
August 1989 "BASIS", newsletter of the Bay Area Skeptics

Bay Area Skeptics Information Sheet
Vol. 8, No. 8
Editor: Kent Harker

MARS HIDES FACE IN SHAME by David Morrison

[Dr. David Morrison, a CSICOP Fellow, heads the Space Science Division at NASA Ames Research Center in California.

As part of the team that planned and directed exploration of Mars, he is eminently qualified to comment on the results of those explorations. The October 1988 issue of "BASIS" carried an analysis by John Hewitt of the work conducted by a group called the Mars Project. This group believes that in one of the images sent from the Viking Orbiter there is a "face" of non-natural origin. Our February 1989 issue featured a rebuttal by Roger Keeling, a board member of the Mars Project, in which he heavily attacked the "most" part of Hewitt's assertion that "Most scientists state flatly that there is `absolutely no evidence'. . . ."

Dr. Morrison is part of that "most," and he is probably in the best position to speak for most.]

Roger Keeling's rebuttal to John Hewitt's article on the Face on Mars adds little but confusion to an already clouded issue. He begins by attacking "appeals to nameless authority" by those who believe the face to be a natural feature. In so doing Keeling demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the scientific process.

Science generally progresses because it is self-correcting, and this self correction depends on the open criticism of ideas among the experts in a particular discipline -- in this case, the discipline of Martian geology. The informed opinions of planetary geologists who are familiar with Mars is the best indication available to all of the rest of us of the technical plausibility of the assertions of Hoagland et al. concerning an unnatural origin for the Face. The judgments of experts on Martian geology are an essential starting point for any analysis of the Viking images.

I can personally attest to the truth of Hewitt's assertion that this group (including the one Martian expert mentioned by Keeling, Dr. Chris McKay of NASA Ames Research Center) is clearly of the opinion that "there is nothing whatever artificial about the Face."

I know this from many discussions with planetary scientists both before and after the publication in "Skeptical Inquirer" of my

review of Hoagland's and Pozos's books. Some of these discussions were as recent as the International Mars Conference held in Tucson this January. The attempt by Keeling of a counter-appeal to his own authorities in support of an artificial origin for the Face is beside the point, since Webb, O'Leary, Pozos, etc., for all of their professional accomplishments, are neither planetary geologists nor experts on Mars.

I do agree with Keeling that the Face on Mars is quite a good face as seen in the oblique lighting of Viking Frame 35A72. Like many such erosional phenomena on our planet, the Face on Mars has a form that is easily interpreted by the human brain as an anthropomorphic image. Maybe some day it will become a tourist attraction for human colonists on Mars, like the "Old Man of the Mountain" or the "Sleeping Indian" on Earth. The area of Mars photographed by Viking is nearly as great as the total land area of the Earth, and it should not surprise us that one good face showed up somewhere on that planet. Incidentally, the same Viking team members who first found the face also came up with a "Happy Face" and "Kermit the Frog" in other orbiter images.

The major problem with Keeling, Hoagland, Pozos and their group does not concern the Face per se, but rather the web of fantasy they have created concerning the supposed ruined city, pyramids, and astronomical alignments in the area of Cydonia near the Face. As Keeling notes in his rebuttal, the case for the past Martian civilization rests largely on the artificial origin of these other features, which are in fact no more than common, randomly oriented mesas shaped by wind erosion, no different from hundreds of similar mesas distributed rather widely on Mars. I have no quarrel with the efforts by Carlotto and others to apply image-processing techniques to the Face and to publish their results in the scientific literature, but I do take offense at Hoagland's tendentious prose and the mixture of fact and fiction that he is trying to sell as an example of "scientific research." This is simply nonsense, in the same category with psychic channeling and UFO abduction stories.

Another grave problem with Keeling and The Mars Project lies in the confusion they generate concerning the nature of science. Like the creationists, they attempt to don the mantle of science in order to legitimize their activities. A recent (June) mailing from the organization proposes to create twenty 2-minute radio spots to be distributed to several hundred radio stations, reaching a potential audience of tens of millions.

They write that "these science notes will introduce and describe the Martian anomalies in a scientific, non-sensational way . . . discuss established space science facts and developments . . . [and] feature fascinating interviews with world-famous scientists discussing their own work. And all will make reference to the work of the Mars Project. . . . It will give the Project new visibility and credibility. . . . They could help us attract top-rank scientists . . . even as they also reach millions of citizens."

Keeling is asking supporters for tax-deductible contributions to finance the production and distribution of these radio slots.

I hope that the "world-famous scientists" approached to appear on this series will realize the way their interviews will be used to promote more Face on Mars nonsense under the guise of legitimate scientific and educational goals.

All of us who support space research, including the continued exploration of Mars, should be especially concerned about Keeling's final paragraph, in which he says that "in the long run -- even if the anomalies should prove natural in origin -- we will deem significantly increased public interest in space exploration and Mars to be success enough." It is intellectually dishonest to try to hoodwink the American taxpayers into returning to Mars for the wrong reasons. I protest the cynicism of this justification for the self-serving publicity blitz Keeling's organization is mounting.

NO GUTS

by William Bennetta

In conventional psychic surgery, the practitioner pretends to withdraw unhealthy or abnormal tissue from his customer's body. The items of choice for this maneuver are chicken guts or similar offal, perhaps augmented by some chicken blood, that the practitioner conceals before starting his act. (In some cases, the offal and blood are kept in a false finger that the practitioner wears.)

This approach has three important disadvantages: It is necessarily messy; it requires some minimal training in sleight-of-hand work; and it forces the practitioner to endure some risk of being exposed -- especially if samples of his organic props are acquired by a skeptic or a police laboratory.

Now, however, the need to play with guts and blood seems to have been abolished, in a brilliant stroke, by a psychic surgeon who calls himself The Reverend Joseph Martinez and who runs The Spiritual Healing Center, in San Francisco. Look at his advertisement in the May issue of the "Psychic Reader":

"The Reverend Joseph Martinez practices a unique variation of Philippine Psychic Surgery in which the removal process occurs beyond the usual range of the senses and can only be seen clairvoyantly. This is a more spiritual version of the process in which the healer removes from the body negative energies in a materialized form. This spiritual method removes psychic blockages and energies invisibly and in a finer manner, although the removal is clearly felt. Pulling and tuggings are commonly reported sensations. Healing is performed by Spirit Psychic Surgeons."

The essential idea, I infer, is this: If you (or an investigator from a bunco squad) cannot see the stuff that The Reverend removes by his manipulations, this merely means that you are insufficiently clairvoyant. And you probably could not see the emperor's new clothes, either.

THE BLOOD READERS

by Robert Steiner

[The following is an excerpted chapter from Bob's soon-to-be-published book "Don't Get Taken!"]

There seems to be no end to the proliferation of nonsense. Published in Japan in 1983, translated into English and published in the United States of America in 1988, "You Are Your Blood Type" (Nomi and Beshar [1983] 1988) splashed on the scene with yet another "revolutionary breakthrough" in the selling of balderdash to an eager and gullible public.

All quotations in this chapter are from "You Are Your Blood Type"; citations are page numbers.

Co-author Alexander Beshar wastes no time getting our attention. By the second paragraph of the Preface, he has already described "this brilliant and lovely Japanese experimental movie director" (11) Kimiko. He did not waste a whole lot of time getting to the important things with her, either. By the end of that second paragraph in the Preface, we are informed that he landed on her on their first date. And then, guess what? You've got it -- they discussed their blood types.

The exciting second paragraph of the Preface concludes with:

Afterwards [after you-know-what], while sipping iced Russian vodka on my deck overlooking the expanse of lights that Los Angeles becomes at night, Kimiko told me that she wanted to share a personal secret. "It's the first time I have been with an AB," she said. "But I knew it would make both of us very happy" (11).

Claiming not to know his own blood type, Beshar tells us that he later learned that Kimiko was correct -- he does indeed have type AB blood.

If you search the book seeking citations of studies proving their hypothesis, you will come up empty. We find only such things as:

The walls in Toshitaka Nomi's office are plastered with graphs and charts showing the state of various studies being conducted at any given time (12-13).

If the Japanese are taking blood-type analysis seriously,

it is probably worthy of contemplation (21).

They laughed at Newton! (21).

So much for the scientific evidence and documentation. Now they get to the practical uses of this hokum. For example, you might use it as a pick-up line. Thinkest thou that I jest? Nay. Nay. Forsooth, 'twas in this wondrous book, to wit:

Just imagine walking up to an attractive stranger and starting up a conversation. "Excuse me," you begin, secure in your knowledge that you are applying one of the most innovative opening lines in modern times. "I was wondering what your blood type is. I thought you might be an A by the way you looked at the details in that Fra Angelico, but I'm not sure" (21).

In a manner similar to the astrologers, the blood readers tell you the important people with whom you share your blood type. For example, President Dwight David Eisenhower, President Ronald Reagan, Nobel Prize winning physicist Murray Gell-Mann, and Lynn Redgrave all have blood type O.

Get ready for an important piece of news: "Most of the big Mafiosi [members of the Mafia] are members of the O blood group" (45).

We have come to an extremely important lesson in learning to recognize bunkum. Frequently it does not take any specific scientific knowledge on your part, nor does it necessarily require familiarity with the subject. Rather, if you simply apply some common sense to the claims, the tomfoolery will jump out at you.

Suppose you wanted to learn the blood types of "most of the big Mafiosi." Where would you begin? Would you go to your local library and ask to see "The Directory of Big Mafiosi"? Do you think such a directory exists? Do you think such a list exists anywhere? Let us assume that somehow you were able to obtain a list of "the big Mafiosi." What is your next step? Ah yes, the survey:

Dear Mr. _____:

In conducting a survey of the Big Mafiosi, it has come to our attention that you are a Big Mafioso. We would appreciate your cooperation in answering just three simple questions for us. The first two questions are for the purpose of verifying that you are properly in our survey. The third question is the subject of the survey. Please circle the correct answers:

1. I hereby admit in writing that I am a member of the Mafia: Yes No.
2. Furthermore, I am considered to be a Big Mafioso: Yes No.

3. My blood type is: O A B AB.

If you do not know your blood type, we respectfully request that you see your physician, in order to learn it. While we know that your time is valuable, and while we hate to inconvenience you, we consider this survey to be quite important.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

The assertion made by the authors about the blood types of the "big Mafiosi" is NONFALSIFIABLE. That is, there is no way that you could obtain the information to show that their assertion is incorrect. There is no way you could falsify it.

If it is not falsifiable, then it is not a scientific claim. We will discuss falsification in more detail later.

We did not have to dig far to learn that their statement might be reasonably correct. In their own book they state that "more people are Os than any other type" (39). Now let us look at the claimed personality of blood type O people. As with my analysis of the traits of the astrological signs, the contradictory characteristics are all there. You will find whatever applies to you:

- Clear-sighted
- Can lose perspective
- Realistic
- Escapes from reality when troubled
- Can treat superiors well
- Can't follow too well
- Positive, idealistic
- Tramples the less fortunate (49).

I was all ready to put away "You Are Your Blood Type" and move on when some goodies in the chapter "The Type AB Personality" caught my eye. They are too much fun to pass up:

Is it any surprise then that the most illustrious AB in history was Jesus Christ? Christ was identified as an AB type through chemical analysis of blood stains on the famous Shroud of Turin. . . . Amazingly, the shroud has withstood the most stringent scientific scrutiny. Some experts examining it have concluded that it may well be the shroud that was used to wrap the body of Jesus Christ following his execution on the cross (75).

Read the words carefully: "SOME experts examining it have concluded that it MAY WELL BE. . . ."

It may interest you to know that AT NO TIME did any significant portion of the scientific community accept the Shroud of Turin as being the shroud of Jesus Christ. As of now, it has been totally

discredited. It was an elaborate hoax. It was not the shroud of Jesus.

One more:

Unfortunately, the blood types of other great religious leaders remain unknown. But the odds are that the founders of the world's greatest religions like the Gautama Buddha, Mohammed, and mystics from St. Francis to Mahatma Gandhi were likely AB types (75).

Do you wonder how they computed those odds? Well, I did, so I did a little arithmetic.

When they say "mystics from St. Francis to Mahatma Gandhi," we may presume that perhaps they meant to include several in between. However, in order to bend over backwards to be fair to these authors, let us assume that section includes only St. Francis and Mahatma Gandhi. With that assumption, they named four persons of unknown blood type who "were likely AB types."

According to their book, "The rarest of the four blood types, AB people make up only four percent of the American population" (74). While the proportion of blood types might vary from country to country, for want of a better figure, let us go with their four-percent figure.

The probability of those four specific persons of unknown blood type all being type AB is four percent to the fourth power. That means that when they say that "the odds are" and that those folks all "were likely AB types," they are referring to a probability of less than three in one million (less than 3 in 1,000,000).

Think about that. With their careless and completely unfounded and unsupported assertion, stating as an odds-on favorite and likely an event which has a probability of less than three in one million, how reliable do you consider their other completely unsupported assertions?

[Note: "Don't Get Taken!" is scheduled for publication in late August, when the price will be \$14.95 plus \$2.00 P & H. For BAS, Bob is offering a special pre-publication price of only \$12.00, postage free, provided your order is postmarked by August 31. (California residents please add sales tax.) Send your order and payment to: Wide-Awake Books, Box 659-B, El Cerrito, CA 94530.]

ANTHROPOSOPHICAL MEDICINE II

by Dan Dugan

Anthroposophical medicine (AM) is a major activity of the cult of Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925). AM claims to run fifteen hospitals and hundreds of clinics in Europe. AM is a pseudoscience, relying

on revealed knowledge and homeopathic remedies. Respectability is obtained by requiring AM physicians to have a conventional degree before they receive AM indoctrination. The movement is growing out of dissatisfaction with medicine and the desire many people have for more personally involved health care. An AM clinic has opened in San Francisco in the heart of the Castro.

My first report (March 1989 issue of "BASIS") told of a lecture given by a doctor Joop van Dam from Amsterdam, a hotbed of AM. He claimed there were reproducible scientific studies proving the extraordinary claims Steiner followers make for the influences of heavenly bodies on physical processes and the efficacy of homeopathic remedies. The evidence for celestial influences rests almost entirely on the work of Lilly Kolisko, who was appointed by Steiner to prove his assertions in the 1920's.

Kolisko spent many years in arduous work, making experiments with inadequate controls and selecting data "hits" which, not surprisingly, were interpreted as verifying what Steiner had revealed through his self-proclaimed clairvoyance.

After the lecture, I sent a request to Dr. van Dam for a copy of a recent paper that he said proved the effect of dilutions of an agent up to the 10 to the -23rd concentration. He replied with a paper from the Dept. of Anatomy and Embryology at the U. of Amsterdam, "Inquiry into the Limits of Biological Effects of Chemical Compounds in Tissue Culture," by Jan Diek van Mansvelt and Ferdinand Amons, published in Z. Naturforsch. 30 c, 643-649 [1975].

In this study a standardized living tissue culture (murine lymphoblastic cell strain MB VIa) was treated with vanishing dilutions of mercuric chloride. The experiments were done in three series of about sixty repetitions each. The data show the obvious toxicity of the mercury compound up to the sixth 1/10 dilution (about 1 ppm).

Thereafter the curve consists of minor random variations, as might be expected. The experimenters focussed on a very slight increase in toxicity seen in the 15th and 16th dilutions of all three series, the series showing no parallelism elsewhere in the high dilutions. They conclude that "the substantial indication towards some as yet unconceived phenomena needs further study." It looks like they're really stretching to find something to justify funding more work. I note that their controls, plain water, were not handled in the same way as the toxic dilutions, which were mixed and shaken.

What is more significant is that the study doesn't prove what Dr. van Dam said in his lecture at all. First, the high dilutions of the toxic substance don't show the opposite (stimulating) effect on cell growth that homeopathic and AM doctrines predict. The only significant data goes in the wrong direction. Secondly the effect shown in the experiment is so small, about two or three percent, that even if it were verified, it would be of no practical use.

It is a typical technique of pseudoscience to design an experiment which produces a lot of random data. The researcher can then pull some hits out of the data and claim that a positive conclusion has been made. Charts and graphs make it look scientific to the unsophisticated. In this case the story had been exaggerated into a proof by the time it reached its San Francisco audience.

AM CLINIC OPENS IN S.F.

On September 25, 1988, the Michael Medical Clinic opened, inside the offices of the Castro Medical Clinic. Castro Medical Clinic is run by Dr. Lisa Capaldini, who has some prominence as an AIDS expert. She would not discuss AM with me when I called asking her to clarify her position.

The AM clinic is staffed by two licensed doctors, Robert Gorter, M.D., who is also a University of California S.F. faculty member doing AIDS research at S.F. General, and Inmaculata Marti, M.D. Both have received AM training in Europe. There is one other AM physician in California, in Fair Oaks, where the Waldorf (Steiner cult) teacher training college is. The clinic will offer general family practice, except for obstetrics. They hope to expand to their own facility in a couple of years, and to eventually build a hospital.

I picketed the opening with a flyer headlined "Beware of Quack Medicine" and went on to say "This practice combines occult Christian mysticism with the remedies of homeopathy, a pseudoscience that has been thoroughly discredited. It appears that the clinic practitioners are sincere in their beliefs and intend to care for their patients in a spiritually uplifting way.

This is likely to be helpful to some people, but for life-and-death decisions good intentions and magic aren't enough. People seeking assistance with health care deserve health services that have been proven safe, effective, and that are truthfully advertised. AM uses remedies proven useless, and makes false claims of a scientific basis." The flyer concluded with "Five Warning Signs of Pseudoscience:

- It subordinates evidence to statements based on authority and revelation.
- Its documentation is almost entirely limited to the special publications of its advocates.
- Its central hypothesis is not subject to change in light of new data or demonstration of error.
- It claims that success stories and testimonials prove its effectiveness.
- Its claims are invalidated when subjected to scientific tests."

I showed the flyer to Dr. Gorter before I started to hand it out. He asked how it could be quackery if in Europe there are larger AM hospitals than Moffitt or S.F. General, and national health and

insurance systems there pay for it. He is certain that his personal experiences validate AM theory.

A dedicated patient followed me down to the street and raved obscenely at me for some time as I handed out flyers. He had been cured of migraine and bursitis. He said he'd brought many people to Dr. Gorter, and all of them had been helped, whereas he knew many people who had been hurt by conventional medicine. He warned me that if I hurt Dr. Gorter "my ass would be in a sling." I opined that I wouldn't mind if they called it the "Anthroposophical Faith Healing Center," but calling it a medical clinic was deceptive. He came back later to apologize for the threat.

Many of the supporters there were faculty of the S.F. Waldorf School. A teacher reproached me: "With all the problems in America today, that you should end up here, as if this were one of the problems, is ludicrous." A board member of the school flamed "You are in a class with Lyndon Larouche."

I handed out about 150 flyers to passers-by. Three people, after reading it, thanked me for doing it. A Ph.D. biologist said that the AM doctors he'd met in New York were closed-minded doctrinaires, but that Dr. Gorter was really doing scientific work. He said Gorter is doing clinical trials of the AM cancer drug "iscador" at SF General for UCSF. Gorter may be an exception, but I want to see the protocol for his experiments before giving him the benefit of the doubt.

All the AM research I've seen so far has been woefully inadequate. Anthroposophical and scientific methods of inquiry are mutually exclusive. An amusing consequence of my flyer was a stern letter from the Walt Disney organization. I had used a drawing of Donald Duck without permission and someone had turned me in. I apologized and was let off.

LOTTO BALONEY

Madame Zollo will, for 35 bucks, give you winning lotto numbers. So will a host of other numerologists, psychics, seers, and charlatans eager to help you spread the wealth around. Of course, the wealth comes not from the lottery, but from the poor suckers who dump their money into schemes as worthless as the lottery itself.

The number of lotto "support" enterprises has mushroomed alarmingly, and the legions of hopefuls who can ill afford the money they pump into the state crap shoot are often just as ill informed as they are broke. The dream of untold riches is a sop beyond which many cannot see. Methods touted as a short cut to find the formula for the winning numbers ignite the combined greed and gullibility of the hopeful and the hopeless.

"BASIS" readers don't have to be told about the minuscule probabilities of winning the lottery -- the likelihood of even drawing a number from a given California city is very small. But, as a matter of interest, it might be useful for us to have some facts to give to someone contemplating a visit to the chambers of the Madame Zollos of this world. Just how good are the psychics and numerologists?

Not even lukewarm, it turns out. But they are very good in giving us exactly what they say: nothing, if one carefully listens to the way they have their say.

Typically, numerologists give GUARANTEED winning numbers. They don't promise THE winning lottery number. They give numbers, plural. For example, the August 1988 Lotto jackpot was \$38 million for the winning number 14,19,25,33,46. That's really one number - miss any digit and you don't win. Nor do you win if you have any permutations of the successful number.

Numerologist Ellin Dodge, one of the more highly acclaimed in the trade, gave several of her clients the number 14. It was a "winning" number. If she had given the number 64, that is really 46 reversed, so it is still a winning one.

To further promote the scam and the illusion that some seer possesses the wisdom of the ages, the numbers are clearly separated by paragraphs (and promises), e.g., "Your birth number, 25, is lucky; your horizon number, 14, is significant." This mumbo-jumbo goes on for as long as the psychic wants to increase his or her chance of a hit. If any one of the numbers turns up as part of the actual lottery number, in any order, the patsy believes that his or her Magi are tapped into the astral plane. For all the schemes and quirks people have for picking their lucky numbers, the Quick Pick (a computer that does the job randomly) has by far the best record. Let the computer pick your number and you have a far better chance of winning.

The clouds of superstition are still thick and choking. -- Ed.

RAMPARTS

[Ramparts is a regular feature of "BASIS", and your participation is urged. Clip, snip and tear bits of irrationality from your local scene and send them to the Editor. If you want to add some comment with the submission, please do so.]

The fabulous, self-indulgence capitol of California is again in the news. The "Corte Madera Journal" article on the Marin County "Brain Spa" found its way to the "New York Times" from which BAS advisor BILL BENNETTA clipped it for us.

The story is about a new institute, the "Universe of You," founded

by Mr. Randy Adamadama (the name was given to him in a dream). What you do is get your brain "tuned up" at his institute. We need to take our cars in periodically, so why not our brains?

The cost is a paltry \$12. Plunk yourself down, don your "Synchro-Energizer" (a set of headphones through which "a combination of nature sounds and a New-Age piano version of 'A Whiter Shade of Pale'" pours) and "a pair of goggles that flash rapid patterns of colored light like a kaleidoscope" and you are on your way to nirvana. Adamadama (Stevens, in real life) says that 45 minutes on the machine helps "synchronize the brain."

We are accustomed to hearing the stories of miraculous results from the most frivolous contraptions, and this is certainly no exception. People report a host of salutary benefits: "Improved tennis game, euphoria, improved problem-solving, heightened self-esteem," and just about anything else you can imagine.

Some patrons are so enthusiastic about the gizmo that they return as many as three times a day. (Which makes one wonder if there isn't something more to the machine. Something like the Orgasmatron in Woody Allen's "Sleeper.") Several say that they look forward to the time when they can pop into any supermarket for a quickie.

The inventor of the apparatus, Denis Gorges, started a company to manufacture the equipment and then franchised the whole system [I've come to loathe anything called a "system." -- Ed.] around the country.

The first thing science would like to know is how the thing works. In classic pseudoscience, Gorges says, "We don't really know. I don't think the body is that knowable."

If it makes money, well, who cares?

As usual, those conspiratorial scientists pooh-pooh his machines. Dr. Douglas Goodin, assistant professor of neurology at USF Medical Center, doing research on the brain's response to light, said researchers are not aware of any health benefits that can be derived by watching flashing lights. Like most scientists, this narrow-minded medico replies, "There would have to be a theory about why this would work and then controlled experiments to test it."

Gorges scoffs at the "lack of scientific data proving any measurable benefit from the machine. He relies instead on the testimonials of the thousands of satisfied users. He is 'results-oriented'." Be honest about it, Denis. You are dollar oriented.

There's been a ton of speculation and rife accusations that the nation is being overrun with satanic cults and ritual murder. The "Geraldo" show on TV upped the ante several notches to the point that parents have put tremendous pressure on local constabularies

to seek and destroy these nests of satanism.

Perhaps typical is the response of a Richmond, VA community. "The Richmond News Leader" ran a one-week series of investigative reports titled "Satanism, Menace or Myth?" to try to get to the bottom of the allegations. Widespread rumors circulated that human sacrifices, satanists masquerading as doctors and lawyers, and 8 percent of the population were involved in satanic cults constituted the current state of affairs. Intensive investigation by the police and FBI failed to turn up so much as a thread of evidence for the hysteria.

The sheriff's department Lt. Howard Wray called the whole thing "utter nonsense." Case after case of allegations by the rumor mongers turned out to be fanciful concoctions of overwrought whimsy.

Patricia Pulling, a licensed private investigator who supports the satanism theory was asked by a reporter why she continues to believe sacrifices have occurred when there is no physical evidence. Take careful note of what follows -- it has to be an absolute classic of an excuse for lack of evidence.

"The police find no evidence of sacrifices because Satanists are so skillful at cleaning up. No evidence can be evidence," she said.

When asked how she determined that 8 percent of the populace was involved in satanism (that figures about 56,000 people in the greater Richmond area) she said her surveys report 4 percent of the youth and 4 percent of the adults. To the "Leader" reporter's perceptive observation that 4% of the youth and 4% of the adults makes 4% of the populace, not 8%, Ms. Pulling said, "It doesn't matter because 8 percent is probably conservative anyway."

Ms. Pulling is also a very able champion of the argument-from-ignorance fallacy in logic. For us mere mortals, when we haven't an explanation for something we can only conclude we are ignorant - we don't know. But the Mr. or Ms. Pullings of the world have their special twist of the rules and they deduce that since we don't know, we know: an unsolved child disappearance is solved because if there is no evidence that is evidence that the satanists did it. Ditto for all the unsolved murders.

Of course the final report declaring that the whole flap is a pack of nonsense generated from the fertile imaginations of hysterical people was proof that the newspaper and law enforcement officials are part of the satanic conspiracy.

Past issues of "BASIS" have carried the debate about the origin of the so-called face on Mars (Oct. '88 and Feb. '89). There is new information to bear on this important topic. Skeptic JOHN HEWITT, who wrote the Oct. '89 article for us critical of the Mars Project's interpretation, called to report the latest revelation:

A face on Venus, identical to the one on Mars down to the last airbrush stroke in the photos, had been recently discovered. This startling disclosure did not come through "Scientific American" or the like. The "News", a supermarket tabloid was John's source, but we're sure stuff like this couldn't get printed unless it were true.

Now it begins to look as though those faces are proliferating all over the solar system like the ubiquitous Happy Face of a few years ago. This editor walked into Lucky's and saw the headlines: "FACE ON THE MOON! TOP SECRET STUNNER: IT'S IDENTICAL TO ONES ON MARS & VENUS" complete with a photo of the face. (The Mars Project prefers the distinguishing uppercase, "Face.") I bought the rag in the interest of science.

On the inside is a photograph of the moon, and sure enough one can make out the face right in the center of a prominent crater. The image is so clear one may well wonder how we could have missed it for so long; a high-quality home telescope is capable of producing the resolution of the "News" photo.

The "News" says the moon face is identical to the Mars face, but our rough calculations based on the size of the known crater would make the moon face about 55 miles long while its Martian brother is a paltry 1.5 miles. Since it can't therefore be identical it must at least be proportional for the pictures to appear to be identical. The Martian issue is about 1,200 feet at the nose which would make the moon replica near 44,000 feet!

Those ancient astronauts were an industrious lot. We should not be surprised to find a similar face in the middle of Atlantis.

OBIT MAKES NO NEWS

[The following article is reproduced from the NCAHF NEWSLETTER, the National Council Against Health Fraud, Inc., of which BAS advisor Dr. Wallace Sampson is a coordinator. The work of the NCAHF has helped bring about important legislation in the control of health care in California. They deserve our support.]

In July 1987, the parents of Sonja Boden went to court to fight for the privilege of treating their 17-year-old daughter, who had Hodgkin's disease, with "Macrobiotic Diet, acupuncture, massage and positive thinking." These inappropriate therapies were prescribed by Dr. Jewel Pookrum, a general practitioner with the Perfect Health Institute in Detroit.

The judge granted the Boden's wishes as long as her disease remained in remission. Sonja's tumors had shrunk by 40% at that time which encouraged her parents. This improvement followed her first chemotherapy session which experts say is a common result of treatment. We later learned that Sonja's disease had progressed and

that her odds of survival had dropped from 85% to 50% due to delays in proper care.

Sonja's obituary appeared in the 18 Nov. 1988 "Detroit Free Press." It was a sad little one-inch square item which was obscure in contrast to the large splash the front-page picture story was given under the headline "A chance to fight cancer their way." It seems that a story about taking on the "establishment" with unusual cancer treatments made a better news story than another teenager's death.

If this tragedy had occurred in California, Pookrum would be subject to indictment under Health & Safety Code No. 1707.1, the state's excellent law which forbids health providers from utilizing unproven methods of cancer therapy unless they are responsible experimental programs that meet scientific requirements. NCAHF believes that every state should have such a law. It's the most effective anti-cancer quackery measure we are aware of.

[Note: This law applies only to cancer treatment. There is no reason to think it ought not to be extended to other life-threatening ailments. We can all help by supporting the NCAHF and legislative efforts through contacts with our local representatives. -- Ed.]

THE FAITH HEALERS

Got a problem with some screaming faith healer in your neighborhood? Who you gonna call? DON HENVICK, who else? Don is something of a legend in his own time for his witty and tireless dogging the trails of the best faith healers money can buy.

From Pasadena to Philadelphia, he has appeared among the afflicted throngs to be called out in the spirit and healed of every garden variety of malady. If he had accomplished little else -- and he certainly has done much more -- but put the miracle workers on high alert for fakes Don's efforts are a huge success. As it is, he has put the fear of God into most of them and driven one, Peter Popoff, nearly out of business.

Don has received national attention for his work and, most recently, participated in a panel at the AAAS meeting in Chico, CA.

Don will show excerpts from his many video tapes with the presentation of his experiences. This will be an interesting and surely amusing evening. Because we must pay for the meeting place, there will be a \$3 suggested donation. See the Calendar for directions.

Opinions expressed in "BASIS" are those of the authors and do not

necessarily reflect those of BAS, its board or its advisors.

The above are selected articles from the August, 1989 issue of "BASIS", the monthly publication of Bay Area Skeptics. You can obtain a free sample copy by sending your name and address to BAY AREA SKEPTICS, 4030 Moraga, San Francisco, CA 94122-3928 or by leaving a message on "The Skeptic's Board" BBS (415-648-8944) or on the 415-LA-TRUTH (voice) hotline.

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