

BOB SWIFT



Heavenly conduit eyes UFOs

I hadn't heard from my friend Frank McTrendy, so I knocked at his door.

"The earthbound one journeys into the unknown," came a singsong voice. "But enter, my son, and root at the trough of knowledge and all like that there."

"What are you up to?" I said, finding him sitting in a chair.

"You speak not to Frank," said Frank. "It is I, a visitor from ages past, speaking to you through my channel, the McTrendy one. It is said, he who ascends the mountain on his knees will take the ski lift in his next life."

"Frank," I said, "don't give me all this 'it is said' jazz."

He gave a start. His eyes closed, he snored loudly, then said, "Huh? Wuzzat?" His eyes opened and he said, "Oh, I'm back. Is he gone?"

"Is who gone?" I said.

"Amen-tut-tut, who lived 30,000 years ago in Atlantis," said Frank. "You see, I have discovered that I am a channeler. Ancient entities use me as a channel from past to present so they can deliver wisdom to the unenlightened. Tut's disciples come here to hear him, through me."

I realized what was going on. Frank — always eager to embrace the latest fad — had been reading about the spiritualism-reincarnation craze in California. He must have seen the "Phil Donahue Show" and the "Today" show, both of which featured channelers who "conduct" the wise spirits from the past. The wise persons speak from the channeler's mouth with Mahatma Gandhi accents and have names like Tabor, or Zam-Ra. People pay money to see and hear them.

"These channelers sound just like what we used to call mediums," I said to Frank. "You know, the medium would go into a trance and you'd say, 'Is everything OK over there, Uncle Charlie?' and the medium would say in a funny voice, 'Everything's OK, except I can't get no peanut butter.'"

"Tsk, tsk," said Frank. "You disbelieve. But I discovered, through Shirley MacLaine's books about reincarnation, that I had other lives. For instance, in Cro-Magnon times I was named Ooch Ooch Agoona Tach and invented the game we know as Scissors, Paper, Rock."

"Frank, don't kid a kidder. Ooch Ooch Agoona Tach is Chattanooga Choo Choo pronounced backwards. And they didn't HAVE scissors or paper in Cro-Magnon times. Only rock."

"Are you telling me? It was hard to have fun in those days, Bob. In a later lives, I was in the poker game when Cain raised his hand against Abel, and I saw Peter, Paul and Moses playing ring around the roses. But wait, I feel an entity approaching."

His eyes closed, then opened.

"Life is like a blueberry muffin," he shouted.

"Life is like a blueberry muffin?" I said, puzzled.

"OK, so it's more like a blintz," said Frank. "But heed me! I lived 30,000 years ago and I tell you this. The grass is always greener where the cow has trodden."

"Frank, this is just another of those weird things you've imported from California, the land of the fruits and nuts," I said. "You took up est — which stands for extrasensory tomfoolery — Rolfing, primal scream therapy, transcendental meditation and the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh."

As I said this, I heard the front door open and people began pouring in, throwing money and shouting: "Show us the way, O Channeler of Entities. Make us even as you, oh illuminator of the divine."

Frank spread his arms in benediction and spoke:

"It is said, 'I'm a Pepper, she's a Pepper, wouldn't you like to be a Pepper too?' Wait, that can't be right. I seem to be getting some spiritual static here from some old TV commercials. Let me fine tune. Now. Say what? Say the secret 'woid'? Groucho, is that you?"

The people gasped in awe.

"I say unto you," Frank said, "don't step on Superman's cape; don't spit into the wind; don't pull the mask off the old Lone Ranger and don't mess around with Jim."

"Ooooooooh," they said.

Frank gestured and said:

"The seers of Atlantis asked of themselves, 'Why is it that the fire persons wearth red suspenders?' And the beings deep within their corporeal selves answered, 'To holdeth up their pants.'"

"Aaaaaah," moaned the crowd, throwing more money. "Lay some more truth upon us, oh, enlightened

Frank knew what he was doing, after all. Turning to leave I paused and whispered in his ear. "Oh heavenly conduit, when reincarnation and channeling the spirits have run their courses, what will you be into next?"

"Oh unwashed one," sang Frank in his curious Anglo-Indian accent, "have I ever told you about how I was kidnapped by UFOs?"

□ Bob Swift is a columnist for Knight-Ridder Newspapers. His column is published on Thursdays.

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