



The Newsletter of The North Texas Skeptics

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Chairman Pessimistic on CSICOP's Future

By Mike Sullivan

Reporting from the 1991 CSICOP Conference

BERKELEY, California -- Chairman Paul Kurtz predicted that the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) could face financial collapse in the coming year, and that this meeting could be CSICOP's last. Kurtz detailed some of CSICOP's financial woes and made an appeal for help at an awards dinner May 4 during the 15th annual convention of the Committee he founded 15 years ago.

In remarks to the audience of nearly 300 skeptics, scholars and invited guests from around the world, Kurtz listed some of the accomplishments of the Committee during its first 15 years:

- Almost 70 independent local skeptics groups have formed worldwide since CSICOP was founded in 1976.
- The Skeptical Inquirer, the official journal of CSICOP, has over 40,000 subscribers.
- Over 30 independent local groups with goals similar to CSICOP's publish newsletters and hold regular meetings in the U.S. alone.
- The skeptical movement is making inroads in combatting pseudoscience, quackery and fraud in diverse areas of science, medicine, education and public policy.

Kurtz went on to add his hopes for the 25th annual meeting of the Committee in 2001:

- Over 2,000 skeptics would gather for the Committee's 25th anniversary meeting.
- The formation of 1,000 autonomous local skeptics groups worldwide.
- The Skeptical Inquirer's circulation would grow to over 100,000 subscribers.
- CSICOP's efforts would result in better understanding of science and rational inquiry by people around the world.

CSICOP 's financial resources would be sufficient to carry out the goals of the Committee and serve society through education and research.

Kurtz then explained why he feels those hopes may never be realized, due to the terrible financial condition of CSICOP. Kurtz told the group:

- Two lawsuits are pending against the Committee that could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal defense. No lawsuit against the Committee has ever been won by a plaintiff, but CSICOP must still spend huge amounts of money and time to defend itself against often frivolous legal action.
- CSICOP is technically bankrupt, and has a negative net worth of over \$200,000.
- CSICOP loses money every year organizing and holding the annual convention and regional seminars.
- The Committee can no longer conduct business effectively from their quarters in a converted hardware store location in a poor section of Buffalo, New York.

Chairman's Call to Action

Kurtz explained that no bank in the Northeast will write a mortgage for CSICOP because of the financial weakness of the organization. Therefore, Kurtz said, donations from supporters are the only way to finance the construction of Phase II of The Center for Inquiry, a new complex planned for a site near the new North Campus of the State University of New York in Buffalo.

The proposed 16,000-sq.ft. Phase II building, if completed, will serve as the common headquarters for CSICOP, The Skeptical Inquirer staff, the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism (CODESH, publisher of Free Inquiry magazine) and Inquiry Media Productions, as well as a permanent research library, meeting rooms and administrative offices. Over \$1.5 million must be raised to finish the project, Kurtz said.

Chairman Kurtz ended his remarks by making a direct appeal for financial help to those gathered at the conference, held at the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley:

"You are the hard-core skeptics that are so important to CSICOP. You have shown your commitment to the skeptical movement by your presence at this meeting. Now CSICOP needs your help."

See related story "[Randi Resigns.](#)"

Editor's note: Contributions to CSICOP's Center for Inquiry Capital Fund Drive may be directed to CSICOP, Box 229, Buffalo, NY 14215-0229. See the coupon elsewhere in this issue for information on The Skeptical Inquirer, the official journal of CSICOP.

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Randi Resigns from CSICOP

By Mike Sullivan

CSICOP Fellow and founding member James "The Amazing" Randi resigned from the Committee because of his ongoing battle against lawsuits brought by former stage magician Uri Geller. In an open letter to skeptics' group written just a week after the CSICOP convention in Berkeley, Randi says Geller has stated that he intends to sue Randi "in every state and in every country", and that Geller is planning to file suit against him in Japan as well as one already filed in California.

Randi says Geller has lost two earlier suits he brought against Randi, which cost Randi \$155,000 to defend. Randi says he has resigned from CSICOP to prevent Geller's suits from affecting CSICOP and its already precarious finances.

Randi, who was easily CSICOP's most visible and outspoken advocate, wrote one of the best Geller exposT books to date, *The Truth About Uri Geller* (Random House, 1975). In it, he explains how Geller's tricks can easily be performed by amateur conjurers, and shows how professional magicians like Randi can produce even more astonishing effects than Geller's own without any paranormal cause.

In fact, Randi demonstrated some of his best close-up tricks for the skeptics gathered in Berkeley at a reception before his final awards dinner as a member of the Committee. Randi is an accomplished magician and escape artist, but skeptics know him best as an author of several of the finest investigative books in the field.

Randi's works include *The Faith Healers* (Prometheus Books, 1976), a blockbuster about the bogus faith healing claims of famous televangelists including Ft. Worth-based W.V. Grant, and *Flim-Flam!* (Prometheus Books, 1982), a classic textbook of rational inquiry.

Randi was awarded a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, in part for his courageous work in exposing the fund-raising and faith healing scams of televangelists. In a stunning exposT on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show*, Randi proved that televangelist Peter Popoff used a wireless radio receiver and behind-the-scenes assistants to "call out" afflicted believers at Popoff's TV shows and revivals.

In *Flim-Flam!*, Randi recounts investigations into more than a dozen hucksters including the "thought pictures" of ex-bellhop Ted Serios, Charles Berlitz's Bermuda Triangle myth, former hotel manager Erich van Daniken's "ancient astronaut" fables, plus assorted dowzers, ESP wanna-bees, spoon benders, table-tippers, and card sharps.

In a cover letter sent with Randi's open letter sent to NTS President John Blanton, Rick Moen of the Association of Local Skeptics Groups says, "The skeptics movement owes a monumental debt to James Randi. Now, it is quite simply time to begin paying him back."

"Randi was one of the founding members of CSICOP ... and is to this day perhaps the greatest bulwark of the skeptics' movement. I find it difficult -- and dispiriting -- to imagine the skeptics' movement without him."

"Gratitude is only one reason why skeptics should help Randi. There's also self-preservation. If Randi can be beaten down this way, you and I may well become quick, easy and obvious next targets. The time to put an end to this thing is now. No one else is coming to Randi's defense. It is up to us (emphasis in original)."

Moen goes on to urge support of Randi's defense against Geller's plan to ruin Randi financially. Moen asks that local groups like NTS publish the news of Randi's predicament, that supporters contribute to a trust fund Moen says will soon be established solely for Randi's defense, and to carefully leaflet and picket at any local appearance Geller may make.

Geller's Response

Shortly after receiving Moen's copy of Randi's open letter, Blanton received another open letter, this one from Geller himself and clearly directed to skeptics' groups like NTS. In the 4-page missive, Geller claims that Randi's statements about him have "hurt me and my family and caused me uncalculable (sic) damage."

As to Randi's claim that Geller had said he plans to sue Randi, Geller replies, "What I said is, that I will sue Randi in every country where my legal rights able (sic) me to stop him from spreading lies about me." Geller goes on to wonder how Randi could possibly be broke and asks that if his lawsuits were frivolous as Randi claims, how could they have cost Randi \$155,000 for defense?

As urgent as Geller's words are, he did not bother to sign the letter himself. Instead, it has been signed by someone else, as noted by the initials "gsg" next to Geller's name in the closing.

Editor's note : Moen may be contacted at 4030 Moraga, San Francisco, CA 94122-3928. Geller may be contacted at Uri Geller Associates Limited, Sonning Court, Sonning-on-Thames, Berkshire, RG4 0UR England.

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Scientology's Prozac Scare Campaign

Dallas Operation Fronts for Church Under Guise of Consumer Rights

By Mike Sullivan

One of the International Church of Scientology's most visible front groups is the Citizen's Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), which has been in business for over 20 years trying to recruit new members into the cult and turn public opinion against conventional psychiatry. In the past few years, the Church has mounted a huge campaign to discredit the safety of the prescription drug Prozac.

CCHR advertises on cable TV channels in Dallas under the pseudonym "Psychiatric Abuse Line", urging people to call for information on Prozac. CCHR hopes to attract depressed individuals to Scientology's bizarre "therapy" after frightening them with stories about an alleged link between Prozac and suicides.

This is in line with the Church's view that conventional medicine in general and psychiatry in particular is evil and unnecessary once one achieves "clear", the Church's euphemism for total understanding of the Dianetics training.

Prozac, a brand of fluoxetine hydrochloride developed and marketed by pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly & Company, is widely prescribed to treat severe depression. So far, the Church tactics have not resulted in decreased sales of the drug, but Lilly executives and top government medical officials are disturbed and frustrated by the misinformation campaign spearheaded by the Church.

In an April 19, 1991 *Wall Street Journal* article, staff reporter Thomas Burton told how Lilly introduced Prozac in 1988 after nearly 20 years of development, and how it quickly became the market leader. With 1990 sales of \$777 million, Prozac is one of Lilly's top products, second in sales to the antibiotic Ceclor.

Burton also reported:

- How the Church's misinformation about a man who killed 12 co-workers and himself in Louisville in 1989 and the alleged link to Prozac has scared hundred of depressed patient off the drug against the orders of their doctors.
- A Harvard psychiatry professor says the Church's campaign has caused a potentially serious public health problem.
- How the Church twists the facts reported in a Harvard medical school study to extrapolate that 14,000 Americans are suicidal as a result of Prozac; the study's author says the Church's use of his work is "absolutely irresponsible" and that he considers the proper use of Prozac safe and effective.
- More than 3.5 million people are using Prozac safely and with great benefit.
- The U.S. government's top psychiatrist called Prozac "a miracle, the first medication to rescue them from the living hell we call depression."
- How a former Church minister says that Scientology is out to derail psychiatry and drug companies as a way to gain more followers for their Dianetics training.

According to John Blamphin, director of public affairs for the 37,000-member American Psychiatric Association in Washington, D.C., Prozac has been proven effective in treating severe depression, with over 3 million prescriptions written worldwide since its introduction.

In a telephone interview for this article on June 6, Blamphin said the suicide rate for severely depressed individuals is one in six, whether or not medications are used. "Like all drugs," Blamphin said, "Prozac isn't 100 percent effective. No drug is. But I would be more surprised to find that no one who ever used Prozac had committed suicide."

Blamphin says that many APA member doctors contacted the organization after Prozac was given what he says was a

very one-sided treatment by CCHR officials on the Donohue TV show. Blamphin says that APA tried to get a representative on the show to provide some balance, but the show's producer turned them down.

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

Blamphin said that patients with severe depression are likely to do almost anything, even when being treated with medications. He said that he knew of at least one case of a patient, concerned about the unfounded Prozac allegations, who discontinued using the drug and later committed suicide. In this way, Blamphin said, the Scientology campaign could probably result in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

"We have no statement on Scientology. They can say or do anything they wish, as long as it doesn't hurt anyone," Blamphin said. "What we are concerned with is when any organization makes statements or does things that scare people into discontinuing medication that is prescribed by their doctor. Prozac is a beneficial drug. It simply gives the doctor another tool to use."

Our thanks to Dr. Stephen Barrett of CSICOP's paranormal health claims subcommittee for his assistance in researching this article.

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Scientology Attacks *Time*

\$3-million Ad Campaign Aims to Discredit Magazine

By Mike Sullivan

The Church of Scientology International mounted a \$3-million campaign to deflect the scrutiny caused by *Time* magazine's 8-page cover story exposé on the cult in *Time's* May 6 issue. The Church ran a series of full-page, full-color ads during May and June and one special insert section in *USA Today* attacking *Time*, claiming the magazine has a history of scurrilous reporting.

In a story about the ads in its own pages on May 30, *USA Today's* Steven Anderson says that the Church ads have been reviewed for libel by the newspaper's legal department, and that the paper will treat the Scientology ads like any other advertisement.

On the same date, just two pages after the Church's full-page ad, the newspaper's Letterline column carried three pro-Scientology letters, one from a Clearwater, FL man. One of Scientology's U.S. headquarters is located in Clearwater.

The campaign follows routine Church tactics in dealing with its critics: deflect attention away from the facts in the *Time* article, and instead attack the attacker. The Church ads, under the headline "What magazine gets it wrong in 1991?", list quotes from individuals critical of *Time's* reporting. Many of those quoted are performers or artists who have received unfavorable reviews of their works in *Time's* pages over the magazine's nearly 70 years of publication.

One ad recounted *Time's* 1930's coverage of Hitler's rise to power and military buildup before World War II as an example of what the Church says is *Time's* distorted reporting. This follows the same pattern of misdirection as former Scientology insider Jon Atack chronicled in his book, *A Piece of Blue Sky*, reviewed in the May-June 1991 issue of this newsletter.

Conspiracy Theory

On June 14, the Church bought a special insert section in *USA Today*, which has daily paid circulation and pass-along readership totalling over six million. The slick 28-page all-color insert posits that the *Time* story is part of a complex conspiracy between the magazine, the WPP Group, a conglomerate which includes the J. Walter Thompson ad agency, and Eli Lilly & Company, the maker of the prescription drug Prozac.

The Church claims that *Time* is trying to destroy the Church because of Church efforts to discredit Prozac, costing *Time* ad revenues controlled by JWT and their client Lilly.

With dozens of out-of-context quotes, the Church tries to make their case as the persecuted, misunderstood salvation of mankind, striving to save lives and spread happiness through Dianetics, goodwill and charity. The insert goes on to give the reader a fictional history of the cult's founding by L. Ron Hubbard, plus 13 glowing pages of propaganda for the Church and its various front groups. The back cover carried an ad for the Church's prime recruiting tomes, Hubbard's 40-year old Dianetics and the more blatantly pseudo-religious Scientology.

The Church's unsupported claims about their aims and accomplishments described in the insert know no bounds. Among them:

- Scientology is the world's fastest-growing religion.
- Scientology is the world's most courageous social reform group.
- Conventional psychiatry has been driven to harsh attacks on the Church because of Scientology's superior technology.
- There are 500 Scientologists for every psychiatrist, "proof" that Scientology is winning the "war of popularity in dealing with the mind."

The insert left out the details of Scientology's bizarre belief system, detailed in several exposT books by former Church insiders and readily verified by any of the kooky books by Hubbard, the late pulp science-fiction author and Scientology's founder:

- Human actions are controlled by a 4-quadrillion year-old soul-like entity called a Thetan that travels from galaxy to galaxy. Mainstream scientists estimate the universe to be around 15 billion years old, less than 1/1,000,000th as old as the imaginary universe inhabited by Hubbard's Thetans.
- Endless and expensive levels of Dianetics "auditing" are designed to remove negative imprints called "engrams" formed in each person's Thetan before birth.
- Hubbard's E-Meter, a crude version of a skin galvanometer, can be used to determine a follower's path towards "clear", the promised but extremely elusive end-goal of Dianetics therapy.

Scientology Front Groups

In the *Time* cover story, associate editor Richard Behar called Scientology a thriving cult of greed and power that is mounting an effort to go mainstream. Behar told of the cult's steady move to become accepted as a valid mental health alternative, and the Church's avowed hatred of conventional psychiatry.

Behar also explained the Church's efforts to attract new members through their many front groups and financial scams, including Sterling Management Systems, Way to Happiness Foundation, Applied Scholastics, Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), Concerned Businessman's Association of America, and Narconon. All of these, Behar reported, are sham outfits whose only goal is to promote Scientology and recruit new followers.

Behar found that the Church had retained Hill and Knowlton, one of the country's largest public relations firms, to bolster its public image. That followed a much more negative report of Scientology's public perception by Trout & Reis, another respected P.R. firm, hired by the Church shortly after founder L. Ron Hubbard's death.

Behar's investigation caused him some personal troubles with Scientology's leadership. Behar claims that the Church unleashed a stable of private investigators and attorneys to harass him after he started his research. Behar says in a sidebar to the *Time* story that the Church, operating through a Church-run enterprise called Educational Funding Services, had obtained a copy of his personal credit report without his authorization. Behar also says he and several of his friends were contacted by Church investigators curious about his credit (which he says is excellent), his health (also excellent), and whether he'd had any trouble with the IRS (which, unlike Scientology, he hasn't).

Editor's note: The Scientologists have at least two operations running right here in Dallas: Church of Scientology International and Celebrity Centre Dallas (801 Manderville Lane, 691-4821), and CCHR with its ersatz "Psychiatric

Abuse Line" in Richardson (669-8029). The Church held a "Dianetics Seminar" at the Anatole hotel in Dallas on June 8th; your editor did not hear of the event in time to attend and report. NTS members and Skeptic readers are encouraged to call when they learn of events of interest to NTS members. See the Letters to the Editor column for our phone numbers.

See related [story](#) in this issue:

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The Skeptic Goes Monthly!

This issue marks the first monthly edition of your newsletter. From now on, you can expect to receive your copy of *The Skeptic* around the first of each month, year-round. Your board of directors voted on June 10 to adopt the monthly format as one of the best tools we have to fulfill our mission as an educational and public service organization.

As always, we need your contributions and suggestions to make *The Skeptic* the best it can be. Your articles and story ideas are welcome -- see the Letters column for information on how you can submit your material for publication. In the coming months, we plan to test a 2-color look for the newsletter and to expand the circulation far beyond the membership of the NTS.

Newsletter-only subscribers: You will continue to receive *The Skeptic* for the balance of your current subscription period; you will simply receive monthly service now instead of bi-monthly in the past. NTS members will also receive monthly newsletters and will be contacted as usual when their annual membership is due for renewal.

Your board of directors will take up the financial considerations of the monthly schedule in the next board meeting. The goal will be to find a fee structure that will meet the production and mailing costs while providing a superior newsletter every month.

Our many thanks to Associate Editor Keith Blanton, whose excellent layout and production skills give *The Skeptic* a clean, professional appearance. Thanks also to the members and readers who have offered kind encouragement and feedback on *The Skeptic*.

Mike Sullivan, Editor

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Letters to the Editor

We welcome letters from our readers. Please make your comments brief and related to topics of interest to NTS members. Letters must be signed, and are subject to editing for space considerations. *To The Editor :*

Just a few comments on Mike Sullivan's article, "MUFON's Circular Reasoning." (*The Skeptic*, May-June 1991)

1. Does no one at *The Skeptic* know that British titles of nobility, such as "Earl," are inherited (emphasis in original)? I fear this does not help your credibility.
2. Whatever one may think of Wingfield, at least he has personally inspected a large number of crop circles. As far as I can tell, Sullivan has examined exactly none. Is it really the position of NTS that the scientific method prefers armchair-pontification-at-a-distance over on-site investigation?
3. Sullivan's own psychic powers must be substantial. He says that he saw "nearly 200 people suspend their reasoning and swallow the Wingfield & Haddington act in one gulp." How can he possibly know this? Did he

read all 200 minds? I know for sure he didn't interview everybody!

Robert Davis, Dallas

Mike Sullivan replies:

I am delighted that Mr. Davis only takes issue with these three points from my 2,300-word story on the crop circle circus, and I hope all our subscribers read as critically as he does. I offer these answers to his questions:

1. British titles can be inherited, as Mr. Davis says. They may also be bought, as is done quite often in modern British society. I refer to the April 1991 issue of *World Press* magazine, where a report on page 32 tells of how the prices of noble titles range from \$16,000 to over \$200,000 in today's market, and how one need not even be a British subject to buy one. Titles of nobility can also be obtained by marriage, as Princess Diana, who is in line to become the next queen of England, will attest.
2. I readily admit that I have not investigated any crop circles first-hand. I am also not making extreme claims of their cause as Haddington and Wingfield are doing. NTS and the skeptical movement do not advocate armchair pontification in place of the scientific method -- we simply demand extraordinary proof when extraordinary claims are made. Wingfield bills himself as a serious investigator and scientist. I saw proof of neither in his presentation, and certainly no evidence that either man had done any careful scientific investigation. My goal in attending was to report to our readers the claims made in the lecture and cite the evidence given to support those claims.
3. I make no claim of psychic powers, which Wingfield calls on readily to back up his crop circle stories. My statement was not intended to include the skeptical members of the audience who were also in attendance that night, including NTS Vice President Joe Voelkering and former NTS technical advisor Dr. Ray Eve. But after sitting in the crowd for nearly four hours, it was very plain to me that the bulk of the audience was receptive to anything Wingfield and Haddington had to say. Not one question or comment from the group showed the slightest disbelief.

Was Mr. Davis in the crowd? If so, I certainly hope he applied the same critical evaluation to the Wingfield & Haddington lecture as he did to my report of it, which I welcome.

Mike Sullivan, Editor

Writing for The Skeptic

Do you have something to share with other NTS members? Submit it for publication in *The Skeptic!* News clippings, original cartoons, articles, book reviews, letters, excerpts from technical journals on controversial topics, and any other materials related to rational inquiry are always welcome. You may contact us:

By US Mail :

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By e-mail: editor@ntskeptics.org

Original writing may be submitted on paper, on computer diskette or via modem. Please contact the editor for more information.

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Skeptical Outlook

A Peek At The Editor's In-box.

Starting with this issue of *The Skeptic*, we will preview some of stories that we have in progress, other stories we would like to write for which we need some expert assistance from our members or readers, and items of local interest that NTS members may want to investigate and report on for *The Skeptic*.

We invite our members and readers to help us investigate and report on the following items:

Quack computer? The "Quest" nutrition computer has been installed at the Nature's Alley food store in Richland Hills (phone 817-485-6041). The computer is said by its manufacturer to be able to diagnose ailments and recommend nutritional and diet treatments after the user answers a series of questions.

Dr. Stephen Barrett of the Lehigh Valley Council Against Health Fraud and co-chairman of CSICOP's paranormal health claims subcommittee informed us of this new machine. He says he has written to Texas health and medical licensing officials asking that the machine be cited for practicing medicine without a license. Dr. Barrett says Nature's Alley has one of the first of these machines in the country. Are there *Skeptic* readers that can investigate and report on this new gadget, and include a printout of its advice for Dr. Barrett's follow-up?

The Big Sleep: Manipulation Under Anesthesia (MUA) is a procedure offered by Dallas mega-chiropractor Ty Talcott. One patient who Talcott advised should have the procedure said that MUA costs over \$15,000 for three out-patient treatments. We'd like to know why the non-surgical procedure costs so much, why the patient must be put under general anesthesia for a chiropractic adjustment, and we'd like to hear from patients whether their investment in MUA treatments proved safe and effective as claimed.

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The third eye

By Pat Reeder

In case you missed them, CBS presented two "documentaries" in May on supernatural subjects. The first was an hour of *True Life Ghost Stories*, dramatized with all the cold, scientific objectivity you would expect from the show's director, Tobe Hooper, whose credits include *Poltergeist* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

Later that same week, CBS enlightened us the masses with an hour's worth of dramatized case histories of UFO abductees. The dramatizations...sorry, "re-creations"...of said cases involved the usual bug-eyed space monsters, who must be a popular item at costume stores all over Hollywood by now. Such notorious fibbers as Travis Walton were allowed to make their cases completely unchallenged, and just to drive home the point, the whole show was narrated in heavy, dramatic tones by James Earl Jones, the voice of Darth Vader. At one point, Walton said he wished people could look past his UFO experience and just see him for what he really is. A few of us do, Travis.

And Cheers to *TV Guide* magazine, for giving "Jeers" to CBS over this one-two punch to viewers' intelligence. Of CBS' "reality programs," *TV Guide* remarked, "it may be reality to them, but not to us."

Our old friend Kevin McCarthy of KLIF continues to let his show be used as a mouthpiece for loons. In early June, Charles Berlitz guested, ostensibly to promote his new language guide for travelers. As usual, during the course of the show, he managed to work in and tie together the Bermuda Triangle, Japanese crop circles, Atlantis, the Devil's Triangle, and more nonsense and folk tales. If his language guide is as well-researched as his other works, unfortunate tourists in Belgium may find themselves being arrested when they were just trying to order a cup of coffee.

A few days later, Kevin played host to a woman who claims to be a "psychic color reader." She did an admirable job of

cold reading over the phone lines, but as far as her ideas on color go, I wouldn't ask her to help pick out wallpaper if I were you.

According to the Associated Press, a popular newsmagazine in India consulted nine prominent "psychics and astrologers" for their predictions on the outcome of India's recent election.

The poll was conducted before Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, but published afterward. Six of the soothsayers predicted Gandhi would be elected. The other three wouldn't go out on a limb, so to speak, but they did predict that Gandhi would hold an important position in the government in the future. None of them specified whether the position would be horizontal.

Homegrown psychic John Catchings has been a busy beaver this month. First, he was a guest on "Geraldo," on a show devoted to "psychic detectives." Not surprisingly, there was nary a skeptic in the house. Viewers were allowed to watch the desperate faces of bereaved mothers as these self-proclaimed psychics spouted unsubstantiated and unverifiable information about the fates of their missing children. It was, frankly, sickening.

Catchings received even more publicity in mid-June, with a highly credulous feature article on his exploits in *The Dallas Times Herald*. A member of the Dallas police department was allowed a paragraph or so to explain why they refused to consult him, but rest assured the paper gave Catchings plenty of space to refute the pig-headed narrow-mindedness of those silly cops.

Speaking of the *The Dallas Times Herald*, the June 19 edition brings a sad story of a female graphologist from the "Institute for Graphological Sciences" in Dallas. Her body was found in the trunk of a car in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and her vacation companion, an unlicensed "mental therapist," has been arrested for first degree murder. While not wishing to make light of a tragic happening, one cannot help but wonder how someone who made her living assessing the personality quirks of job applicants from their handwriting could have failed to detect the homicidal tendencies of her companion. Did she not see his signature when he registered at the hotel?

Finally, my wife and I had a delightful dinner recently with local journalist Hugh Aynesworth and his wife. Apparently, during his recent location filming in Dallas, Oliver Stone rather studiously avoided talking to Hugh, a nationally-renowned expert on the John Kennedy assassination and an eyewitness to the event. Word is that Stone's film will present a wildly credulous accounting of Jim Garrison's utterly discredited conspiracy theory. Kevin Costner, now filming in Garrison's stomping ground in New Orleans, has been warned by many locals that the man he is portraying is widely considered to be a crackpot. With so much egg on his face from Robin Hood, Costner must not be looking forward to the critical reaction when JFK debuts.

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