena.

To achieve predictability is one important aim of scientific research. But it would be naive to hastily dismiss all paranormal claims merely on the grounds that we have not yet been able to achieve complete and instant predicability. Otherwise, we would have banished our meteorologists and psychologists long ago. And the latter specialists have had the benefit of much more time, finance, personnel and other resources. The alleged elusiveness of some phenomena can be used as an excuse by some paranormal proponents for lowering their standards of research. But it can also be used as an excuse by some skeptics to avoid the effort of objective investigation and to replace it with the easy option of ridicule.

Whilst the scientific ideals are fine, it is when people's beliefs interfere with the application of those ideals, that problems arise. In the case of meteorites, the scientific establishment did finally consider the evidence and accept their existence. But the point is that it took several decades for this to occur. And it was not because of the absence of physical and testimonial evidence. It was because the scientists of the day were blinded by their own beliefs and preferred to ignore the available evidence.

I simply advocate the objective scientific investigation of paranormal claims. We will learn more by this than by allowing emotion-laden beliefs in the existence or non-existence of such things to determine our conclusions.

### REPLY by James Gerrand

Mark, your agreement as to the need for psychologists and magicians is pleasing. But is it "emotion-laden beliefs" that have, if not "blinded", at least greatly distorted your reading of my criticism?

I did not mention "achieve complete and instant predictability"; my words were "tell with some confidence the future". "A scientific truth is established when on its use it is found to have some reliability." (my emphases here).

Meteorologists keep their credibility, unlike rain-dancers, because their predictions can be used with some confidence (they keep a running check on their success rate and use same to try and improve their predictions). The theories of psychologists have become more useful and so credible in recent years as more emphasis has been placed on the evaluation rather than on the production rate of psychological theories.

To achieve predictability is not just one important aim of scientific research, it is its fundamental basis, it is the bottom line of science.



"THE SKEPTIC"

Editor: Janet de Silva

Word Processing: James Gerrand

## PROJECT HOOK'S FINAL CATCH - A.I.P.R.

A major aim of Project Hook was to "catch" Australian "believers" by showing they would support Terbot's claims to be psychic and/or they were ignorant of the magical tricks, psychological ploys and the deceptions used by some psychics.

After the hoax was revealed Dr Michael Hough, the Secretary of the Australian Institute of Psychic Research (A.I.P.R.) sent us a draft copy of an article for their Bulletin titled "Skeptics' Terbot Hoax - AIPR not hooked".

We were delighted to read that the AIPR had indeed been hooked by Bob Steiner's post expose presentation.

One of the tricks used by Steve Terbot/Bob Steiner at his public meetings to demonstrate "telepathy" was to affix an envelope containing a line of words in a prominent position.

He then held up a newspaper clipping and a pair of scissors and invited a person in the audience selected at random to tell him where to cut the clipping.

The person tells Steve to move the scissors up or down and then to cut at a position decided by the person.

Steve Terbot makes the cut and the cut off portion drops to the floor. The top line from this cut off portion is read by the person and is found to match the words in the envelope.

Amazing.

It is a magical trick involving the sort of deception used by Geller and others. It is performed by James Randi and other magicians including our magic consultant. Even some Skeptics after considerable practice have been able to master the trick.

Dr Hough stated in his draft that "Bob switched clippings while the person was coming on stage. This trick is never used by psychics."

I suggested to Dr Hough that he change it to "I believe Bob switched ..."

We can assure Dr Hough that Bob did not change the clippings.

In the first issue of the AIPR Bulletin a description is given of magical tricks performed by Glen Falkenstein.

The article states that Glen Falkenstein has ESP ability. At least one of the tricks described can be found in many books on magic.

Randi has written to Dr Hough telling him to forget any notion that Falkenstein claims any psychic powers. Randi says Falkenstein is the best of today's performers in his field but is just that alone.

In explaining the newspaper clipping trick as involving "switching" and Falkenstein's tricks as ESP ability the AIPR has demonstrated an ignorance of the fundamental principles of magic deception and psychological ploys.

Until the AIPR is prepared to try and understand magic and the precepts of deception their psychic research is worthless and they are wide open for any trickster, "clairvoyant" or "psychic" to convince them that they have psychic powers.

Dr Hough's other amazing assertion is: "This trick is never used by psychics." As no person anywhere in the world has ever scientifically proved that he/she is a genuine psychic it is quite true that the newspaper clipping trick or any other trick is never used by genuine psychics.

Dr Hough made a fateful assumption when writing his article on Project Hook - that the project was finished. In fact he became its final catch.

from page 2 →

It is also very significant that when the table was rapped to get around the possibility that the meter sounds revealed the answer, and the meter was covered to similarly guard against the very plain visual clues, John Rainbow's performance on both tests dropped from 100 percent to chance level. But perhaps, to be charitable, we can grant that Rainbow never noticed the clues.

There is one way to find out. That would be to repeat these tests, using a simpler device. I suggest that we use simple coin-toss in another room to direct an experimenter to switch on or off a simple battery-wire-resistor circuit. Thus there will be no conceivable way, short of exceedingly sophisticated electronics and/or collusion, that Rainbow would be able to obtain his claimed success rate unless he actually has the ability to dowse.

Shortly after the failed test, Robert Homer compiled a lengthy list of excuses for John Rainbow's not being able to collect the \$110,000. Homer said there were tape-recorders running. He complained that I "should just have quietly covered over the meter with [my] hand" rather than putting a piece of paper on it. (And continued to record results?) Homer continued, "The color and pattern of the table cloth were confusing . . ." Rainbow, he said, had problems with his pendulum, "making sure the thread suspension of the bob was exactly in the center . . ." There were "delays" and "distractions," claimed Homer. Well, one thing has been forgotten: John Rainbow operated 100 percent with the tape-recorders running, the table cloth, the stubborn pendulum, and all the delays and distractions—until the means of observing the state of the circuit directly were removed. Then, he failed.

I look forward to a further formal, definitive test of John Rainbow's dowsing ability. Both prizes—Smith's and mine—are still available. ●

◁ BALANCE SHEET - PROJECT HOOK ▷

<u>INCOME</u>	\$AUS	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	\$US	\$AUS
<u>Pre-Expose:</u>		<u>Robert Steiner's prior</u>		
Donations: D Smith	1,400.00	<u>arrival in Australia</u>		
P Adams	400.00	Passport	42.00	
Sale stamps	.90	Passport photos	13.99	
<u>Post-Expose:</u>		Stationery	61.24	
Sydney Collection (Lane Cove)	117.59	Magical equipment		
Melbourne Collection (Dinner)	240.00	for tour	77.99	
Donations: T Harding	17.50	Dr Curtaine's		
J Lapworth	5.10	test fees	00.00	
N Blyth	10.00	International		
Other	1,095.55	phone calls	248.46	
Psychology Seminar Honorarium	100.00	Inter'l telegrams	11.13	
	-----	Copying & postage		
TOTAL INCOME	\$3,386.64	publicity mat'l	80.00	
		Transport inc.		
		stopover Hawaii	202.35	
			-----	
		(Rate 0.8565)	737.16	= 861.00
		<u>Incurred in Australia</u>		
		Airfare USA/Aus rtn		1,273.00
		Hire Ringwood Hall		280.00
		Hire Lane Cove Hall		96.00
		Newspaper Ads		76.48
		Road Transport inc to ACT		106.00
		Film		14.50
		Printing		138.18
		Stationery		25.60
		Press releases		39.10
		Meals & Accomodation costs		92.17
		Books		10.00
		Copying		42.00
		Phone calls		134.00
		Postage		100.00
		Printing additional Skeptics		60.00
		Circular letter		72.88
		Sundries		10.40
				-----
DEFICIT	44.86	TOTAL EXPENDITURE		\$3,431.50
	-----			-----
TOTAL INCOME & DEFICIT	\$3,431.50			=====
	=====			=====

*I certify that the above balance sheet represents a true and accurate record of accounts of the Project.*

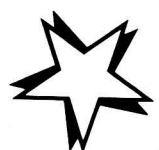
*Mark Plummer,  
Tour Organiser.*

ADDRESSES OF STATE BRANCHES

— OF THE AUSTRALIAN COMMITTEE

A.C.T.: Mr Mike Shearer 18 Quandong St, O'CONNOR 2601	Qld: Dr A G Wheeler, 18 Noreen St, CHAPEL HILL 4069	Vic: Mr James Gerrand, Box 1555P GPO, MELBOURNE 3001
N.S.W.: Mr J Smyrk, Box 647 DEEWHY 2099	S.A.: Mr L Eddie, 52 Miller St, NORTH UNLEY 5061	W.A.: Mr Dan Varney, 25 Headingly Rd, KALAMUNDA 6076

Tas & N.T.: No branches or  
representatives yet.



"I register my disapproval of the manner in which the Steve Terbot tour was handled. While I appreciate Bob Steiner's intention of alerting people to the frauds who exist in the "psychic" area, I believe he went too far in claiming that he had been undertaking laboratory testing for the past three years etc. as the means for initially gaining public attention. Had it not been for the co-operation of the Australian media, many less people would have fallen for his tale; this tends to detract from his contention that people put their faith in so-called "psychics" merely because of their showmanship abilities, since it appears to me that there are at least some genuine people who have some psychic talent worth investigating.

For this reason it should not be necessary to immediately dismiss everybody as being a fake, but rather, these people should be submitted to thorough scientific testing in order to give them the opportunity to demonstrate their ability, as the final proof of their claim.

I realize that few would be prepared to do so if they felt they would be subjected to biased treatment by scientific investigators, but an attempt needs to be made to find out if there really is any truth in the claims made by some of these people.

Gus Greco, Chadstone, Vic.

The reaction to the Bob Steiner (Steve Terbot) tour is recorded on the next few pages. Overall the reaction was

favourable and the Skeptics received the best publicity they have had since the Water Divining Test organised by Dick Smith.

**Suspicious** ★

IN THE wake of the Steve Terbot /Bob Steiner, Bert Newton, Derryn Hinch, Australian Skeptics Association fiasco, the latter organisation staged a dinner or claimed they were going to on Friday night. Steiner was to be the speaker. I received an invitation but doubted whether anyone would turn up. I was going to ring yesterday and see how it went but they probably gave the wrong phone number. Anyway, how do we know the Skeptics are fair dinkum?

# ★ Anger over hoax

## Viewers blast Newton show

Bert Newton's "Great Steve Terbot Hoax" has drawn an angry response from viewers.

Many have criticised Channel Nine for duping them for more than a week over the credentials of an American who called himself Steve Terbot and said he was a psychic.

"Yes, we have had some irate callers", a spokeswoman said. "Some said it was a farce and others felt they were cheated."

"The hoax, which had viewers around Australia intrigued, was revealed on Thursday night when Terbot admitted his real name was Bob Steiner and he had come to Australia to expose fake psychics."

He had acted the part to show how easy it was to con people and get money out of them. He said the ill and aged were most vulnerable.

Derryn Hinch, Philip Adams and Dick Smith had all offered to put up money if Terbot could perform a legitimate psychic act. But their money was never in danger. They, along with Newton and the Australian Skeptics Association were all part of the con.

Many viewers felt that the Newton show was playing the same game as the fake psychics by duping viewers for so long.

But the Executive Producer of the show Peter Faiman said yesterday many people were overreacting.

He claimed that the show had done more good than harm in warning people of the dangers of believing in fakes and con men.

"People will not easily forget Steve Terbot", he said. "We have shown how easy it is for people to be sucked in. These fake can rip people off, harm them and even kill them if they are not revealed."

Kevin Arnett, long time phenomena watcher, came in for his share of criticism too after he told Newtown he was skeptical on Thursday night.

Arnett has studied psychics and faith healers for years and is perceived by viewers to be a believer. Many felt let down by his comments.

But Faiman came out fighting for Arnett.

"He has studied these things for years but that doesn't mean he accepts them without challenge. He is far too intelligent for that. He has an enquiring mind and said that he thought quite fairly."

Newton himself was terribly careful not to declare himself on the network

one way or the other and we now know why Hinch could afford to be so dogmatic and smile when he put up the cash.

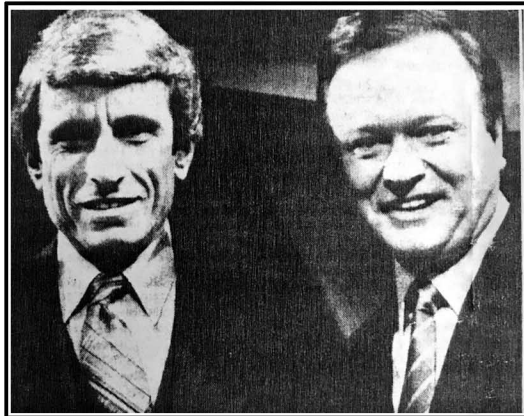
Although to be fair he said his \$10,000 offer for a genuine psychic still stood.

My first response was anger when the hoax was revealed but on reflection I believe the exercise did achieve something.

It showed how an amateurish skeptic from America with a few magic tricks up his sleeve could be quite capable of ripping off vulnerable people who as a last hope, believe in a lot of mumbo jumbo and place their faith in medicine men.

I too have never seen a genuine example of psychic phenomena which could be proved under controlled conditions beyond any reasonable doubt. But I have seen a lot of fast talking con men, and women, line their pockets at the expense of others.

It is also fair to point out that this exercise was carried out during a non ratings period and the station cannot be accused of grandstanding for ratings points.



Bert Newton and Bob Steiner, alias Steve Terbot.

Your reporter is delighted with his sharp sight and accurate memory — and a nudge from the lady sitting next to him.

"It had just never occurred to me that mediums and psychics could use accomplices in the audience to be so accurate in their readings".

Julie Dethbridge, Melbourne.

"Excellent: I watched with interest the Bert Newton show last night, and your 'unmasking' of Terbot ... Eric and I have been suspicious for some time that you might try this hoax on us. But both of us have been so busy this past month that neither of us had time to think that this might be it".

Dr Michael Hough, Vice-President Australian Institute of Psychic Research, Sydney.

"Firstly my congratulations you and your associates for a magnificently executed performance - you must like living dangerously, for when I think of how many people were involved and could have made a critical slip - however, it went superbly and I think proved very dramatically the point you tried to make".

Julie Edwards, Lara, Vic.

"I would like to congratulate you on bringing Steve Terbot/Steiner to Australia". Catherine Craddock, Sydney.

"Congratulations to you and all involved with the Steiner Stunt ... I suppose I should have been alerted by Phillip's column of May 5/6th, unfortunately it was too good and I thought he was really giving this latest visitor, the 'works'."

Danny Varney, magician, Perth.

★ I then turned to 'Tonight with Bert Newton' (Channel 9 at 10 pm) just in time to see the end of what has turned out to be a long-running confidence-trick involving a bogus psychic, Steve Turbo, alias Bob Steiner. A trick, I should add, devised and presented by what should be a responsible television network and the Sceptics Society. "The reason," said Bert Newton, "was to aid people who are going to fakes and frauds." Is it really the job of a night-time chat show to warn of fakes by setting up its own fakery? Is it out of genuine social concern or is it just a cheap trick to attract viewers?

— MICHAEL SHMITH

**TV REVIEW**

# Hinch Cops burst

**★ Radio**

DERRYN Hinch was assailed by his former fans on 3AW this week for his part in the Steve Terbot hoax.

Angry listeners declared that Hinch's credibility rating had sunk to zero. Others made caustic references to Hinch's professionalism and sincerity while others predictably insisted they were finished for good with the Hinch program and the Bert Newton Tonight Show.

Hinch too caused something of a flat for this columnist.

I had written an item (subsequently scraped) suggesting that Hinch might have to part with his \$10,000. Mr turbo had been thoroughly convincing, I thought, and Hinch had simply closed his mind to the psychic's powers.

What a fool I felt when the Newton show jumped the column and revealed the true identity of Mr Turbo (Bob Steiner) week earlier than expected.

But wasn't a bigger fool to have believed Mr turbo to be real?

"The person you brought from America shall see my wrath on his statement prayer brings nothing. Sir I am a devout Catholic and what I an able to do does come from God".

Louis John Youngman, Eastlakes, NSW.

"Yes, I was taken in. But I trusted you, and you did not trust me ..."

R Collinson, Melbourne.

## ★ Concerned viewer challenges over Terbot affair

★ THE Steve Terbot/Bob Steiner hoax on the Bert Newton Show, aided and abetted by Derryn Hinch, caused much public controversy.

Ern Allway of Hampton is an avid Newton watch, television viewer and reader of this column.

His letter was amongst many received in the wake of the whole affair. His comments are fairly indicative of public reaction to the 'stunt'. He also takes me to task for the way I reported reaction to the hoax. It is published below.

HAVING already vented my spleen to Channel Nine, I now take you to task for your article headed Anger Over Hoax.

Responsible journalism and telev-

sion stations in dealing with the public MUST show credibility.

You all take the public as gullible idiots and to be used to suit your ends.

This brings a form of "Yellow Press" into the realm of journalism and television, adding a tag which I bring into this disgraceful episode with great regret.

You, Peter Faiman, Dick Smith, Philip Adams and Hinch, by way of saying their money was never in jeopardy, get away with a form of conspiracy to cheat the public at large.

You state your first response was anger, but then you went on to make the same excuses that Newton and the station handed out.

Why didn't you stick to your first impulse and show the station and program up for the contempt it deserved

After all it is the public you are responsible to — and not to be a mouth-piece of the like of television stations.

As regards to Channel Nine, I hope they will live to regret their double standards.

By double standards, I mean that Peter Faiman, as the supremo of the Don Lane Show, directed many programs involving one Doris Stokes.

Lane dissociated himself/stood in the background as to believing or not. Never at any stage did Faiman say that Stokes was a fake. The Hoax still continues with regards to Doris Stokes.

As far as I am concerned Channel Nine did more to encourage the gullible public, through the Stokes appearances, to go in droves to the fakes and

con men in their belief that Channel Nine wouldn't put anything over them.

They had trusted the station's credibility. Coming back to your article you say, "Newton himself was terribly careful not to declare himself to the network one way or the other."

(Mr Allway made a libellous comment here which cannot be published.)

It would appear to me that someone in the network suddenly had a conscience and decided to pull the plug quickly because the whole concept had got out of hand.

After all it appeared that the finality of the conspiracy was brought forward from May 21 to May 17 and to treat it as a service to the public.

Throughout the community we all become alerted to rogues and conmen and we have no desire to see these people gracing our television screen.

Finally Mr Armsden, in your last paragraph you say, "It is also fair to point out that this exercise was carried out during a non ratings period and the station cannot be accused of grandstanding for ratings points." You are wrong again.

From an ailing comper and station, Channel Nine would do anything to get an audience.

Mr. Armsden, it would well be for you to consider which side of the fence to go. The public at large is becoming fed up with the two bob each way comper.

★ reprinted with permission from "THE AGE"

★ reprinted with permission from the "SUNDAY PRESS"

**THERE'S A FRAUD IN YOUR FUTURE DEPT.**

Hi, MAD reader's! I'm **Howard Gosell**, and I'm famous for **telling it like it is!** I deal only in **truth and reality!** Which is why **MAD Magazine**, in its ridiculous fashion, has chosen **me** to interview a man who deals in the **unbelievable and unreal world of Mysticism and The Occult!** His name is **Cosmo Mantra**, President of **Occult Enterprises!** He's

# MAD'S OCCULT PROMOTER OF THE YEAR

Mr. Mantra, you've made millions of dollars in Astrology . . . Mysticism . . . and Psychic Phenomenon! Tell us . . . what got you into The Occult?

My fascination with the unknown, Howard! I never knew what a **FORTUNE** there is in this stuff!

But, what qualified you?

For years, I sold patent medicines and miracle-cure elixirs to the crowds at carnivals and sideshows!

And from that, you discovered the key to the mysteries of The Occult?

No . . . from that, I discovered that people will swallow **ANYTHING!**



ARTIST: JACK DAVIS WRITER: FRANK JACOBS

Behold . . . our Séance Chamber! Through one of our Mediums, here a seeker can speak with loved ones who have crossed over to the Other Side!

You mean talk with the dead???

"Dead" is a no-no here, Howard! No one dies in The Occult! They simply **MOVE ON . . .** and leave a forwarding address!

Your departed husband will now speak . . . through me!

Harry . . . is that you???

This is Harry! I am speaking to you from the Hereafter!

Are you happy, there, Harry?

Yes, except that everything is so expensive here! The robes—the wings—the harp!

How can I help?!

Donate half my insurance money to Occult Enterprises! They'll get it to me by Divine Messenger! Make it cash! They don't take checks here!!





Boy ... it sure looks to me like you're fleeing that woman!

How can you say that, Howard?!? We're bringing her JOY!  
But everyone knows you can't send money to the Hereafter!

Hah!! That's the typical reaction of a non-believer!  
Yeah ...? How will we know if Harry got the money?!?

Oh, that's easy! Tomorrow ... through that same Medium ... Harry will communicate a RECEIPT!



Sorry to interrupt, Chief, but this follower has a complaint!

Darn right I do! I paid to talk to my departed Sister, and they told me that she WASN'T IN!

That often happens when you try to communicate station-to-station! You should have made it person-to-person! The extra charge is well worth it!



I DID make it person-to-person ... and the Medium still couldn't reach her!

Then she's probably unlisted—requiring cosmic assistance by our Afterlife Operator ... for an additional fee, of course!

I'll pay ANYTHING to talk to her!

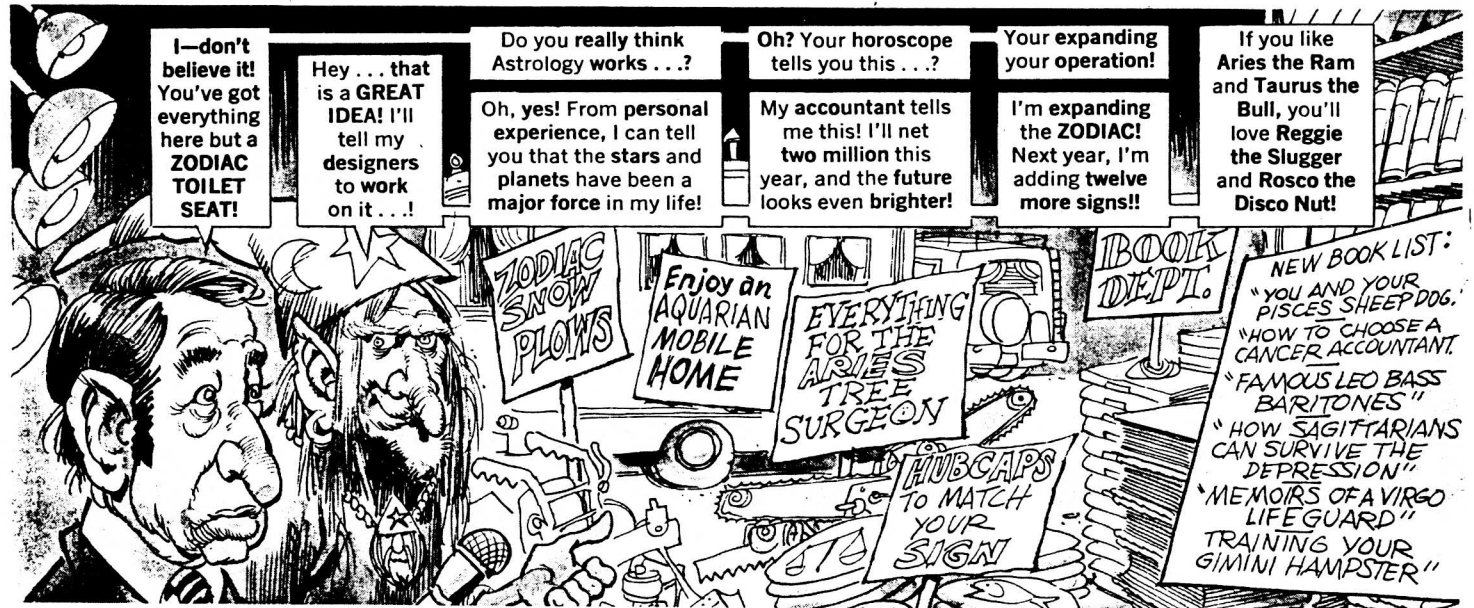
With faith like yours, how can you fail?!



Behold, our Astrology Section! The ancients believed in the forces of stars and planets!

But this is nothing more than BLATANT MERCHANDISING!

The ancients ALSO believed in Number One!



I—don't believe it! You've got everything here but a ZODIAC TOILET SEAT!

Hey ... that is a GREAT IDEA! I'll tell my designers to work on it ...!

Do you really think Astrology works ...?

Oh, yes! From personal experience, I can tell you that the stars and planets have been a major force in my life!

Oh? Your horoscope tells you this ...?

My accountant tells me this! I'll net two million this year, and the future looks even brighter!

Your expanding your operation!

I'm expanding the ZODIAC! Next year, I'm adding twelve more signs!!

If you like Aries the Ram and Taurus the Bull, you'll love Reggie the Slugger and Rosco the Disco Nut!

ZODIAC SNOW PLOWS

Enjoy an AQUARIAN MOBILE HOME

EVERYTHING FOR THE ARIES TREE SURGEON

HUBCAPS TO MATCH YOUR SIGN

BOOK DEPT.

NEW BOOK LIST:

- "YOU AND YOUR PISCES SHEEP DOG."
- "HOW TO CHOOSE A CANCER ACCOUNTANT."
- "FAMOUS LEO BASS BARITONES"
- "HOW SAGITTARIANS CAN SURVIVE THE DEPRESSION"
- "MEMOIRS OF A VIRGO LIFE GUARD"
- "TRAINING YOUR GIMINI HAMPSTER"

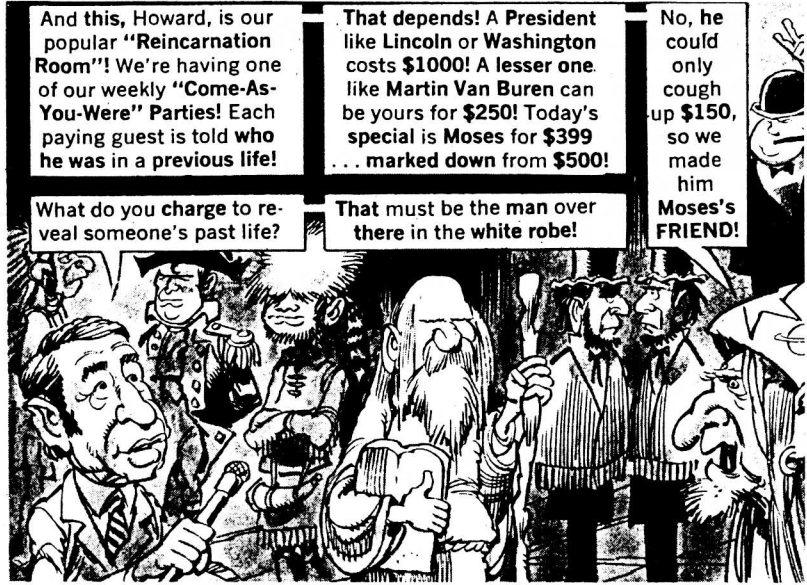


Chief, a woman is on the phone, complaining about our Daily Horoscope in the newspaper!

What's her beef...?

She's a Libra, and her forecast today said to get out and meet people! But when she backed her car out of the driveway, she lost control—and smashed into a lampost!

Tell her her car's a Pisces—and ITS forecast today was to STAY HOME!



And this, Howard, is our popular "Reincarnation Room"! We're having one of our weekly "Come-As-You-Were" Parties! Each paying guest is told who he was in a previous life!

What do you charge to reveal someone's past life?

That depends! A President like Lincoln or Washington costs \$1000! A lesser one like Martin Van Buren can be yours for \$250! Today's special is Moses for \$399... marked down from \$500!

That must be the man over there in the white robe!

No, he could only cough up \$150, so we made him Moses's FRIEND!

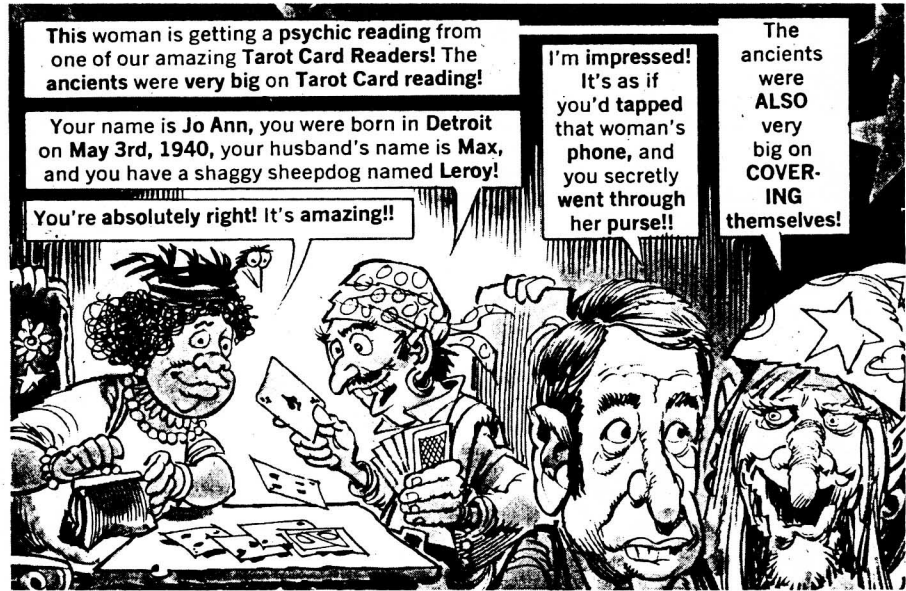


Who's that fellow at the piano!

He's the reincarnation of Schubert, composing his Unfinished Symphony!

But his playing is terrible! It sounds awful!

Now you know why Schubert left it UNFINISHED!



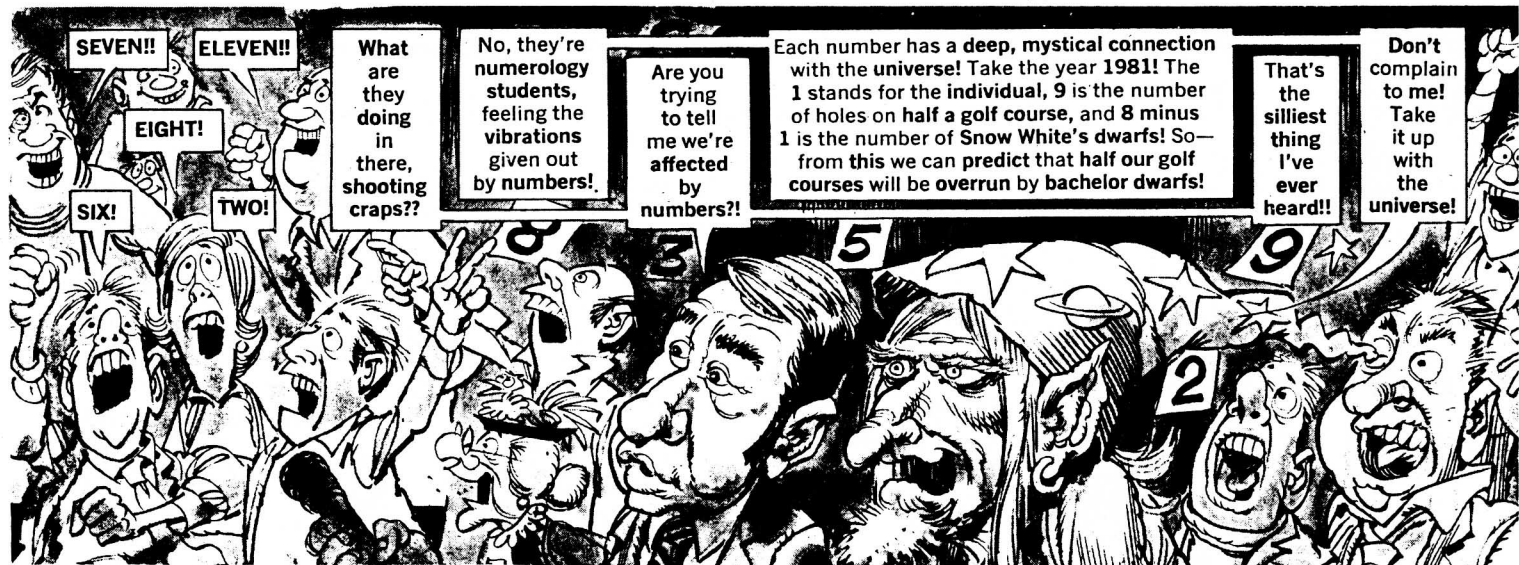
This woman is getting a psychic reading from one of our amazing Tarot Card Readers! The ancients were very big on Tarot Card reading!

Your name is Jo Ann, you were born in Detroit on May 3rd, 1940, your husband's name is Max, and you have a shaggy sheepdog named Leroy!

You're absolutely right! It's amazing!!

I'm impressed! It's as if you'd tapped that woman's phone, and you secretly went through her purse!!

The ancients were ALSO very big on COVERING themselves!



SEVEN!!

ELEVEN!!

EIGHT!

SIX!

TWO!

What are they doing in there, shooting craps??

No, they're numerology students, feeling the vibrations given out by numbers!

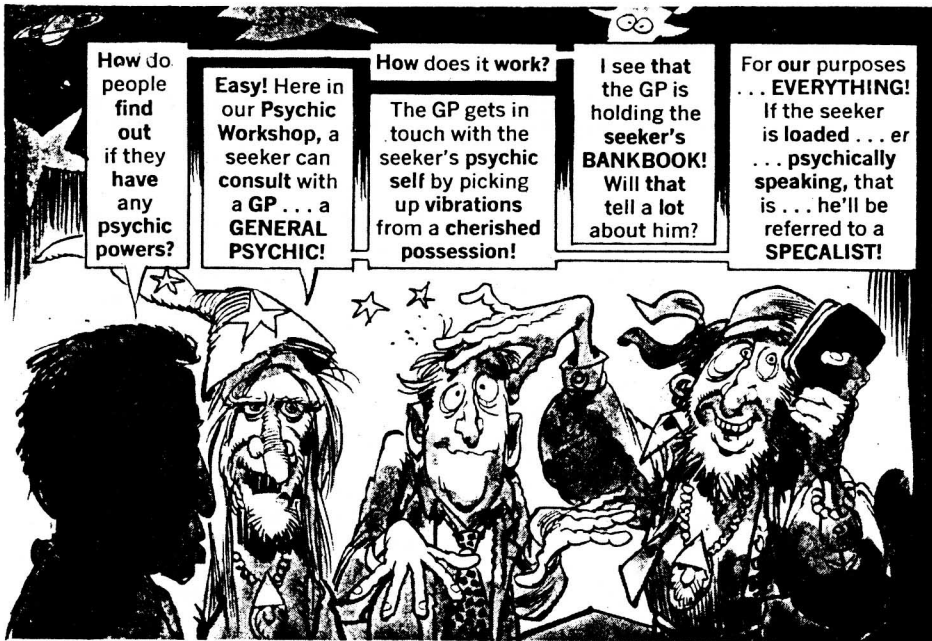
Are you trying to tell me we're affected by numbers?!

Each number has a deep, mystical connection with the universe! Take the year 1981! The 1 stands for the individual, 9 is the number of holes on half a golf course, and 8 minus 1 is the number of Snow White's dwarfs! So—from this we can predict that half our golf courses will be overrun by bachelor dwarfs!

That's the silliest thing I've ever heard!!

Don't complain to me! Take it up with the universe!

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How do people find out if they have any psychic powers?

Easy! Here in our **Psychic Workshop**, a seeker can consult with a GP... a **GENERAL PSYCHIC!**

How does it work? The GP gets in touch with the seeker's psychic self by picking up vibrations from a cherished possession!

I see that the GP is holding the seeker's **BANKBOOK!** Will that tell a lot about him?

For our purposes... **EVERYTHING!** If the seeker is loaded... er... psychically speaking, that is... he'll be referred to a **SPECIALIST!**



He's being **CARESSSED** by that beautiful girl wearing a see-through gown...!

**SHE's** the specialist! She's getting in touch with his **PSYCHIC CENTER** through the art of **COSMIC TOUCH** and **SPIRITUAL MASSAGE!**

It doesn't look all that **SPIRITUAL!** Each man must tap his psyche in his own way!!

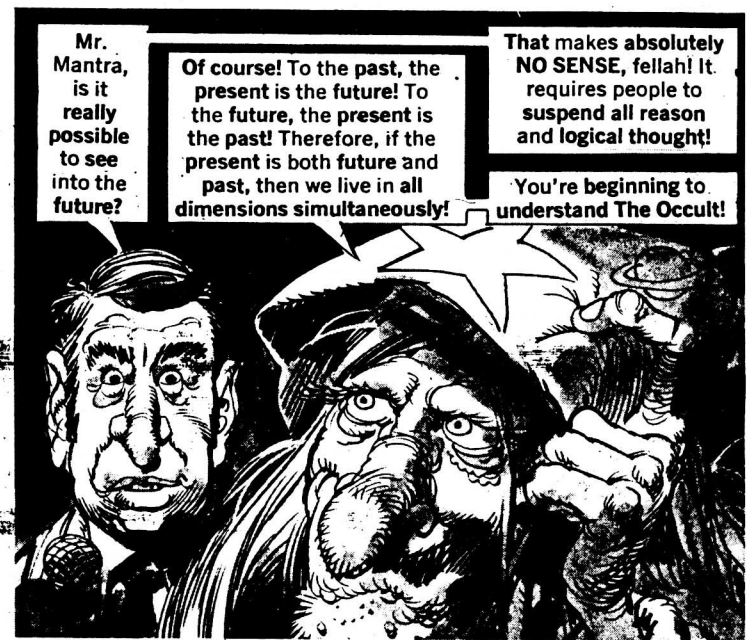


Why is that **Palm-Reader** being thrown out of here??

He was my most trusted **Reader!** But now, we've stripped him of his sacred robe, and confiscated his **mandala!**

What did he do? He committed the worst sin of all... the unforgivable, infamous deed I cannot allow!

He mentioned **SATAN!** Worse! He predicted **BAD NEWS** for a cash customer!



Mr. Mantra, is it really possible to see into the future?

Of course! To the past, the present is the future! To the future, the present is the past! Therefore, if the present is both future and past, then we live in all dimensions simultaneously!

That makes absolutely **NO SENSE**, fellah! It requires people to suspend all reason and logical thought! You're beginning to understand **The Occult!**



Tell me Sir... what do **YOU** believe in??!

That there are forces beyond our control that affect our lives!

You mean the stars? The planets?

I mean the meddlers who claim I'm bilking the public and want to close me down! Fortunately, I've stashed away my profits in **Swiss Banks!**

Why not invest in **stocks... or bonds?**

Are you kidding? Who knows what they'll be worth in six months?! Only an **IDIOT** would try to predict the future!



This is **Howard Gosell**, returning you to **MAD Magazine...!!**



# BOB STEINER VISITS URI

*Ol' Spoon-bender is back*

By Don Morris

On Thursday evening, June 14th, at the San Francisco Bay Athletic Club, an audience of 500 people were witness to an incredible display of the powers of the human mind. Uri Geller, the Israeli-born psychic, amazed almost everyone with his unbelievable demonstrations of mindreading, levitating a 200-pound man, moving material objects, bending metal, and materializing and dematerializing matter, all by the power of his mind alone!

That at least was the way most people in the audience might have described the recent appearance of "psychic" Uri Geller, bete noire of the skeptical community and shameless purveyor of parlour tricks in the guise of supernatural powers. It is certainly the way Geller would have described it. But a handful of Bay Area Skeptics who paid \$10 each to attend were less impressed. We agreed only that Uri's performance was, indeed, unbelievable.

This is a blow-by-blow report of what took place at that performance, based on personal attendance backed up by a careful analysis of an audio recording I made there.\* Our attendance at Geller's show followed an earlier Uri Geller Night at BAS, in which BAS Chair Bob Steiner showed videotapes of Geller interviews, and performed typical Geller tricks. These preparations made the show much more interesting for us than for the average audience member, because we knew what we were looking at.

The program began with a brief introduction by someone named Sonja, who presumably represented Western Athletics Club, sponsors of the event (we understand Geller was paid \$10,000 by Western for his appearance). She gushed about Uri's abilities, citing the scientists who had tested and "verified" his powers, mentioning in particular the U.S. Naval Weapons Center ("...cannot be explained scientifically"), Warner von Braun ("...I cannot give a scientific explanation") and SRI. She seemed impressed by these names; no doubt because she doesn't know the full story behind them. [You'll find details of the SRI test of Geller in James Randi's "The Truth About

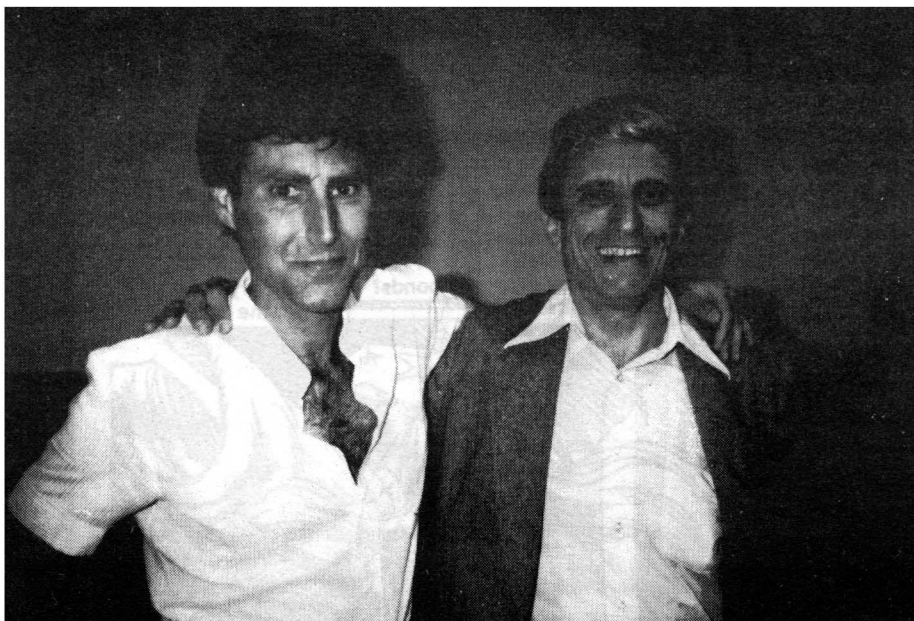
Uri Geller" and Kaman & Marks' "Psychology of a Psychic"--Ed.] She concluded that Uri was a man who "uses the powers of his mind to the fullest," Uri's slogan.

Uri then bounced up to the stage that had been set up in the gymnasium. During the next 71 minutes he performed about ten demonstrations of the powers of his mind. The first five were simple parlor tricks on the order of those found in books for children to keep themselves amused on rainy days.

The first stunt consisted of a woman from the audience writing the name of a color on a blackboard at the back of the stage while Uri looked away. She wrote "pink" but Uri was unable to "get it." This was blamed on the fact that she didn't follow his instructions to "write a simple, basic color, not a shade." She tried again, wrote "red," and Uri got it. He also asked the audience "Who was thinking of yellow?" In the audience of 500, somebody was found to admit the crime, and naturally Geller claimed that the confusing signals had thrown him off. [A good trick; naturally he'd get a hit in that size audience, and abashed viewers will try to discipline themselves in future tricks by cleansing their minds of disruptive thoughts--Ed].

The woman who admitted to thinking of yellow was characterized by Geller as a good sender and invited up on stage for the next demonstration. This time Uri held a bulletin board in his lap to hide his view of the blackboard while the new woman printed the name of a city, below that making a simple drawing, and below that writing a number between 1 and 100. She was then instructed to draw a TV-screen-like box around everything, then erase the entire blackboard.

Geller made five attempts, then correctly guessed the city as Cairo. At this point he went into a lengthy explanation of how he visualizes a blank TV screen, etc., and how the audience can try it at home with friends. He also gives a rather curious explanation for the *deja vu* experience, saying it's the mind sending telepathic waves ahead of you while you walk...[huh?]



URI and BOB

Fellow magicians in a moment of camaraderie

Now he tried to guess the drawing. After asking the audience to "send" the target to him telepathically, and following the usual dramatics, Uri said with some hesitation: "Okay, I hope I'm not wrong--but it's, it was, it's like a heart." There was a moment's hesitation, then Uri asked, surprised, "Wrong?" Confused, he asked what the drawing was. To the woman's reply, Uri responded with great surprise: "A UFO! Gosh, I should have gotten that!"

But the audience protested, "It was a hat!", and when the woman redrew her image, it was a simple UFO that could easily have been mistaken for a hat. Uri attempted to show that it could also have been a heart, by drawing a heart shape over the UFO and saying "I did not get the UFO, but what I did get is I guess this part, and I thought it was a heart. But look, I was very close, right?" One alternate possibility: whoever signals Uri tried to spell 'hat' but Uri took it for "heart."

We recommend you consult *The Amateur Magician's Handbook* by Henry Hay if you want to learn how to do Uri's trick yourself.

The number guess was skipped because Uri said he saw the number "so I have to be honest about that." The third demonstration of telepathy was a variation on the standard magician's blindfold effect. Uri had himself blindfolded with a borrowed woman's scarf. One woman previously invited up to the stage selected another woman from the audience. She came up to the stage and paused in front of Uri just long enough for him to do the necessary peeking, then he went into his routine. He described the details of her dress, while she walked back and forth behind him. When he was done, he introduced the woman as a Russian psychic now living in San Francisco (a bizarre twist).

A fourth demonstration of telepathy involved another woman from the audience trying to send Uri a color. After first confirming that green was not the color, he guessed blue. Interesting to note that when asking for colors, Uri always insists on a simple, basic color, not a shade. This trims the alternatives down to six or seven, a manageable number if he uses an audience signaller (there are other methods as well). Incidentally, Uri wrote his guess on a notepad borrowed from a member of the audience -- none other than our own BAS Chair, Bob Steiner.

Uri now spent some time telling the audience about discovering his powers as a kid, and gave a condensed and highly colored version of his arrival in America at the invitation of former astronaut Edgar Mitchell, when he was taken to SRI for extensive testing. He mentioned the SRI report being published in the prestigious *Nature* magazine, and reference to the controversy he has created. Of course, he left out a few minor details, like his complete debunking in Isreal and the sorry misreporting of the SRI incident.

Back to another parlour trick. Through the entire show, remember, Uri has been saying he's not a magician. A magician, he says, is somebody who does card tricks and pulls rabbits out of a hat. Since Uri guesses colors, cities and women's dresses, that means he's not a magician. This of course plays to the audience's naive presumption that if there's no deck of cards and no rabbits- and-top-hat combo, there's no magic act going on.

Having insisted he was no magician, Uri went directly to the tired old "levitation" trick in which a 200 pound man is lifted from his chair by four other men using "only" two fingers of each hand-- plus some mentalist

mumbo-jumbo to convince you that the audience's psychic powers cause the man to actually lose weight. Interesting, Bob Steiner did this same trick at Uri Geller Night at BAS the previous Saturday night.

In the next demonstration, children were brought up on stage, where they stand around yelling "Move!" at a watch. The watch was set at three minutes to eight when they started, then Geller handed it to a young kid, and later took the watch back and announced that it now read one o'clock. In a classic bit of Geller logic, he adds "and the stem is untouched!" Obviously you're obliged to take his word for that. Uri insisted the kids were the ones with the psychic power. (How many hours will that kid spend trying to repeat the trick before concluding it was all a fraud? Or will he continue to believe in spite of the evidence -- like so many others?)

Now came the watch trick. Uri asked everyone who brought broken watches to bring them up to the stage -- but first to *wind them up*, a peculiar preliminary. No electronic watches and no watches without insides were allowed. Uri kept referring to the watches as "broken," and "completely broken" mentioning broken springs inside the watches.

When the watches were up on stage, the audience was obliged to yell "Work!" over and over, while Uri pawed through the watches on the table, picking out those which were ticking (this he refers to as "working") and asking the owner of each how long it was "broken" (average: four years). Uri exclaimed over each ticking watch and invited the audience's amazement at this miracle.

He ridiculed the claim that the trick works by warming congealed oils in the watches, and again claims (with no attempt at substantiation) that he is fixing watches with broken mainsprings. His explanation: "There is a materialization that happens when we all shout the word 'work,' if the spring is broke, it is not broken anymore -- I mean there is some krrr of a, a materialization, and the spring is mended!"

[Editor's comment: In case anybody actually needs an explanation of this typically misleading fraud, just stop and remember why your watch is sitting in the drawer at home. Because it's broken? Because the spring is snapped? No. Because it stopped ticking. That's how you know it doesn't work it stops keeping reliable time. Wind it up, give it a shake, and it starts ticking again. But after minutes, hours or days it stops again. Of course, by that time Uri's show is over and nobody can compare notes on how many of the two dozen miracles have stopped running again by the following day. Meanwhile, Uri adds two dozen more "fixed" watches to his reputation.]

[Notice too Uri's reference to broken springs -- when was the last time you had a watch with a broken spring? Does Uri select out the broken watches? Does he check them first? No, he just repeatedly refers to the watches as "completely broken" and mentions broken springs over and over, as if that was the principle reason for stopped watches. In fact, as any watch repair shop will be happy to tell you, the vast majority of watches can be repaired by a simple cleaning.]

[Notice, too, that Uri doesn't take a *specific* watch and try to make it work -- he jumbles them all together in a pile, then picks out those that are ticking -- the ones that were susceptible to the wind-the-stem instruction. The deck is stacked in Uri's favor. The unquestioning gullibility of the audience does the rest.]

At this point there was a power failure in the room and everyone sat in the dark for ten minutes or so until the

fuse was repaired. Uri disclaimed responsibility for blowing the fuse, and answered questions about his personal life. One member of the audience turned out to be parapsychologist Julian Issacks of the local JFK University, who stood up to say, enthusiastically, "I've been doing a PhD on metal bending for the past five years, and I've found that people like you (Geller) who can do metal bending here, can also improve your ability if you practice. So I'm into training people to get bigger and better bendings [laughter]. And we can use it (metal bending skills) for all sorts of other purposes." He invited people interested in the subject to contact him at JFK University's parapsychology department. It must be a sorry testament to the quality of research at JFK if Mr. Issacks is able to research metal bending for five years and not discover its fraudulent background.

Now to the grand finale, bending keys and spoons. Here we get to see the act for which Uri is most famous -- and a most peculiar episode it was, too.

First, the audience brought up spoons and keys to be bent, adding them to the pile of spoons and keys Uri has collected before the show ... uh, wait a second here. Keys and spoons *Uri* collected before the show? Doesn't that seem a little suspicious? Why would he need to collect some in advance? Is he expecting a shortage? Doesn't it seem likely that practically everybody in the audience will have brought a spoon? Could there be more here than meets the eye?

Having thus raised a suspicious note to the whole proceedings, Uri blandly states "Now all these spoons are yours, no spoons have chemicals on them, none of them are prepared." This shows Uri's ability to make a statement flatly contradictory to the audience's observation, and get away with it. It's the sort of thing a regular magician wouldn't even attempt, because it's poor showmanship.

Uri picked out a spoon from the pile ("randomly," no doubt), had a man from the audience hold it while he stroked it, and produced a thoroughly bent key that easily broke in half. Uri's explanation: a very small piece of the spoon handle has dematerialized. Our suggestion: the spoon, contrary to Uri's statement, is specially made and prepared in advance.

Next, he asked the audience to examine their own keys and see if any had bent while this spoonbending trick was going on. Marvelously, out of 500 people in the audience, a few discover a slight bend in their keys that they claim never to have noticed before. Uri predicted that they would continue to bend for several hours. Nobody will be in a position to test that claim, of course.

Now Uri picked out a large soup spoon from the pile and brought some small children up on stage to help him bend it. This is apparently not a prepared spoon, because someone from the audience identified it. Instead, Uri will bend it himself while claiming the children are bending it with their psychic powers.

Under the pretext of directing the children on the stage, Uri turned his back to the audience while switching the spoon from hand to hand along with the microphone. He gave the spoon to the girl, and told her to hold it lightly while stroking it and yelling "bend!" With the excuse of getting a better angle for the video camera, Uri kept handling the spoon and moving back and forth in front of the girl. He announced the spoon is "curling up," then finally took the spoon triumphantly from the girl to show to the camera.

At that moment I was able clearly to see Uri bend the spoon some more with both his hands. At the same time, he told the audience the spoon was still moving. "Now she did that and not me," Geller said as the girl left the stage.

While the audience applauded, it was clear to me that Uri again bent the spoon with both hands, again announcing "it is still bending, look at it now -- it might even stop at 90 degrees if we leave it here!"

That ended the performance, which was followed by a reception. As the audience slowly trickled out into the street they were met by representatives of BAS (Dan Sabsay, Bob Steiner and myself), who handed out flyers inviting them to phone LA TRUTH for an alternative explanation of the Geller effect, as well as a sample issue of BASIS. The back of the flyer listed books the audience members could read to improve their understanding of Mr. Geller.

The audience members were surprisingly receptive to the flyers, some of them clearly not being quite so gullible as Uri would like. If anyone reads any of the books on the suggested reading list, they will find their skepticism reinforced.

Believe it or not, we also handed a flyer to Geller himself. Maybe he will subscribe? We also managed to get a photo of Uri Geller and Bob Steiner, Chair of BAS. Geller of course didn't know that Bob was head of a major skeptics group and himself a magician -- Geller would have to be psychic to know that.

Another interesting sidelight is that Geller appeared to suffer no ill effects from the presence in the audience of four or five psychics and magicians, even though Geller claims his failure to perform under properly controlled conditions is due entirely to the negative psychic influence of skeptics and magicians.

A careful listening to the audio tapes I made led me to appreciate all the more Uri Geller the showman, the clever way he manipulates his audience, the constant stream of suggestions and insupportable statements, the careful definitions that lead the audience astray the appeal to their sympathies by ridiculing his opposition.

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Books which deal with this topic (including detailed explanations as to how Geller does his magic tricks):

- The Truth About Uri Geller, by James (The Amazing) Randi
- Science: Good, Bad and Bogus, by Martin Gardner
- The Psychology of the Psychic, by David Marks and Richard Kammann
- ESP and Parapsychology: A Critical Re-evaluation, by C.E.M. Hansel
- Miracle Mongers and Their Methods, by Houdini.

Books available locally and also from Prometheus Books, 700 East Amherst St., Buffalo, NY 14215.

# PINKNEY'S MOONSHINE

Prominent "Bent Spoon" nominee, John Pinkney, recently (People, May28) took Phillip Adams to task for reporting the award to Mr Pinkney of one of our "Bent Spoons" for 1983.

In another report in the same column, entitled "Moon book hit the mark", Mr Pinkney draws parallels between Jules Verne's novel "From The Earth to The Moon" and the NASA moonshots. He describes the Verne novel as "probably the most astoundingly accurate piece of science fiction ever written".

Leaving aside the accuracy of Verne's book, consider some of the "facts" Mr Pinkney uses to support his contention.

\* PINKNEY - "Resemblance between reality and Verne's 'fantasy' did not begin emerging until 1970 when NASA fired its second moon shot".

FACT - NASA's second moon shot, Apollo 12 occurred during the period November 14-24 1969.

\* PINKNEY - "Verne's three man moonship was fired from a 'Columbiad' cannon. NASA called its three man vessel Columbia"

FACT - Leaving aside the historical importance of the name "Columbia" to Americans, the Apollo 12 command module was called "Yankee Clipper". The Apollo 11 c/m was called "Columbia" so one of his "facts" must be wrong.

\* PINKNEY - "The Verne ship's escape velocity was 25,000 mph - the Columbia shrugged off Earth's pull at 24,000 mph".

Fact - Escape velocity from Earth is approx. 25,000 mph. This fact was known well before 1865. At only 24,000 mph, Columbia would not have made it. Two wrong there Mr P.

\* PINKNEY - "Both fictional and real life space ships carried compressed food".

FACT - Presumably Pinkney means "concentrated". Verne, using the knowledge of his day, would have recognised that space and weight limitations would preclude the carriage of sides of beef and bags of potatoes. Incidentally Verne included live chickens among the provisions. NASA didn't.

\* PINKNEY - "Verne's ship lost oxygen, froze up and failed to land. After an explosion, NASA's craft also leaked oxygen and failed to land.

FACT - This was Apollo 13, the third moon shot. Pinkney does not distinguish between any of them. Perhaps he thinks there was only one?

\* PINKNEY - "Verne's craft splashed down in the Pacific Ocean and was picked up by a specially designed craft. NASA's mode of splashdown and retrieval were almost identical."

FACT - Apart from the fact that the Pacific Ocean is common to both (hardly surprising considering it is the largest body of water on Earth) nothing else was "almost identical". NASA retrieved its various Apollos by helicopter and loaded them on aircraft carriers - Verne did not.

Pinkney concludes that far from being science fiction, Verne's book is "better known today as an uncanny collection of psychic visions". That would no doubt have been a revelation to Verne who used the known scientific and engineering facts of his time to extrapolate in time an adventurous story, an art in which he was skilled. Mr Pinkney ignores the readily obtainable facts of Verne's time to produce a "Bent Spoon" quality load of rubbish, a skill at which he seems peculiarly adept.

The only coincidence that the two stories that is in any way unusual is the one Pinkney missed. That is that Cape Canaveral and the site of Verne's cannon are both in Florida. Bad luck, John, better stick to ghosts, they are harder to refute.

Barry Williams



DON'T FORGET TO  
WATCH "60 MINUTES"  
ON SEPTEMBER 30th



# An astronomer's view of astrology

By PHILIP A. IANNA

**One of the impressive things about astrology today is the extent to which it pervades our culture. More people know their sun sign than know their own blood type, and you can find zodiac motifs on almost anything.**

For example, the ANZ bank has advertised a Zodiac Savers Plan. To some this is just amusing, but to many, astrology is the space age science, the guide to their personal lives and business.

Several companies have been reported to use horoscopes to find the optimum time to introduce a new product into the marketplace, or to judge for what job a particular person might be best suited. For a kidnapping trial in Cincinnati several years ago, the defence attorneys consulted astrologers for guidance with the selection of the jury. In a Florida rape case, there was an attempt to have the charges dismissed on the grounds unfavourable celestial influences were at the root of the crime.

How you react to these stories no doubt depends to some degree on whether or not you see astrology as valid, or invalid, or somewhere in between. Scientists have been inclined to ignore astrology or dismiss it as nonsense. But really we should ask: Might astrology, in fact, work? Have astrologers found fundamental laws governing our behaviour? What is the mechanism, if any, producing the effects claimed?

Astrology is a system whereby the patterns of planets in the sky can be interpreted to reveal personality and predict events. We perhaps all know the kinds of things. If you are born with sun in Capricorn, you are said to be neat, methodical and have an extreme capacity for hard work. Planetary patterns are also alleged to yield information about the life of a business, a building, or a whole nation. Recently, John Milich of New York City suggested a relationship between transits by the moon of Sirius (the Dog Star) and the enactment there of the dog litter law, the so-called "pooper scooper" statute.

The typical natal horoscope maps, for a specified time of birth and location, the positions of the planets with respect to the signs of the zodiac and the twelve houses. The horoscope analysis is carried out by combining — or synthesizing — the many various indicators of the chart. The astrologer might look at the distribution of the planets around the chart, the occurrence of planets in cardinal, mutable, or fixed signs, the ascendant sign, the sun sign, the moon sign, other planets in the signs, planets in the astrological houses, the angular relationships (or aspects) of the planets, the parts of fortune, asteroid locations, hypothetical planets, and a few other things. If all the chart factors that have been proposed were to be included — a few thousand million — it would take about 300km of computer printout to list them. The interpretation of all this information is yet another matter. Astrologers often do not agree with one another about the factors in the chart; there are no Maxwell's equations of astrology.

All of this bears little resemblance to astronomy.

Astronomy is a science; it has most precise descriptions and the evidence of its success in seeking the secrets of the universe is there for all to see. Through astronomy and physics and related technologies we have sampled and scrutinized distant planets and their moons. We know our sun is a garden variety star like billions of others making up the clouds of the Milky Way; all of these stars contain the same chemical elements, and operate with the same physics. Astronomers have examined great clouds of hydrogen where stars are born, the debris left over when stars explode near the end of their lifetimes, and have gone on to find there is galaxy after

galaxy after distant galaxy like our own Milky Way.

These marvellous truths are not self evident but come only after hundreds of years of very hard work. It has required thousands of individuals trying new ideas and curious about nature, making mistakes, finding new information, adopting new viewpoints, in order to understand something about how the universe behaves.

On the other hand, the astrologers appear to have uncritically adopted any combination or permutation of factors they could think of in a horoscope without any appeal to evidence. They have not appreciated how we as fallible humans are inaccurate, biased observers of the world. It is not adequate to trust intuition, or our impressions of things. We do need experimental evidence.

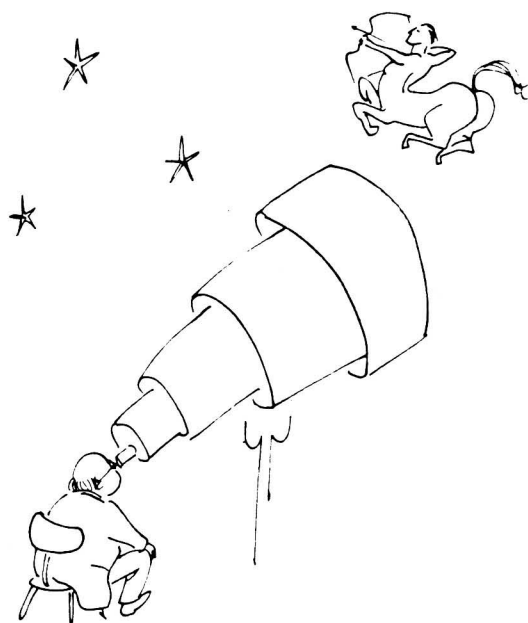
A number of astrologers have wanted at least a scientific origin for astrology. Marc Edmund Jones has argued that astrology arose empirically when man began to observe correspondence between the events in his life, the seasons, and celestial phenomena.

The historical record shows

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astrology beginning 5000 years ago in Mesopotamia. Then astrology consisted of very simple omens about the appearance of the moon and planets in the sky. "If the sky is bright when the new moon appears, the year will be good." Such sayings were only a minor part of a superstitious culture where every event in nature of almost any sort was read as a portent of some future event. People looked for meaning in the migration of animals, storms, patterns of animal entrails, patterns in flour or oil thrown into an urn of water, like the reading of tea leaves. Was this empirical? Consider the typical birth omen: "If a woman gives birth to an elephant, the land will be laid waste". Surely this and similar omens, including those astrological, are not based on observational fact. As far as can be determined there is no recorded historical evidence to suggest any astrological tenets were originally empirical.

A problem for the scientist has been trying to understand what



plausible physical mechanism could possibly produce the astrological effects. Astrologers have occasionally dropped vague allusions to gravity, or electromagnetic radiation of some undiscovered kind as sources. Gravity seems unlikely — the pull of the doctor in the delivery room is stronger than most planets, and the astrologers certainly do not speak of “inverse r-squared” effects. Radiation doesn't seem likely either, unless you want to add the delivery room lights to the chart indicators, for they are far stronger than planetary radiation. Nor does particle radiation appear to correlate with astrological effects. The astrologers seem to be stuck with a “missing link”.

The crucial question, however, is whether or not natal horoscopes fit the lives of people. First two interesting examples for astrologers at work. To quote an anecdote from a recent astrology text, one prominent astrologer, having just impressed a client with an accurate description of what was going on in her life, discovered she had been using the wrong chart, one for a different client.

Astrologers frequently study the lives of famous people. Winston Churchill is a good example of someone about whom a great deal astrological has been written, especially with regard to the timing of events in his life. Unfortunately for a long while, Churchill's birth time was unknown. A. G. S. Norris, who did much of this work used a chart rigorously “rectified” by several methods, ie the birth time is inferred from astrological correspondence with documented events. Of the predicted ascendant Norris wrote “If it were proved wrong, which is almost inconceivable, the blow to directional astrology would be a serious one.” Subsequently the birth time of Churchill was discovered and published. The rectified time was 2½ hours too late; moreover at least half a dozen rectifications had been published, none of them identical, and all of them wrong.

Astrological personality descriptions are usually not very specific. Experiments by psychologists show people are inclined to believe any horoscope if they are told it was especially prepared for them. To illustrate this, in April 1968, Michel Gau-

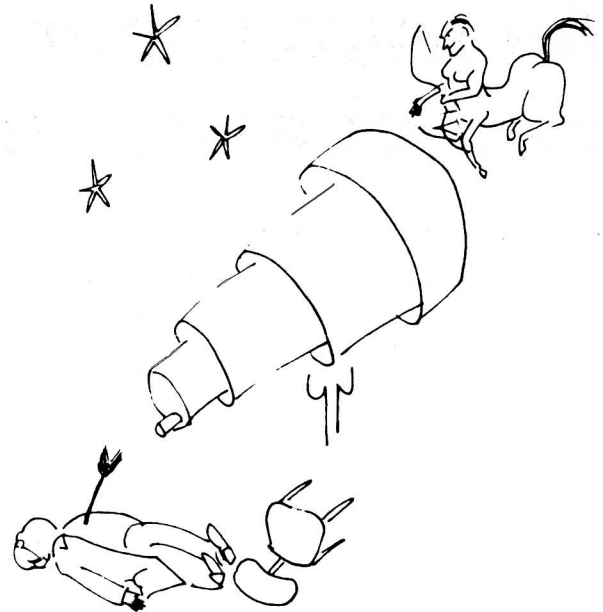
quelin placed an ad in the magazine *Ici Paris* offering a free horoscope and analysis to anyone who would write in. He sent the identical computer horoscope to each respondent with a questionnaire soliciting comments on the quality of the analysis of 150 replies, 94% found the fake horoscope to accurately describe their character, their personal problems, and the cycle of events in their life; 90% found the accuracy confirmed by family and friends. The wrong horoscope sent to each person was from the birth date of a Dr Petiot, a notorious criminal who had murdered several dozen people and dissolved their bodies in lime.

It is one of the most common associations in traditional astrology that occupation, personality traits, and physical characteristics vary according to sun (birth) sign. It is very easy to check up on this claim. For example, according to Margaret Hone, an Aries person is expected to have several characteristics including red hair. Roger Culver gathered a sample of 300 red-hair individuals to see if most of them might have been born under Aries. They weren't. He found their birth signs to be about equally divided between all twelve zodiacal signs.

A study by G. A. Tyson of 10,313 university graduates over a ten year period examined the relationship between date of birth and career. No relationship between birthdate and career was found. Other studies comparing standardized personality inventories with sun sign estimates show no significant correlations. Nor do supposedly incompatible signs show up in marriage or divorce statistics.

A few weeks ago at the University of Virginia, we tested an astrologer, John McCall, who claimed an 80% success rate at distinguishing the correct horoscope for an individual from three false ones on the basis of observed physical characteristics. This was a double blind test and no one knew the correct answers until after the experiment had been performed. For 28 subjects, Mr McCall was right only 7 times, just what is to be expected by chance.

Two astrologers, Geoffrey Dean (Australia) and Arthur Mather (UK) have offered a \$1000 prize to anyone who can demonstrate the validity of



astrological signs. Although they have searched over a thousand books, hundreds of journals, and written to hundreds of astrologers around the world, they were unable to find anybody anywhere who could provide a demonstration that the traditional signs actually work the way they are supposed to work.

Finally, one of the most comprehensive studies to date is an elaborate investigation of New York City suicides by astrologer Nona Press and several colleagues. Suicides were chosen because they could give a well defined event time and it is such

an extreme personal action, so some tendency toward suicide should appear in the birth chart. Approximately 100,000 different factors were examined for the sample of 311 suicides. The study failed to identify any factor in the birth chart significantly related to suicide.

There is overwhelming evidence showing astrology cannot do what is claimed for it. Moreover, it seems to me that astrology, although offering psychological solace to those who believe, has never contributed in any useful way to the advancement of knowledge.

★ SOLUTION TO CROSSWORD ★

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