



The Newsletter of The North Texas Skeptics

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Richard Feynman — Brilliant Enigma

Curious Character on the Leading-Edge

By Joe Voelkering

Second of Two Parts

Here are some of my favorite "skeptical" excerpts. Hopefully, they will provide a representative taste of each book. (Some material credited to "SYJ ..." or "WDYC ..." can also be found in *GENIUS*):

...

"The first principle is that you must not fool yourself — and you are the easiest person to fool. ...

"... I'm talking about a specific, extra type of integrity, that is ... bending over backwards to show how you're maybe wrong — that you ought to have when acting as a scientist. And this is our responsibility as scientists, ... to other scientists, and I think to laymen."
SURELY YOU'RE JOKING ...!

...

"The only way to have real success in science, ... is to describe the evidence very carefully without regard to the way you feel it should be. If you have a theory, you must try to explain what's good what's bad about it equally. In science, you [must have] a kind of standard integrity and honesty.

"For a successful technology, reality must take precedence over public relations, for Nature cannot be fooled."

"The same thrill, the same awe and mystery comes again and again when we look at any question deeply enough. With more knowledge comes a deeper, more wonderful mystery, luring one on to penetrate deeper still ... to more wonderful questions and mysteries — certainly a grand adventure!"

"We have found it of paramount importance that in order to progress we must recognize our ignorance and leave room for doubt. Scientific knowledge is a body of evidence of varying degrees of certainty — some most unsure, some nearly sure, but none ABSOLUTELY sure.

"Now, we scientists ... take it for granted that it is perfectly consistent to be unsure, [to] not know. ... [However, we have to conscientiously guard this freedom] to question — to doubt — to not be sure."

"What can we say to dispel the mystery of existence? ... I think we must frankly admit that we do not know.

"This is not a new idea; ... This is the philosophy that guided the men who made the democracy we live under. The idea that no one really knew how to run a government led to the idea that we should arrange a system by which new ideas could be developed, tried out, and tossed out if necessary, with more new ideas brought in — a trial-and-error system. This method was the result of the fact that science was already showing itself to be a successful venture. ... Even then it was clear ... that doubt and discussion were essential to progress into the unknown."

"It is our responsibility as scientists, knowing the great progress which comes from [the] philosophy of [admitting] ignorance, [and from the resulting] freedom of thought, to proclaim the value of that freedom; to teach how doubt is not to be feared but welcomed and discussed; and to demand this freedom — as our duty to all future generations."

"If we want to solve a problem that we have never solved before, we must leave the door to the unknown ajar."

What Do You Care ...

"[We must view all laws of science as provisional] — they are not [to be regarded as] exact. There is an edge of mystery, always some place where we have some fiddling around to do yet. This may or may not be a property of Nature, but it certainly is common to all the laws [of science] as we know them today."

"People say to me, 'Are you looking for the ultimate laws of physics?' No, I'm not. ... If it turns out there is a simple ultimate law which explains everything, so be it — that would be very nice to discover. If it turns out that it's like an onion with [an infinite number] of layers ... then that's the way it is."

"It doesn't seem to me that this fantastically marvelous universe, this tremendous range of time and space and different kinds of animals, and all the planets, and all these atoms with their motions, an so on; all this complicated thing can merely be a stage so that God can watch human beings struggle for good and evil — which is the view [creationists have]. The stage is too big for the drama."

"You see, one thing is, I can live with doubt and uncertainty and not knowing. I think it's much more interesting to live not knowing than to have answers which might be wrong. I have approximate answers and possible beliefs and different degrees of certainty about different things, but I'm not ABSOLUTELY sure of anything. . . .

"I don't HAVE to know an answer. I don't feel frightened by not knowing things. ..."
— **Richard Feynman**; *GENIUS*

" ... Feynman's persistent skepticism, his unwillingness to accept any assertion [merely] on authority, would be useful [in the Manhattan Project]. If there was any baloney or self-deception in the idea ... Feynman would find it."

"To Feynman, looking on, it seemed like classic self-deception: a researcher believes in the result he is seeking, and he starts to overweight the favorable evidence and underweight the possible counterexamples. ...

"Later, experimenters at Caltech felt that Feynman's very presence exerted a sort of moral pressure on their findings and methods. He was mercilessly skeptical."

"He believed that it was not certainty but freedom from certainty that empowered people to make judgments about right from wrong: knowing that they could never be more than provisionally right, but able to act nonetheless. Only by understanding uncertainty could people learn how to evaluate the many kinds of false knowledge that bombard them: claims of mind reading and spoon bending, belief in flying saucers bearing alien visitors.

"Science can never disprove such claims, any more than it can disprove God. It can only devise experiments and explore alternative explanations until it gains a commonsense sureness. 'I have [debated about pseudo-scientific based claims] with lots of people,' Feynman once said. 'I was interested in this: they kept arguing that it is possible. And that's true. It is possible. They do not appreciate that the problem is not to demonstrate whether it's possible or not but whether it's [really happening] or not.'"
— **James Gleick**; *GENIUS*

Both of the Feynman/Leighton books use the phrase "Adventures of a Curious Character" in their subtitles — which might be a subtle double-entendre. Multiple definitions could easily be used for the last two words: a distinctive, curious personality and a rare, unique character — with a wealth of intellectual curiosity and an abundance of ethical character.

Capital "Cs" certainly seem appropriate for all of them!

Finally, a "freebie" — from an essay not incorporated into the books reviewed here:

"Learn from science that you must doubt the experts. ... Science is the belief in the ignorance of experts. ... Each generation that discovers something [of value] must pass that on with a delicate balance of respect and disrespect [as it must with the rest our] accumulated wisdom — plus the wisdom that it may not be wisdom."
— **Richard Feynman**, *WHAT IS SCIENCE?*¹

1. As quoted by Leon Lederman in *THE GOD PARTICLE*

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Open forum

This column is the forum for Skeptic readers to contribute news items of interest to critical thinkers. Please send your items to the Editor by the 15th of each month for inclusion in the next month's issue.

...

A UFO CALLED JANET — A recent (March 1994) issue of *Popular Science* had a well-researched article on the super-secret Groom Dry Lake Test Facility in Nevada. Some data in it seems worth passing along: Also known as Area 51, The Box, The Pig Farm, The Ranch, Watertown Strip — and (officially) "a remote test facility" — Groom Lake has been the initial home of "black project" aircraft such as the U-2, A-12/SR-71, F-117A, etc. Current "non-existent" projects reportedly include a hybrid hypersonic aircraft known as Aurora, Senior Citizen or Senior Smart. The high level of secrecy surrounding the facility has been used to advantage by "UFOlogists" who claim the activities include hush-hush UFO testing. Thus, it's become a mecca for saucer seekers. Of course, they contend official denials that the base exists "prove" their allegations. Serious aerospace watchers have been exchanging information on the base, and associated edge-of-the-envelope projects, for decades. Thus, aerospace buffs find both the denials and the UFO contentions rather amusing.

Insiders have cited: A 27,000 foot runway that "isn't there"; an estimated \$14.3 billion that "isn't spent" for secret programs (which would seem to be one very

obvious reason why the feds would want to maintain its "black project" status); 1500 to 2500 people that "don't work there," and: shuttle flights on Boeing 737s that "aren't flown" by defense contractors from Las Vegas and Palmdale. The shuttle trips are commonly referred to as "Janet flights" — because of the air traffic control radio communications prefix they use, such as "Las Vegas Tower, (this is) Janet One-Zero."

The official denials are pretty silly, since the feds don't have total control over a number of public-access mountains that overlook the complex from about a dozen miles away. Hence, there's an eclectic mix of serious aerospace fans, freedom-of-information advocates, budget watchdogs, UFO buffs and (probably) spies sharing the prime viewing spots at times. The mountain tops provide a nice view of the "Janet" flights, which fly long, curved, descents into the valley around Groom Lake. Portable ATC receivers work particularly well at those high elevation sites, so the aerospace types commonly monitor flight-related radio communications.

Now, a 737 with its landing lights on at night over unlighted terrain appears to sort of hover like a helicopter, since there are no good references for noting its progress. Mix that fact with a legendary UFO, "old faithful," that makes a regular appearance most mornings. OK — next, envision the aerospace gang listening to a 4:45 AM "Janet" inbound — while the UFO buffs are looking for "old faithful." The "Janet" 737 turns on its landing lights while it's still a fair distance out — and everyone observes exactly what they'd been hoping to see!

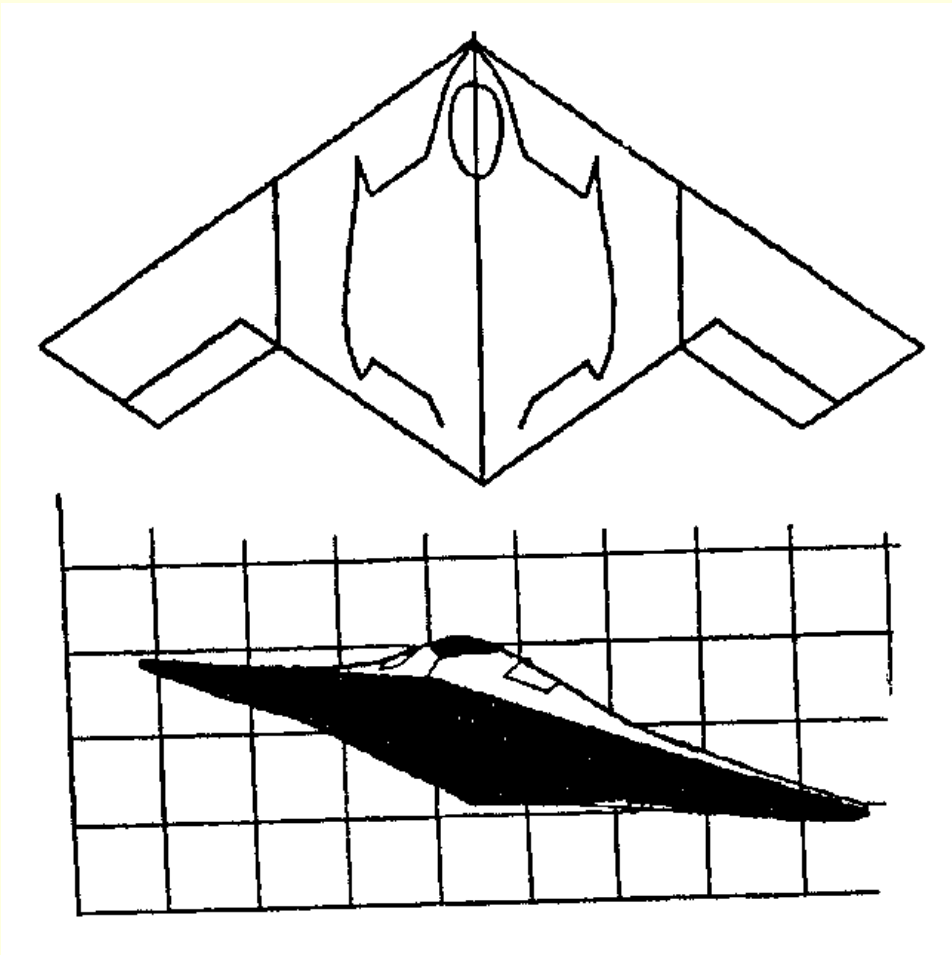
— JV

INVISIBLE PROOF — The UFOlogy crowd obviously recognizes a good thing when the don't see it. It take about three laps of circular reasoning to explain, however. Lap 1: The repressed memory types claim that failure to remember abuse "proves" one has repressed the memory. Lap 2: UFO abduction "therapists" use the same rationale to "prove" repressed abductions. Lap 3: The reason all those claimed abductions from inside large cities weren't seen by other people is that the UFO, aliens and abductees were made invisible. Thus, if you can't see a UFO, impliedly that "proves" it's there!?

That brings some interesting questions to mind: 1: Why is the invisibility trick supposedly used in places like New York and Washington, D.C., but not employed to hide Groom Lake? 2: Why do the "abductees" see the "invisible" UFO and aliens while others can't? 3: If the object is actually observed, does that mean it's not a UFO? 4: Does credulity have no end?

— JV

A REAL IFO — Aerospace watchers at Groom Lake, NV, and Roswell, NM, have seen an aircraft that looks like a scaled-down B-2 with a lower aspect ratio (wingspan-to-length) planform. Like the B-2, it lacks vertical fins/rudders. Viewed from a bit to the side of its fore-aft centerline, and a like amount above or below the centerline, it displays a "squashed diamond" profile. (See accompanying drawing.) Any bets re: it showing up in the tabloids as a UFO?



Drawn by aviation expert Bill Sweetman, these overhead and front outlines of the stealthy aircraft are based on sightings by Douglass and aircraft spotter Mark Farmer of Juneau, Alaska. Farmer saw the plane in May 1993 near Groom Lake, Nev.

— JV

JUNK SCIENCE IN THE LEGISLATURE — Drunk-driver tests that employ Breathalyzer sampling has been challenged in some courts because of the fairly large amounts of "scatter" in readings that equate to specific blood/alcohol levels. (Blood/alcohol values, alone, apparently involve a scatter factor re: actual intoxication, so the real validity of a Breathalyzer reading would seem to equate to sort a "scatter stacked on scatter" situation.)

One state's legislature has proposed a remedy: They want to make a specific breathalyzer level the "scientific equivalent" of a (supposedly) corresponding blood/alcohol level. (If it's not really scientifically valid, we'll make it legally scientifically valid!) Wonder if they could come up with a value for scientific ignorance, too?
— JV

MACK ATTACKED? — UFO abduction proponents have had a highly-credentialed advocate in Harvard psychiatrist John Mack. Mack, whose book about T.E. Lawrence won the Pulitzer Prize for biography in 1977, has a new book out from Scribners with accounts of 13 of his client's abduction cases. Mack calls those who claim alien abductions "experiencers," and has concluded that their stories describe real events and are not explicable as psychological phenomena. Despite the total lack of any corroborating evidence for these fantastic tales of spaceship rides, bizarre alien medical experiments, blue tractor beams and little gray men, Mack is convinced it has all happened as the experiencers say. He has hit the book-tour circuit to promote Abduction, and was featured on the CBS-TV 48 Hours show about UFOs on April 20.

But Mack's techniques and theory may come under some scrutiny after Time magazine published a story in their April 25 issue about how Mack was taken in by a debunker's story of alien abduction, rides on alien craft with Nikita Khrushchev and JFK during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and more. Donna Bassett, a 37-year old Boston writer, wrote to Mack with a made-up story of alien contacts in her family going back to the 11th century. Mack provided her with alien-abduction literature to read prior to her visit, and then invited her to come to hypnotic regression sessions he held in a darkened bedroom of his house.

Bassett says she acted her way through the regressions, feeding the receptive Harvard psychiatrist one fantasy after another, including the JFK/Khrushchev yarn. Mack bought it all, she says: Bassett rose through the ranks of the alien-abductee support group network, and Mack even made her the treasurer of an abductee-support group he ran. "John made it obvious what he wanted to hear," she says. She also claims Mack billed client's insurance companies for support-group sessions which he says are "therapy" and not research.

Time says that Mack declined to discuss Bassett's claims other than to say he had doubts about her story all along. Other mental-health professionals, including Harvard Medical School professor and psychiatrist Fred Frankel, say that Mack is misusing hypnosis, improperly coaching clients and prompting them in their alien contact tales; others say he is actually harming some clients. Bassett says she has extensive notes and tapes of her time with Mack. Skeptics can only hope that her story gets a tiny bit of the ink and air given to the pro-paranormalists view of this troubling phenomena.
— MS

SN&V Contributors: MS - Mike Sullivan; JV - Joe Voelkering.

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Chiropractic

By Tim Gorski, M.D.

[Editor's note: This is the second part of Dr. Gorski's article on chiropractic begun in the April issue of The Skeptic.]

One of the most recent and dangerous trends is that of chiropractors seeking to take on the role of family physician and even pediatrician. Newspaper advertising along these lines has asserted that chiropractic adjustments are the "treatment of choice" for ear infections! Dallas/Fort Worth's KXAS-TV Channel 5 investigator Mike Androvette, in a special report aired in February of this year, recorded a local chiropractor who was consulted about a child's recurrent ear infections claiming that antibiotics "weaken the immune system." I have personally had area chiropractors tell me that children as young as newborns need to undergo regular chiropractic adjustments in order to prevent life-threatening illnesses including childhood leukemia and diabetes. One of the two main chiropractic organizations, the International Chiropractors Association, which is composed mainly of the "straight" practitioners, even produced a videotape designed to sell parents on the importance of chiropractic care for their children.

Palmer and Jennifer Peet, a pair of chiropractors in Vermont, are aggressively promoting routine pediatric care by chiropractors and asserted on a ABC-TV 20-20 program (also in February of this year) that untreated chiropractic "subluxations" in children can be life-threatening. In a book written by the couple, it's alleged that "every time a child receives a chiropractic adjustment it should be given as if their very life depends on it, because it does." The book also warns that "the dangers of vaccinations to the young child are profound," asserting that they can "increase a child's preexisting chronic disease tendency."

In reality, pediatric ear infections that go untreated with appropriate antibiotics can lead to hearing loss, invasive infections of the bones of the skull, and the formation of brain abscesses and other complications. And not only have childhood vaccinations proven to be extremely safe and effective tools which have virtually eradicated such disorders as polio, whooping cough, and measles, but they result in measurable stimulation of the immune system, namely: the appearance of protective antibodies, whereas chiropractic "adjustments" do nothing of the kind.

In March of 1993 *The Wall Street Journal* exposed this latest attempt at an aggressive expansion of the scope of chiropractic and its irrational and potentially harmful consequences. The American Chiropractic Association, the larger of the two main chiropractic organizations which is composed mostly of "mixers," responded with a full-page advertisement stating that "any doctor of chiropractic who would seek to substitute spinal manipulation for antibiotic therapy in the treatment of bacterial infections ... is acting counter to accepted clinical practices" and gave a qualified endorsement of childhood immunizations. In defending its actions to even many of its own members who considered the action a betrayal, ACA officials noted that "The Clinton administration's health-care task force was literally making the cut on who was 'in' and who was 'out' of the minimum benefits package." In other words, they were concerned that the bad publicity might deny them a share of the nation's tax (Oops! ... I meant 'health care insurance premium') dollars.

Left unmentioned in the media attention devoted to the issue of chiropractors practicing pediatrics are two additional points. One is the enormous value inherent in inculcating an entire new generation with the belief that the human body cannot be truly healthy without regular chiropractic "adjustments." The other is that such "adjustments," even when given to healthy children, have a real potential for harm. According to Ron Slaughter, a Houston chiropractor who is a principal in a movement to rid his profession of pseudoscience, the manipulation of children can turn their normally pliable joints into unstable ones.

Slaughter is one of a minority of chiropractors who are seeking a legitimate place for chiropractic as a means of managing the variety of musculoskeletal disorders, and primarily low back pain related to trauma, in which it appears to be safe and effective. He is past president of the National Association for Chiropractic

Medicine, an organization formed in 1984 which requires of its members a written pledge to "openly renounce the historical chiropractic philosophical concept that subluxation is the cause of disease" and to restrict their practice to treating "neuromusculoskeletal conditions of a nonsurgical nature."

This sort of approach is undoubtedly the only one which can ultimately lead to chiropractic's finding its place in the spectrum of legitimate scientific medical care. On the other hand, Stephen Barrett, M.D., has this to say in his chapter of Chiropractic in *The Health Robbers*: "If a chiropractor limited his practice to musculoskeletal conditions such as simple backaches, if he were able to determine which patients are appropriate for him to treat, if he consulted and referred to medical doctors when he couldn't handle a problem, if he were not overly vigorous in his manipulations, if he minimized the use of X-rays, and if he encouraged the use of proven public health measures, his patients would be relatively safe. But he might not be able to learn a living."

One thing is for certain: rational-minded chiropractors like Ron Slaughter, Charles Duvall (current NACM President), and others who share their ideas for reform are the only hope of their profession's being salvaged from the toxic waste dumps of medical quackery. However encouraging are its few signs of progress, chiropractic cannot look to M.D.s, D.O.s, and the rest of the scientific medical mainstream to save it from its errors.

This information is provided by the D/FW Council Against Health Fraud. For more information, or to report suspected health fraud, please contact the Council at Box 202577, Arlington, TX 76006, or call metro 817-792-2000. Dr. Gorski is a practicing physician, chairman of the D/FW Council Against Health Fraud and a North Texas Skeptics Technical Advisor.

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The third eye

By Pat Reeder

Before I recount the weird news of the past month, I'd like to take a moment to ask a rhetorical question: why bother?

Over the past year or so, I have become more and more despairing of American culture and of our mission of trying to foster rational, scientific thinking. We are selling Newton's apple and drawing few takers, while the peddlers of junk food for thought are deluged with customers. In the past month alone, several events have caused me to question why I keep trying, as W.C. Fields put it, to "smarten up the chumps." For example...

A recent episode of the syndicated Bertice Berry Show presented a panel of "psychics," along with a skeptic. I missed the first few minutes of the show and did not catch the names, but it was established later that the skeptic was a professional magician, had worked with the LA Police Department's bunko squad, and was a high-ranking member of CSICOP. During the show, some people came forth to accuse the psychics on the panel of bilking them out of thousands of dollars and ruining their lives. The skeptic pointed out the complete lack of any evidence that such a thing as psychic ability exists, and he easily duplicated one of their "psychic effects" (removing a "demon" from somebody via an apple) using 39 cents worth of supplies from the local A&P.

What was so disheartening about this was the reaction of the studio audience. One woman stood up and angrily demanded to know the skeptic's credentials! Did she think they couldn't compare to the psychics' "credentials?!" When the psychics tried the old dodge that they help people not just by telling the future, but by counseling them about their personal problems, the skeptic said that is a job for trained counselors and psychologists ... and the audience laughed and booed him!

This gives us a frightening glimpse into the thought processes of America's TV talk show culture: the psychics were embraced, despite no evidence for their claims, simply because they say they care so much about their clients. The skeptic (who, admittedly, was rather strident, humorless and combative) was rejected — along with all trained psychoanalysts — by most in the audience, because they embrace scientific rationality and appear cold and uncaring. It was obvious that most audience members believed every horror story they've ever heard about incompetent psychiatrists ... but they could not accept testimony against these nice psychics, even with their victims right there in the studio to accuse them.

It all reminded me of a scene in Steven Sondheim's musical fairy tale, "Into The Woods." The witch tells the townsfolk the unpleasant truth about what they must do to save themselves from a vengeful giant. They refuse and instead blame the witch, because she is cold and heartless to suggest such a thing. The witch then sings a song in which she says, fine, don't listen to me ... "I'm not 'good,' I'm not 'nice' ... I'm just right!"

Rationality is taking a beating, friends, from religious fanatics on the right, from political correctness proponents on the left, from the mass media, from purveyors of psycho-babble and victimology, from people whose financial interests are served by fostering widespread belief in superstition and relativism. Truth is not enough, in fact, it doesn't count for anything anymore. In the TV talk show culture, "truth" is a subjective concept, "reality" something that we all create for ourselves as we blunder through the day. Many Americans prefer to listen to a seemingly "caring" person who would lead them over a cliff, rather than to a "coldly rational" person who honestly tries to warn them that they are about to fall to their doom. Don't believe me? Ask a Branch Davidian, if you can find one.

Another example of this mentality can be found in several recent nationwide political polls, all of which showed roughly the same results. About half the respondents said that they believed the president had not been honest in his financial dealings in the past, and is not being truthful with the public in explaining them. Yet over 70% also stated that the press shouldn't spend so much time investigating the subject, because it might distract the president from fulfilling promises made to them in the campaign (health care reform, etc.).

Please, before you send me letters, note that I am NOT taking a stand either way on whether the president is or is not honest. I am not questioning the president's honesty ... I am examining the thought processes of the people who answered the poll. If the numbers are accurate, then at least 20% of respondents held both of the above opinions simultaneously. These people are saying, in effect, "I think the president is a liar ... but I don't care, because I like what he promised." But if you truly believe that any person is not honest, then what difference does it make what he promises you?

Another example of the spread of fuzzy thinking: the April 25 edition of U.S. News and World Report carried an article on the booming business publishers are doing with books on feel-good New Age philosophy, led by James Redfield's *The Celestine Prophecy*, which purports to contain "nine key insights into life itself." This one sits at number one on virtually every fiction bestseller list in the country. It is labeled fiction because its message is presented in the form of a "metaphysical adventure story," and not because the publishers suddenly developed consciences.

The common denominator in all this is "niceness," the attribute Sondheim's witch eschewed in favor of being correct. The president's supporters say he cares about them more than previous presidents did. The people in the talk show audience believed the nice psychics care more about their clients than trained therapists do.

People line up to buy spiritual how-to guides, because they believe they must change themselves and their society because nobody cares about anybody anymore. People are so desperate to think that someone cares about them, that there is more to life than the dismal things they see on the news every night, that they will cling to their idols, even while admitting that they personally believe the idol is not honest, or when they have hard evidence before them of the person's chicanery (such as the psychics' victims on the talk show).

So, given the prevailing mindset, where does this leave skeptics? It seems to me we have two choices:

1. Adopt the truly cold attitude of H.L. Mencken, who once argued (perhaps only partly in jest) that quacks should not be policed, because they help the human race progress by insuring a high death rate among idiots. In that case, we should throw up our hands and say, "To hell with it, you all deserve to be taken!" Or—
2. Be even more careful about the way we present our viewpoint. Too often, we appeal solely to people's minds when the occultists already have control of both their minds and their hearts. We must maintain our sense of humor and control our tempers (which the skeptic on the talk show did not, and thus alienated the audience), and remind ourselves constantly that the people we are seeking to convince have an emotional investment in these beliefs. We must make a calm, clear case against the belief itself, or else the believer will think it is a personal attack and become defensive. We must be considerate of the victims' feelings even as we debunk a belief, remembering that nobody likes to be perceived as foolish or gullible in public.

It is not necessary to soft-pedal our arguments to accomplish this. We simply must remind the audience repeatedly that we do this because we honestly do care about people ... that we care about elderly people who have their life savings taken in order to "lift a curse," about sick or disabled people whose hopes, lives and money are stolen away by quacks and faith healers, and about students who are being taught bad science and fuzzy thinking that will put them at a disadvantage for the rest of their lives.

Believe me, I know how tempting it is to go after these miscreants with a meat ax. I do it here all the time (although, I hope, with humorous effect), and there is a time and a place for blunt language and strong accusation, when the facts warrant it. But, when we go out into the world to argue for logic and rationality in front of a general audience, let's all remember: in the current intellectual climate, a little niceness really helps sell the product.

...

And now, let's clear out a whole lot of news items fast ...

I finally got around to watching the Fox TV special on the worldwide UFO cover-up conspiracy, and I want my time refunded! It was an outrageous rehash of stories like the "Guardian" case of 1990, also known as the Carp case, which even UFO proponents long ago declared a hoax. As our fellow skeptics in Nebraska noted in their newsletter, The REALL News, the show was denounced by everyone from UFO Magazine to the Swamp Gas Journal. Don Ecker on the ParaNet computer network called it "smelly as a dead carp with no truth to it," and declared the Fox special "a very big waste of airwaves." For once, we're in complete agreement.

As for NBC's shows on prophecy, sorry, having wasted an hour on the first special, I didn't have two hours to waste watching this one. I'll talk about it next time. But to underscore my earlier point about the American hunger for the metaphysical, you might be interested to know that NBC was deluged with so many requests for tapes and transcripts of the show, they repeated it in prime time only a month after originally showing it. I've got to get around to watching this thing ... but not tonight, because 48 Hours is doing a special on UFOs. Man, this stuff never ends!

Hard Copy recently presented a story on the murder of an extremely wealthy and successful Japanese psychic. The tabloid reporter seemed troubled and mystified as to how this woman, who saw the future for so many others, did not foresee the danger headed her own way. Imagine that!

Update on last month's false memory syndrome article: 60 Minutes jumped on the bandwagon with a story questioning the veracity of "recovered memories." Their guests included Roseanne Arnold's beleaguered family, all of whom came together to deny her claims of abuse and incest, and to point out the parts of her stories which are physically impossible or which they knew to be outright fabrications. The reporters also talked to a female "hypnotherapist" who wrote a book on recovering memories which is now used by most of the others. She was a large, angry woman, and my wife noted that she looked to be in desperate need of therapy herself. Of course, she adamantly believes in every incest memory "recalled" under hypnosis.

Speaking of large, angry women brings us back to Roseanne, who is divorcing her husband, Tom, claiming that she was a battered, abused wife almost from the beginning of her marriage, (which she described as idyllic as recently as three weeks ago) but only now suddenly realizes that he was constantly hitting her. I wonder how long it took Rodney King to realize that somebody was hitting him?

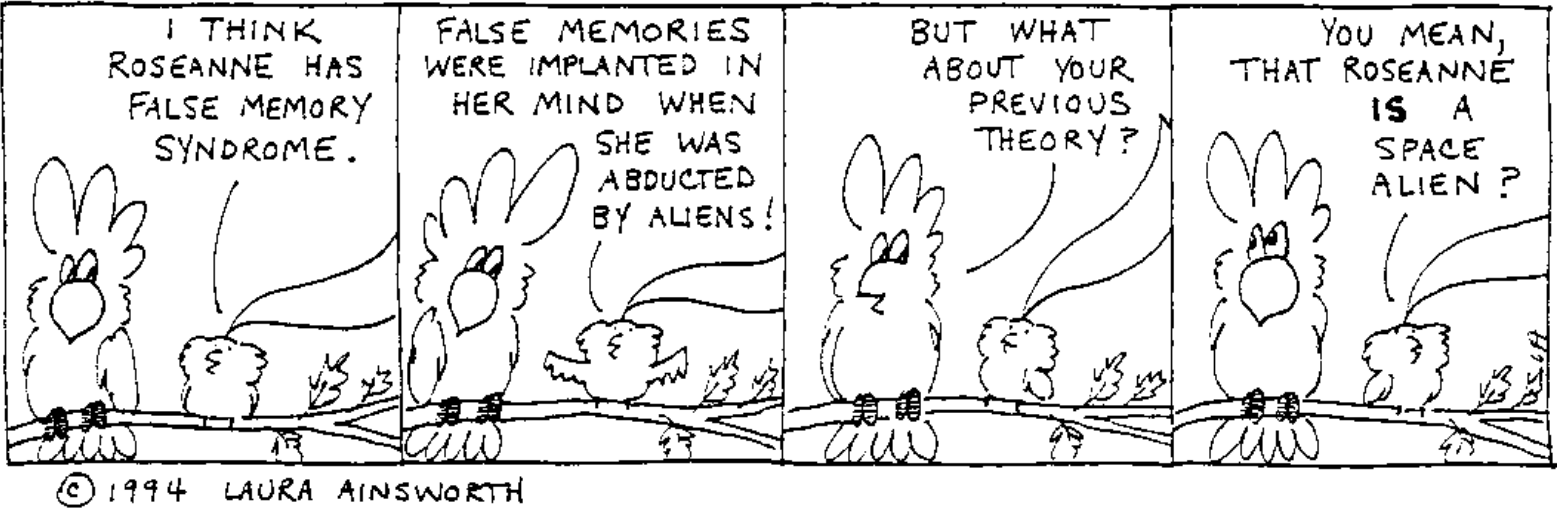
Finally, Gary Trudeau is running a series on the subject in *Doonesbury*. In the strip, a hypnotherapist puts the DJ character, Mark, under and tries to get him to recall memories. Mark says he sees himself standing on a road. The hypnotist says, completely out of the blue, "And there's a figure next to you. Is it an alien?" Mark says, "No." The next question: "Is it your mother, then? Is she holding a knife?"

Sounds like Gary Trudeau is fully qualified to be a hypnotherapist!

(Ed. note — Since Pat wrote this article Rosanne and Tom have made up. It's hard to keep up with the fast pace of TV stars.)

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Up a tree: a skeptical cartoon by Laura Ainsworth



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