



The Newsletter of The North Texas Skeptics

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## MUFON's Circular Reasoning

### No Ring of Truth in Grain Patterns

By Mike Sullivan

The Metroplex chapter of MUFON, the Mutual UFO Network, played host to the Crop Circle touring company the evening of April 19th at the Holiday Inn/NorthPark. Preceded by fairly heavy publicity on radio and in print, MUFON drew some 200 folks willing to pay the \$12 admission price for non-members; MUFON let in their own members for \$10. A separate admission of \$3 was charged to those who wished to view (not buy) some color prints of the same slides as would be shown during the 3-hour lecture.

The main attraction was the team of "The Earl of Haddington" and Professor George Wingfield, President and Director of Research, respectively, for the "Center for Crop Circle Studies" (CCCS). We are not told in what area of academia Wingfield earned his professorship or where he teaches, or what noble deed the Earl (John Haddington) has performed to gain his royal title. After an introduction by the MUFON/Metroplex president, the show started and Wingfield took the stage supported by his tray of 35mm slides.

For anyone unfamiliar with the crop circles that so fascinate the UFO crowd, they are simply patterns of depressed or bent wheat or similar long-stalk crops, almost always found in mature, cultivated fields with fresh tractor ruts. The circles lay neatly in line with the parallel ruts of the huge tractors used to work the land, with the wheel tracks leading to the nearby roads clearly visible. In the rare case where the patterns cut diagonally across ruts, they crisply begin or end at the edge of one. No patterns have been found on uncultivated land, or in grain that is less than shoulder-height.

The majority of these have been found in the pastoral rolling hills of England, although Wingfield reports that some have been sighted in the U.S. Alas, he has no photos of these, as he is so busy with the lecture tour he doesn't have time to check on every report. Wingfield also said that he had heard "reports of one circle here in Texas," although he hasn't documented that one either.

It should be noted that only one photo was shown of the circles laying in a field without tractor ruts, and even then two clear walkways into the pattern were visible despite the oblique angle of Wingfield's photo. The fact that these patterns almost always appear in fields that have recently been worked by powerful modern farm tractors, with paved roads adjacent to the field, doesn't seem to suggest anything at all to the crop circle promoters. As Wingfield said, "It's almost like we laid out a clean sheet of graph paper for them, and said 'Draw on it.'" Who "them" is, Wingfield doesn't say.

In fact, Wingfield is silent on any conclusion or even a theory of what or who causes these patterns. Cleverly, he lets the imaginations of the clearly sympathetic audience run wild, giving them tidbits of nonsensical imagined connections to religious symbolism, ancient burial sites, UFOs, Stonehenge, and nearly every New Age buzzword in the book.

What Wingfield did do was go out of his way to explain why he claims the circles can't be hoaxed. Wingfield has what he considers several very strong arguments to "positively conclude" that the rings can't be faked. Or does he? Early on in his presentation, he said "these are very definitely not hoaxed," but just a minute later said that they are "almost impossible to hoax." Does that mean he can think of a way the circles can be hoaxed, as several British investigators have shown?

Some photos show the grain spiraled outward from the center of the circle, but not always, as we saw several pictures where this was not the case. Wingfield called these examples "quite odd" and "unexpected," but didn't doubt that they were "real" crop circles as well.

The claim that there are "very, very few" eyewitnesses to the circles being formed is also offered as "proof" that they are "real." Wingfield said he could count on one hand the number of people he said had actually witnessed the formation of the patterns, yet he didn't bother to name them, read their statements, or give any other details of what would at least be some independent testimony. The fact that almost no one has seen the circles being made shouldn't surprise anyone: these fields are in the middle of very rural areas, where virtually the only residents are the farmers themselves. But in Wingfield's strange brand of science, not having independent witnesses is itself a form of proof!

He did show a slide of young Mary Freeman, who Wingfield says saw a UFO and a beam of light near Stonehenge, and was then abducted by aliens, taken into their craft and shown pictures of the patterns.

MUFON and CCCS bill themselves as scientific research groups, but they have no qualms with employing dowzers, channelers and psychics in their "investigations." These types of people were called upon many times during the lecture to add "scientific" weight to the CCCS show.

"The dowzing evidence is so strong," Wingfield exclaimed, "and that really removes any doubt that the circles are real!" Wingfield claims some of the circles lie along "a node point for Earth energy lines," and that the dowzers designate the barbell-shaped two-circle patterns as "a Ying and Yang, or a good and bad energy field." That Wingfield names dowzing as "evidence" for anything throws his credibility as a serious scientific researcher out the window.

As weak as dowsing is as verifiable scientific evidence, Wingfield then calls on even more unmeasurable claims to make his case: "Channeling is also straightforward and natural evidence of intelligence in the formation of the patterns," Wingfield said. Wingfield listed two mediums, including a map dowser, who visited the circles with him. One of them, named Rita Gould, Wingfield regarded as "a respected medium and a very psychic lady."

Gould and Wingfield spent a night sitting in a crop circle, according to Wingfield, where they reported a "trilling noise." Gould then spoke to the noise, first commanding it to stop and then coaxing it toward some bushes. Unfortunately, we have only Wingfield's word on any of this, since no photos, measurements or recordings of any kind were made that night.

Wingfield also said later in response to a question that he "thought time had slowed down while we were in the circle, because what we saw should have taken longer than our watches told us it did." Again, you'll have to take his word for this rather confusing statement.

The strong "presence" felt by trance mediums and channelers who visit the circles also makes Wingfield convinced of the authenticity of the circles. Of course, Wingfield hasn't been able to scientifically measure any type of phenomena, but says that he plans to try to do so if the CCCS can raise more money.

On one occasion Wingfield reported that an attempt was made to film a circle being formed, dubbed Project White Crow. Nothing happened. For eight days the White Crow team kept 24-hour vigil on a field where they "thought a circle might pop up"; alas, no circles, noises, energy fields, strange lights, UFOs, nothing. But several days later, Wingfield claims, a large circle did appear some distance away, which he says is proof that Gould's influence attracted whatever is causing the patterns.

Wingfield also mentions, almost as an afterthought, that the circles have had physical healing powers in at least one instance. This remarkable claim went unsupported with the name of the person involved or the ailment of which they were rid. If that claim alone were to be clearly and independently documented, CCCS and MUFON would attract the interest of researchers everywhere. And of course, that is the reason Wingfield states he does not pursue the healing claim: CCCS doesn't want other scientists getting in their way!

Beyond the 100 or so slides Wingfield showed of these quite mechanical-looking patches of mashed grain, he offered not a single shred of verifiable physical evidence to suggest any paranormal cause. No scientific measurements of the supposed "energy field," no interviews with the claimed eyewitnesses, no close-up photos of the areas where the patterns intersect the tractor ruts, no examination of the grain by a qualified agriculturalist, no precise mapping of the alignment of the patterns, no soil tests, no magnetic field tests, nothing: just snapshots of squashed crops.

I wasn't quite sure where Wingfield was trying to lead all of us at the Holiday Inn. He proffered no theory of his own, but sprinkled his comments with tantalizing one-liners like these: "Maybe the circles are trying to tell us something"; "It's the symbol of unity of consciousness; the essence of the New Age"; "I was beginning to think in terms of UFOs"; and perhaps best of all, "Especially New Age people would go and sit in these circles -- make of that what you will."

Wingfield's only thrust was to convince the audience that it is impossible to produce these types of circles by means of a hoax, but he does believe that there is some type of "intelligence" behind them. In at least one case, that intelligence was a BBC film crew.

In October of 1989, the BBC asked crop circle believer Colin Andrews to examine a circle they told Andrews they had found. Andrews visited the pattern and pronounced it genuine. The BBC then told Andrews that they had made the circle themselves by shuffling their feet while linking arms; they had easily walked into the field along the tractor ruts to avoid leaving tracks.

In the end, Andrews had to resort to saying that the circles looked "too perfect" to be genuine after all. No wonder the Earl of Haddington referred to Andrews and Pat Delgado, co-authors of the pro-circle book *Circular Evidence*, as "the wretched Delgado and Andrews."

Haddington's portion of the lecture was virtually incomprehensible. He showed mostly the same slides as Wingfield, except his were shown upside-down. He added shots of some old churches and cemeteries, religious pictographs, and the ancient mural drawings on the chalk cliffs of Dover, all of which he said were being "pointed to" by the patterns. He also had no firm statement to make on the cause of the circles, but kept emphasizing what he saw as clear religious symbolism.

He mentioned that the date June 6 kept coming up in the appearances of the circles, and he expects some huge event to happen this coming June 6 having something to do with the Virgin Mary. Haddington's vivid imagination found the letters "EVE" in one of the patterns, and a picture of a flying saucer as viewed from inside a cave is seen in the famous horse mural on the chalk cliffs, at least in Haddington's mind!

A short question-and-answer session followed the talk. Totally credulous audience members asked how the Hopi Indian tribe interpreted the patterns ("We have a lot of work to do there," Wingfield answered); had Wingfield used his physical voice or did he channel to the "trilling" sound he heard with Gould in the circle ("No, I just spoke!" Wingfield replied), etc.

Best of all, when asked when they thought the circles would begin appearing again this year, Haddington replied cheerily, "I suspect the circles will start up again just as soon as George and I get back to England"! No doubt!

Wingfield is surprised to find "practice" circles nearby other larger ones; he's mystified that the patterns only appear on freshly-worked, mature fields with clear tractor ruts; he finds compelling evidence for paranormal forces that sections of the patterns are connected by clear "walkways"; when a circle is less than perfectly round, he accepts it as "a learning experience for them," but says that the precision and circularity of the better ones "proves" they are not man-made; he wonders aloud why they are often aligned with magnetic North or some prominent object in the distance; he notes with wonder that no circle has ever spanned two adjacent fields, a road, a tree line or a property marker; and when a country farmer takes in \$20,000.00 cash in admission for visitors to his newly-patterned fields, Wingfield sees no possible motive factor for a hoaxer.

As someone who lived amid the cornfields of Illinois, I know how easy it is to disappear into a stand of grain, how to comfortably walk between the neatly machine-planted rows without detection, and how the crop is often so dense and resilient that one can lose sight of a companion less than six feet away. In other words, the crops themselves provide perfect cover for a hoaxer, whether they use a powerful farm tractor or only their feet, as the BBC crew had done.

As usual with the UFO crowd, a conclusion has been drawn absent any physical evidence to support it. Wingfield and Haddington are convinced that some paranormal force has formed these quite harmless pictures in the pastures. Then the facts to support their conclusion are invented or selected as needed, even if it means calling in dowsers and mediums.

At about \$12 per head admission, plus the books, magazines, cassettes, videotapes and T-shirt sales and many new membership dues and donations taken in by MUFON that night, it's clear that the traveling CCCS road show is run as a business. It was sad to see nearly 200 people suspend their reasoning and swallow the Wingfield & Haddington act in one gulp. Until the source of the circles is exposed, Haddington, Wingfield, CCCS and MUFON will continue to lead those unquestioning people down their garden path -- or perhaps in circles.

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## Meeting News

### March Meeting -- Faithhealing

We were pleased to have Ole Anthony speak at our March meeting. He discussed with us what he has discovered in his investigations of so-called faithhealers and specifically about Robert Tilton. He made an appeal to us all to get involved at

the grass roots level in watching faithhealers (there are several nationwide operations headquartered right in our own neighborhood), pooling our information, and in making sure they don't violate any laws. Hopefully, one will get careless.

There is much harm caused by these faithhealers. They divert money away from useful social causes, while they give little or nothing in return to the contributors. Importantly, they cause believers to forgo needed medical treatment that might otherwise cure their ills or ease their suffering. What Skeptics are most interested in, however, is that they falsely claim to be able perform cures of illness, deformities, etc. We would welcome a faithhealer who could adequately prove to us that he can perform such an act. - KB

#### **April Meeting -- Hypnosis Defined For NTS**

Steve Reed, a clinical psychotherapist that uses hypnosis as "just another tool" was our April NTS speaker. As he pointed out, virtually everybody has been hypnotized many times - but we probably don't realize it. Simple "daydreaming" is a state of light hypnosis. Essentially, whenever one is in a relaxed state of focused attention, they are in some stage of hypnosis.

Contrary to popular myth, you do not lose a sense of awareness in even the deepest stages. (If you did, how could you be advised to return to full alertness? In the deepest state, though, you may not easily recall the events.) Also, there's no validated record of anyone being unwillingly hypnotized - or of performing acts they would not otherwise do. Reed suggested that "behaving like a chicken" involves subjects that "show off" when given an excuse, much like the events at an office party.

One generally is more open to suggestion under hypnosis, however. Also, like with daydreams, you are free to fantasize. Thus, past life regression or UFO abduction claims are not validated by one "recalling" them under hypnosis.

Effective clinical use of hypnosis requires complete intellectual honesty by both the therapist and the subject. Unfortunately, no group is a central certifying body for hypnotists. Anybody can lay claim to being a "hypnotherapist," which accounts for the new-age/psychic types one encounters - and for some wild claims.

Reed uses hypnosis in about 10% of his practice. He's apparently found it most useful for relaxation exercises and has a modest amount of success with individuals that want to stop smoking. He also noted that it's useful for pain relief, particularly as used by many dentists. As stated earlier, "it's merely another tool that can be used." - JV **May Schedule**

Our own John Blanton and Mike Sullivan are attending the 1991 CSICOP Conference at Berkeley, Calif. this month. The program of our May meeting will be given by John and Mike covering what they learned there. The meeting will be held 21 May (Tue.) at 7:00 PM, at the Manske Library, located on the corner of Webb Chapel and Golfing Green, about 5 blocks north of Valley View Lane, in Farmers Branch. **June Schedule**

The subject of our June meeting is still under consideration, but it should be firmed up by the May meeting. The tentative date is 19 June (Wed.) at 7:00 PM at the Manske Library. Come to the May meeting or call John Blanton, (214) 416-8038, for confirmation.

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## ***A Piece of Blue Sky Scientology, Dianetics and L. Ron Hubbard Exposed***

**by Jon Atack**

**A Lyle Stuart Book / Carol Publishing Group, New York, 1990 -- Reviewed by Mike Sullivan**

Layfayette Ronald Hubbard was a middle-aged penny-a-word pulp science fiction writer when he submitted an article for the January 1950 issue of Astounding Science Fiction titled "Dianetics: The Evolution of a Science." That article, and the book that followed, Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health, started the worldwide cult of Scientology that has destroyed the lives and emptied the bank accounts of tens of thousands of people over the past 40 years.

Scientologists promote their cult religion under the guise of a science-based self-help mental therapy, but quickly indoctrinate new members in bizarre mental and physical drills, endless and expensive "levels" of mind-numbing counseling, and fanatical devotion to the writings of their founder, the eccentric Hubbard.

Jon Atack was a member of the Church of Scientology from 1974 to 1984, advancing to some of the highest levels within the "tech," the Church's term for the Dianetics therapy. This 400-page book chronicles his own journey through the Byzantine world of the Church, and provides one of the best-documented histories of the cult and its founder to date.

A Piece of Blue Sky is really two books: Atack's personal history of his involvement with the Church, plus a carefully referenced and documented chronicle of Hubbard, his followers and the internal workings of the Church.

Atack came to the Church when he was 19, seeking comfort from a broken love affair. After reading one of Hubbard's books, Science of Survival, Atack called the local Church Mission in Birmingham, England. Hooked by the scientific basis claimed for Dianetics, which Hubbard said was an extension of Freudian analysis, Atack was drawn into the cult as much by Hubbard's writings as by the incredibly cheerful staff he met at the Birmingham Mission.

Atack was also impressed by Hubbard's fictional personal achievements, which are still proffered today in Church books and brochures. Hubbard, according to Church materials, was a famous world explorer, a double-degreed nuclear physicist and mathematician, and a U.S. Navy Commodore squadron commander who was decorated 27 times and who saw action in all five theatres of World War II. Blinded and crippled by his war injuries, the Church claims, Hubbard cured himself completely when he discovered a way to blend modern science with Eastern philosophy and Freudian analysis.

In fact, Atack shows, Hubbard was a flop in the Navy, where he rose only to Lieutenant. He was relieved of his command of three separate small Navy vessels for incompetence. Academically, he received an "F" in an introductory physics course at George Washington University, and went on to receive no better than a "D" in any mathematics course at GW, from which he never graduated. Far from curing himself from his fictional war injuries, Hubbard collected a Navy disability check until his death, despite the enormous wealth he gained from the Church. He was a chain smoker, used most types of mind-altering drugs at one time or another, suffered from obsessive-compulsive behavior, paranoia, ulcers, conjunctivitis and arthritis, all ailments that the Dianetics therapy he invented claimed to be able to cure.

Atack tells a fascinating first-hand account of how one of the world's most successful cults attracts and captivates new members, drains them of their money, holds out false hopes for a better life through Dianetics therapy, and then "disconnects" them from their friends and family when they become disillusioned. Atack's own story, along with court testimony from many other former Church members and quotes from Hubbard and hundreds of official Church documents, gives chilling evidence of the dark side of Dianetics and Scientology.

Even after reading Atack's story and his investigations into Hubbard's huge money-making cult empire, it's difficult to imagine that rational adults could be taken in by such claptrap. The excerpts from Church materials and the explanations of Scientology training courses that Atack recounts are so wild that only the mind of a deranged science fiction author could possibly dream them up, which, of course, is exactly what happened.

Atack's research shows how Scientology fits the familiar cult pattern like a glove:

- the belief system is the revolutionary invention of a single individual;
- the founder is accorded deific status within the cult, despite fairly mediocre achievements;
- the faith demands blind devotion without question from its followers;
- the followers are told that their loved ones, conventional medical science and all outsiders ("wogs" in Hubbard-speak) are in conspiracy against them;
- that only by increasing their monetary devotion to the cause will the followers achieve the end goals claimed by the leaders;
- only the free labor supplied by the followers sustains the operations of the cult, and without it, the financial house of cards Scientology is built on would collapse;
- formerly high-ranked executives that have been cast out of the operation are suddenly exposed as deceitful conspirators from the start; etc.

Atack's book relates dozens of examples in vivid detail from his own Church experience for each of these traits, and how Hubbard's disciples slavishly followed the most outrageous orders from Church leaders.

Unlike its founder, The Church of Scientology itself is not dead. Church Missions are still running in most major American cities, including Dallas, and nearly every bookstore in the country carries at least some of Hubbard's turgid writing efforts. Bridge Publications, a front company for the Church's publishing arm, keeps grinding out Hubbard's teachings in a never-ending stream of self-proclaimed "#1 best-sellers," even though the author died after a stroke in 1986. It's hard to watch an hour of television without seeing an ad for Scientology's all-time top moneymaker and recruiting tool, the 40-year-old Dianetics.

An old Hubbard pulp has been resurrected and re-titled recently to capitalize on the country's appetite for quick-fix self-help advice. Ironically, I found Atack's book in the "New Non-Fiction" rack of the local bookseller where it belongs, right next to Hubbard's Clear Body, Clear Mind, where it doesn't belong!

Atack's book is an excellent addition to the already substantial list of titles exposing Scientology. The critical reader will find it an almost unbelievable case study of how a cult can ruin lives, and the cult researcher will be inspired by Atack's careful investigation of Hubbard and his legacy.

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## FAIR CLEAR AND TERRIBLE...*The Story of Shiloh*

by Shirley Nelson

**British American Publishing, \$21.95 -- Reviewed by Laura Ainsworth**

Here's a real story for the '90s: A young, dynamic, megomaniacal preacher, proclaiming himself to be the fulfillment of certain Biblical prophesies and believing himself to be directed by God's voice, establishes his very own fundamentalist ministry and gradually attracts believers. They are told that God will give them everything they need if they give everything they already have to the church. (Besides, Armageddon is just around the corner!) They are taught that doubt is evil, that logical thought is the worst enemy of faith. They are expected to go without medication or inoculation for deadly diseases, believing that their trust in God -- and blind faith in their anointed leader -- will triumph over Satan. They are told that they are warriors for God, that they are literally fighting for His victory on Earth against the forces of Satan. And when members of the congregation need his help, the minister blames their own shortcomings, or the workings of Satan, and ignores them.

Sounds like the expose of some modern-day televangelist's ministry, but it's not. In fact, we're not talking about the 1990s here, but the 1890s! The place was Shiloh, Maine, and the preacher was Frank W. Sandford. And in return for their faith and all their worldly goods, the people of Shiloh were rewarded with smallpox, diphtheria, near-starvation, psychological torture, physical abuse and the savagery of a Maine winter when prayers have failed to deliver coal. While many of these tragedies were taking place at Shiloh, Frank W. Sandford was thousands of miles away, cruising on his ministry's \$50,000 yacht.

Not that his round-the-world cruise was any picnic, either. While they were circling the globe for Christ, most of his crew died of scurvy, despite their fervent prayers. (What they really needed was a little orange juice.) Sandford was later convicted of negligence and did some prison time. His hard-core followers kept the faith until his return.

Whenever disease swept through Shiloh, Sandford demanded "purgues," days of fasting -- even for the sick -- and constant prayer. Disease was a sign that the people of Shiloh were not "right with God." The slightest personal flaw, real or perceived, was blamed for sickness and death. If a child withheld even two pennies from the ministry, he might be bringing down God's wrath.

Shirley Nelson, the author of *Fair Clear and Terrible*, is a sensitive writer and painstaking researcher whose parents and grandparents were members of Sandford's ministry. She closely examines the techniques he used to control his followers: the fasting, the finger-pointing, the relentless demands. The atmosphere at Shiloh was one of constant anxiety regarding one's spiritual condition. Leaving meant sure damnation.

Nelson underscores the danger for our world of the apocalyptic vision ("it invites war by presupposing it") and the tragedy that can result whenever one personality controls many others. She tells her story "for all the innocent, for those who ... are bound to be victims, destined to fall from the cliffs of someone else's ascent ... ."

Read about Frank W. Sandford, and several modern-day religious personalities spring immediately to mind. (If Sandford were alive today and had access to the airwaves, he would probably have a mansion at least as big as Tilton's.) Though it seems incredible in light of this century's unprecedented scientific advancement, fundamentalism is on the rise again, and millions of trusting souls continue to be victimized in the name of God.

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## Notes and announcements

### **Cold Fusion Controversy Continues**

Navy researchers at the China Lake Naval Weapons Center in California have reported experimental results that they say match those of the Utah scientists who startled the physics world two years ago with news of fusion on a tabletop. However, a U.S. Department of Energy cold fusion investigator doubts the Navy claims, citing numerous inconsistencies in the data.

The Navy team, under the direction of Melvin Miles, will have their findings published in the Journal of Electroanalytical Chemistry. In fax copies of the paper circulated worldwide before the publication, they claim to have produced excess helium-4 and up to half a watt of excess heat energy in heavy-water cells similar to those of the Utah team of B. Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischmann. Miles also collected the gas bubbling off the cells and had it analyzed at a University of Texas at Austin lab. UT-Austin confirmed that the samples had over 100 trillion atoms of helium-4, an amount that could be expected if the excess heat and the helium had indeed been produced by the same cold fusion process.

John Huizenga, the co-chairman of the DOE's cold fusion committee, said the Navy paper offered few details of the experimental apparatus used at the Navy's China Lake lab. He also noted that the density of helium-4 found by the Navy roughly matches that found in normal room atmosphere. A spokesman for the Utah-based National Cold Fusion Institute agreed that contamination from the atmosphere could be a problem, but claimed that the Navy team took adequate precautions against it.

Like Pons and Fleischmann in 1989, the Navy team chose to announce their findings before publication of their paper. The initial headlines grabbed by such announcements are rarely followed up with stories of like excitement by other scientists unable to confirm the results. Peer review is one of the cornerstones of modern scientific research, and preempting this important step in the inquiry process with the "science by press conference" used by several cold-fusion researchers casts a shadow on the entire scientific community. - MS

#### **Heavenly Cheerleader**

Quoted verbatim from the Chicago Tribune, February 20, 1991:

Forget geopolitics. The psychics and faith healers at the Whole Life Expo in Pasadena, Calif., know what lies behind the Persian Gulf war: "It's about the male-female struggle in all of us," said Seattle channeler Terry Cole-Whittaker, who describes herself as a "heavenly cheerleader." President Bush and Saddam Hussein are afraid of their feminine side and are therefore unbalanced, she said. Cole-Whittaker also said that Bush "doesn't even eat vegetables and is a meat eater and has that killer instinct. That goes for Hussein, too. There [in Iraq] they eat a lot of meat."

#### **Astrologically Correct Garments**

Also from the Chicago *Tribune's* Style section on the same date: "What's Your Sign? London designer gets astrological inspiration to create clothes that fit her clients' personalities." I will spare our readers from the entire article, and condense just the highlights of this hilarious report written by a San Francisco Chronicle reporter in London.

Rita Hraiz is a 27-year-old fashion designer who became interested in astrology at age 11. She charges \$200 for an hour long initial consultation which includes a chat on the power of color vibrations, a tarot card reading, and presentation of a crystal to help the client give or receive information. All of this, along with a birth chart reading, are required before she will even consider making clothes for a new client. Her designs, which average \$800 each, often include crystals sewn onto the fabric or painting zodiac symbols on the garment.

Hraiz lists some of the recommendations she makes to clients based on their zodiac sign: "Aries generally have the most amazing bodies, but will wear track suits and things. I think it's because they don't own their sexuality. The air signs-- Gemini, Aquarius, Libra--go for cheaper, cheerful clothes that will last the season. Libras, out of the whole zodiac, have the best sense of color. Capricorns like power dressing. The water signs are drawn to water colors." - MS

#### **The Skeptics Challenge**

As you remember, in our last newsletter, we offered a challenge to anyone who could perform a paranormal act or otherwise prove the occurrence of a paranormal event, subject to a set of conditions to be fulfilled, after which we would reward that individual with \$2000. If you want to win this money here are the conditions:

1. You must write us a letter, with your signature affixed, stating what paranormal act you can perform or prove (i.e., what is your claim?).
2. If we don't think it's a paranormal act, we reserve the right to refuse and there will be no test performed, no money rewarded.
3. If we accept your offer, we will draw up terms of a test for you to pass.
4. You must agree in writing to the terms of the test.
5. Upon successful completion of the test, the money will be rewarded.
6. After the test is completed, whether you are successful or not, both you and The North Texas Skeptics will own unrestricted rights to the results of the test. That is, you may publish the results, keep them secret, sell them, etc. We also will have the same rights, but we promise to publish the results, no matter how they turn out.
7. (Note: It is our opinion that you will, in effect, have to perform a MIRACLE to win.) Have at it. - KB

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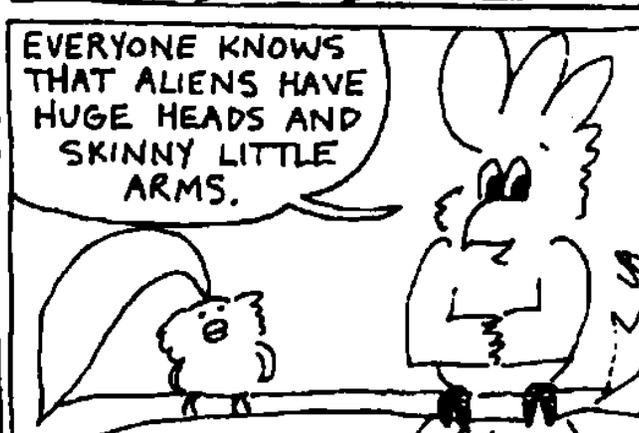
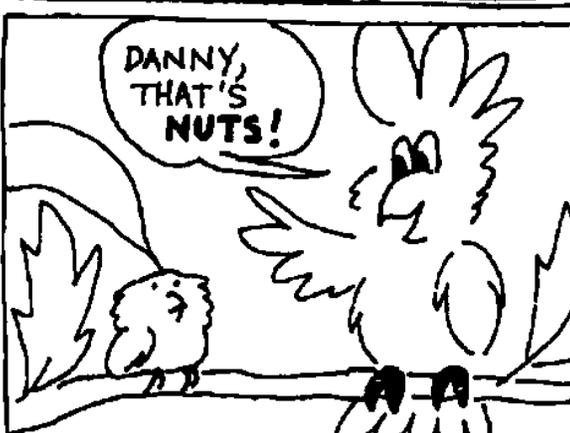
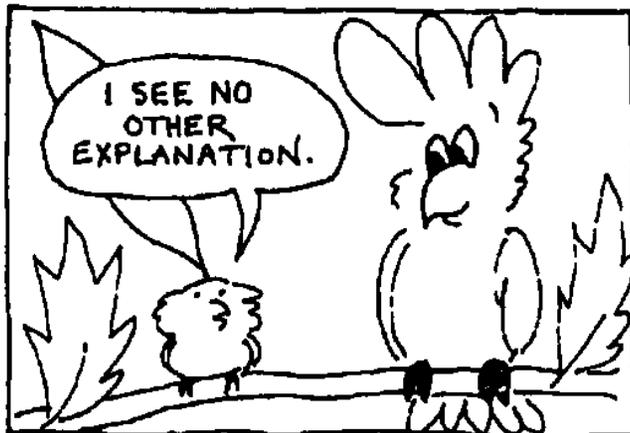
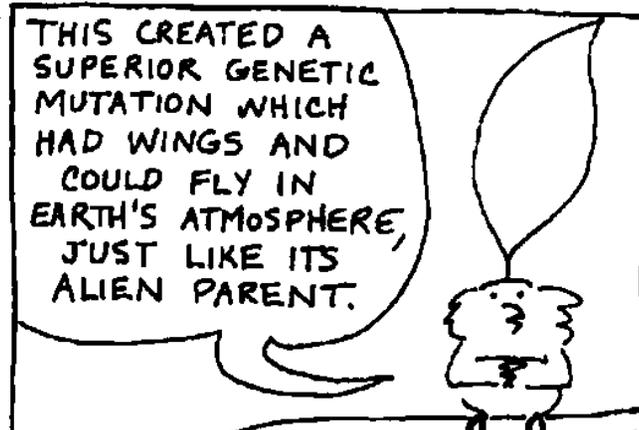
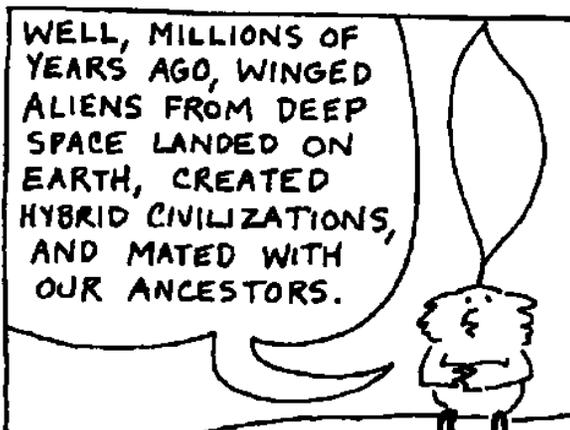
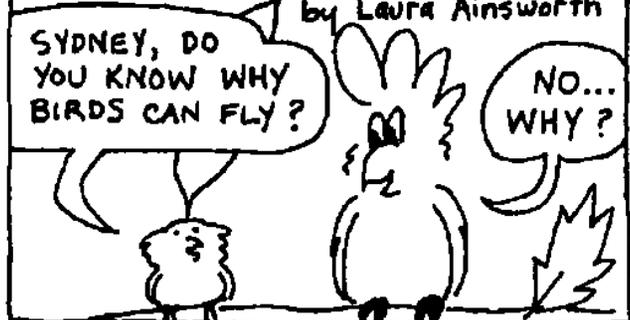
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## Up a tree: a skeptical cartoon

By Laura Ainsworth

# UP A TREE

by Laura Ainsworth



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