

The Newsletter of The North Texas Skeptics



The Newsletter of The North Texas Skeptics

Volume 11 Number 5

www.ntskeptics.org

May 1997

In this month's issue:

- ["Intuitive Archaeology"](#)
- [The Third Eye - by Pat Reeder](#)
- [Perpetual Nonsense - by John Thomas](#)
- [The '3-D' Post-Santa Syndrome](#)
- [Cartoon by Laura Ainsworth](#)

"Intuitive" Archaeology

Psychic's Presentation Entertaining, But Unconvincing
by **Jim Burton**

[The following is used with permission from the Montana Rationalists.]

George McMullen recently appeared at the Montana Historical Society in Helena and gave a presentation, "The Secret Vaults of Time," to a packed crowd in the tiny Haynes Auditorium. McMullen, who looks like the kind, elderly gentleman who lives down the road, claims he consults with "spirit guides" to uncover information about archaeological digs, such as where elusive artifacts and structures may be found and the history surrounding the artifact.

Actually, McMullen did little talking. The bulk of the presentation was given by Raymond Worrying, a local investigator who claims a geological background (supposedly he owns "Investigative Research Field Station," which I could not find in the phone book).

Don't Call Us Psychics!

It seems psychics are shying away from the term "psychic" these days, probably because of the richly-deserved negative connotations of dial-up charlatans. One of Worrying's first statements was that he preferred to call what McMullen does "intuitive archaeology." He then tried to lend scientific legitimacy to this field by quoting material from various paranormal researchers -- he probably assumed that the audience would not know that paranormal studies have gone absolutely nowhere, and no one has ever shown verifiable and reproducible results in ESP or telekinesis. Worrying also attempted to identify intuitive archaeology with "remote viewing" as another psychic field gaining scientific acceptance -- alas, it is not true. Remote viewing is the supposed ability to identify remote events and places without actually being there. One of the remote viewing researchers Worrying mentioned, Courtney Brown, claims that Buddha is now a high official in the Galactic Federation, there is a huge living alien ship traveling with the comet Hale-Bopp, and Martians moved to earth after their atmosphere was wrenched from their planet. As Brown has no verifiable evidence to prove these extraordinary claims, this is hardly scientific.

Psychic, Intuitive, Or Just Lucky?

Worrying claims that McMullen uses his ability to locate structures that an archaeologist feels should be there, but can't locate. He gave an example of an archaeologist who was trying to find a fence-like pile of stones around an ancient American Indian village. McMullen claims he felt the "energies" of the site and used this to determine where the structure should be.

Although this example -- or in fact, any of the stories we were told -- wasn't proven in any scientific sense at this presentation, I am willing to concede that McMullen might have some ability. But I don't think that it is anything mystical. I believe some people may have an uncanny capability to scan their surroundings and pick up subtle clues that others miss, perhaps because they are too intent on their search. McMullen could have instinctively read the lay of the land to determine where a logical place to build a structure would be, or he could have noticed some tiny traces that revealed where the structure was. Meanwhile, others don't notice these clues simply because they are concentrating so much, they can't see the forest for the trees.

McMullen's supposed ability might even be a largely subconscious process. In the taped interview given at the presentation, McMullen was asked how he performs this feat. He obviously had a hard time describing what happens in his mind, and he eventually stammered out an answer that spirit guides "flesh out" the energy he feels from the past. Could this "energy" be the very real but subtle visual clues his subconscious sees and processes? Does McMullen seize upon the story of "spirit guides" to explain this ability he does not understand?

Psychics are too quick to promote paranormal explanations for perplexing events. It seems they don't realize how complex and resourceful the human brain is. Remember, our brain is responsible for finding food, shelter and mates while avoiding crafty predators and dangerous situations. Attention to detail can mean the difference between life and death. Given thousands of years of evolution, is it really so remarkable that some people can make remarkably accurate conclusions from seemingly scant evidence? Not at all. Also, studies of autistic patients have confirmed that the brain is capable of amazing, lightning-fast attention to detail -- remember the scene in "Rain Man" where Dustin Hoffman's character was able to count the number of spilled matches in a single glance?

In any case, it is important to remember that humans have been in North America for a long time, and in just about any location you have some chance of finding some kind of artifact.

Dramatic Story As Evidence

Worrying played an audio tape of another McMullen "success" to illustrate his ability to pick up the emotional resonances of an event. Apparently, McMullen found a site somewhere in the Montana plains with three piles of rocks. After consulting his spirit guides, McMullen recounted a dramatic story of a man, his wife and daughter being caught in a bison stampede. According to McMullen, the man heard the ominous thunder, saw the approaching sea of bison, and hurried his family to the safety of nearby rocks. McMullen stated that the man could have made it if he had abandoned his family, but the heroic man tried his best to save everyone, and all were pulverized by the rampaging stampede.

A good story, but did it really happen? After the presentation, I asked if it had been confirmed. I wanted to know if the site had been excavated, and if three bodies (and only three bodies!) of a man, woman and child were found. Not surprisingly, Worrying said that the story had not been confirmed, and offered the excuse that they did not have permission to dig.

This is hardly scientific procedure. Presenting dramatic stories as evidence is not science. It is a shoddy appeal to the audience's emotions.

Tell Them What They Want To Hear

Worrying tried to present "The Secret Vaults of Time" as scientifically valid, but failed miserably, at least in the view of someone familiar with science. However, judging by the questions and comments I heard after the event, I fear he was successful in the primary mission of the psychic: tell them what they want to hear. Many of the questioners seemed not to doubt that McMullen really had this paranormal ability. No one asked him to demonstrate by, for example, correctly identifying an artifact they had brought in. In fact, Worrying skillfully discouraged this at the beginning of the presentation by saying that McMullen had demonstrated his ability many, many times, and it was getting tiring.

Despite McMullen's professed dislike of the term psychic, this presentation was full of psychic babble. McMullen talked

about feeling "as one" with all of nature. He talked of communing with spirits and how he seems to draw energy from the land. The increased psychic power of areas with higher densities of crystals was mentioned. McMullen told a sappy anecdote about how he hated to go near a Jewish grave yard because of the plaintive cries of the dead; "Why hasn't my son come to see me?"

I can see where McMullen might have an ability to discern the slightest clues, but stories like this simply smack of showmanship.

Worrying was careful to state that McMullen is not always correct. He claimed that McMullen's accuracy was eighty percent, but he offered no independent studies, journals or log books to confirm this. This is a convenient cop-out frequently used by psychics — if someone were to approach him with a case that McMullen failed, Worrying can always say that was one of the twenty percent that McMullen got wrong, but there are, of course, plenty of cases he got right.

Another familiar psychic ploy is the promise that "everyone is psychic, and you can learn how to do this too." McMullen claims this, and, of course, he has a couple of books you can buy....

MHS Should Educate, Not Just Accommodate

I contacted the Montana Historical Society, a state agency, before the event, and was told by a spokesperson that the views expressed at the presentation were not sanctioned by the state and that it was simply a public event held in a public forum. I applaud the Society for their promotion of free speech, but given their mission to educate, I rather hoped the Society would at least have discussed the controversial nature of the material before the presentation, and offered a few resources on mainstream scientific research and opinion on this subject. As it was, believers came and believers left.

In any event, "The Secret Vaults of Time" offered no compelling evidence of McMullen's claims, only mildly entertaining stories and fanciful speculation.

For more information on skepticism and the scrutiny of pseudoscience, visit the Montana Rationalists and Skeptics Network's web page at <http://members.aol.com/mtrsn> or send e-mail to mtrsn@aol.com.

THE THIRD EYE

News and Commentary From the Weird World of the Media

By Pat Reeder

Of all the things the Heaven's Gate cultists thought their suicides would accomplish, how could they have dreamed that their only real accomplishment would be the boost they gave to skepticism?

That's right, we now have 39 new martyrs to the cause of rational thinking. For too long, the mainstream press had ignored UFO and alien tales, wacky cults and other paranormal mumbo jumbo. Thinking it was merely the stuff of tabloids, most reputable journalists kept their attentions focused on more worthwhile subjects. This lack of scrutiny by the press had allowed layers of unchallenged nonsense to build up into a thick, choking blanket of kultursmog that seeped into the national consciousness until polls began to show majorities of people believing in hokum for which they had never seen any hard evidence.

But then, a miracle occurred! No sooner had the cultists jettisoned their human pods to ascend to a UFO trailing the Hale-Bopp comet than the mainstream press suddenly woke from their slumber, looked at the idiocy all around them, and goggled, "Hey, when the hell did THIS happen?!" Realizing it had happened when they weren't looking, they suddenly began working overtime to shine flashlights into all those blue, foggy corners. In the past month, the major network news programs have become born-again debunkers, giving a good rectal probing to everything from Roswell to the Alien Autopsy film, and showing us just how quickly these tales dry up and blow away when you separate the unsubstantiated claims from the real evidence. I particularly enjoyed 20/20's story on how movie special effects artists built a much better rubber alien for a much more convincing autopsy film (if you missed it, CSICOP has a link on the

Web to an article called "How To Make An Alien"). The press was so rigorous, members of MUFON and other UFO groups publicly worried that they might be lumped in with "UFO nuts" (perish the thought!).

Of course, this could be a shortlived trend. With the May ratings sweeps upon us, the paranormal specials will likely soon be back on the same networks that are now debunking them. And some of the interviews with surviving Heaven's Gate cultists have been awfully hushed and reverent, as if the reporters feared that asking a tough question about someone's "religion" would get them tarred with those scarlet letters of the '90s, "Mean-spirited" and "Insensitive." As Jay Leno said, "Just once, I wish some reporter would scream, 'There IS no UFO, you idiot!!'"

But even if the press drops the ball and all the paranormal snake oil peddlers come creeping back in tomorrow, at least for a few shining weeks, they had to sweat through some cynical, skeptical, lovely interrogations. Just for giving America that brief whiff of fresh air, those 39 UFO nuts did not die in vain.

•••

Some big CSICOP names also got airtime last month, with James Randi hosting an excellent two-hour special on con men on A&E and Ray Hymen providing an explanation of cold reading on an ABC story about a popular New Age spirit medium. Dallas Morning News columnists Steve Blow and Kent Biffle also checked in with great columns on alien abductions and the hoax saucer crash in Aurora, respectively. Of course, for some media outlets, skepticism would be very bad for business, so you'll certainly find none of it in such tripe as the syndicated TV show, Strange Universe.

With even UFO buffs mostly in agreement that the Alien Autopsy is a laughable hoax, "S.U." has leapt into the breach with "The Alien Interview," a new video allegedly showing a captured alien being interrogated at Area 51. After much ballyhoo, it turned out they had only three seconds of the six-minute tape, which showed a motionless, bulbous-headed E.T. in a room so dark, you couldn't see anything except its face, and even that was mighty blurry. Since most abductees recall being bathed in bright light, I don't understand why they had to interview this alien in the dark. Unless, of course, it was to hide the wires.

The story got even fishier when we discovered that the whole video will be released soon for purchase, and the person who allegedly smuggled the film out of Area 51 refused to reveal his identity...although he did sit for an interview in disguise, complete with a very phony-looking angry walk-out when one question threatened to blow his cover and put his very life at risk. (Don't worry: after his well-rehearsed huff, he immediately sat back down and answered it).

But never let it be said that the Strange Universe folk are a bunch of Gullible Gussies! They assembled a panel of experts to view the full video and weigh in on its authenticity. Of course, they were "experts" only in that they all claimed to be alien abductees. One of them was Whitley Streiber, for crying out loud. Personally, I might've included an expert at spotting phony military footage, but then, I'm a killjoy.

The only thing about the show that was worthwhile was that it helped me identify yet another cliché of pseudojournalism. Remember a few years back, when this column was the first to classify that species of skeptic that resides only in bad articles on the paranormal, the "Skeptic But?" You know, as in "I'm a SKEPTIC, BUT I'm convinced that Shirley MacLaine can fly."

Well, I've isolated another one, which occurs only in shows about things like the Alien Autopsy or the Alien Interview. I call it the "DGF," short for "Darn Good Fake." In every one of these shows, at some point, an alleged expert shakes his head in wonderment and says, "If it's a fake, it's a Darn Good Fake!" Well, of course it is! If it were a lousy, obvious fake, we wouldn't need alleged experts to tell us so!

Remember, maintain high standards of proof. Don't fall for just any old fake! Demand a DGF: A Darn Good Fake!

•••

Time to play catch-up with some of old names who are suddenly back in the news again. First, the Rev. Robert Tilton and his estranged wife are pushing their divorce court judge's patience to a visible breaking point, as their lawyers spend hour after hour (no doubt at rates of hundreds of dollars an hour) haggling over who gets custody of such garage sale castoffs as a wooden toy box or a cracked ceramic vase. The whole pathetic scene reminds me of that movie where Steve Martin, told he has lost his wife and his fortune, shuffles through his mansion grabbing various pieces of junk, and sniffing, "I don't need anybody or anything!...Except this lamp!...And this ashtray! All I need is this lamp and this ashtray! That's all I need!...And this goldfish bowl!..." What was that movie called? Ah, yes, I remember: The Jerk.

Speaking of televangelists, those with strong stomachs will want to pick up the current issue of the religious humor magazine "The Door," to see the centerfold, a Polaroid of a butt-naked W.V. Grant fished out of his trash can by some truly evil demon. It's both hilarious and terrifying, sort of like "Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein's Butt."

L. Ron Hubbard continues to snake his tendrils from the very grave. In the wake of the Heaven's Gate cult story, you'd think that more reporters would have drawn the obvious parallels to Scientology. But only New York Times columnist Frank Rich was brave enough to risk his credit rating by writing a couple of columns pointing out how Scientologists had taken over the Cult Awareness Network, rendering it an impotent mockery, and asking why the IRS Commissioner suddenly granted them tax exempt status and why the U.S. State Department is using America's power and prestige to protect them from the German government, which considers them a money-making cult, not a religion.

This coincided with the city of Los Angeles naming the street outside the posh Scientology Center "L. Ron Hubbard Way" (I assume it's a one-way toll road). Kirstie Alley and John Travolta were there for the party, with Travolta lauding Hubbard as a "great man" and giving credit for all his success to Scientology. He said the same help was there for anyone else who needed it. But if you don't have Travolta's money and fame, don't expect to use the same posh facilities.

That li'l ol' spoon bender Uri Geller is back in the headlines, after a very long absence. He is offering a \$50,000 reward for the release of Western hostages who have been held by Moslem guerillas in Kashmir for almost two years. Geller says the families asked for his help, and it's admirable of him to comply. Of course, it did get him international publicity, and since he's asking everyone in the world to help by beaming positive thoughts toward Kashmir, he'll need to coordinate the effort through his website, the address of which was included in the Reuters article...Oops, sorry! Got to make my thoughts more positive!

Finally, that old relic the Shroud of Turin is all over the news. First, CBS ran an Easter special, "The Mysterious Man In The Shroud," which was fairly well-balanced. The highlight was the use of computer imagery to make the Shroud image look 3-D (if they'd had a bigger budget, they could've made him dance with a Hoover Vacuum cleaner). Shortly thereafter, Israeli historians denounced the Shroud as a fake, pointing out that no examples of First Century textiles from humid regions exist today because they've all rotted away (except the Shroud...another miracle!). Then, a fire nearly destroyed the Shroud, but it was saved, and word now is that it may go on tour. I can't say whether the Shroud is 2,000 years old or only 700, but either way, it's got a more exciting life than I do.



Well, let's wrap up this visit with a few quickie news items, shall we?... The British insurance company of Goodfellow Rebecca Ingrams Pearson has stopped selling alien abduction insurance, after it came to light that the Heaven's Gate cultists all had policies (no, they didn't pay off). However, GRIP will continue to insure people against immaculate conception, turning into a werewolf or vampire, or injury due to paranormal activity. If you think any of these things might happen to you, you need to get a GRIP.

One never knows where the gods will pop up next. In Sunnyside, Washington, police are dealing with traffic jams caused by milling crowds who think they see an image of the Madonna in the chemical film on the back of an aluminum road sign. Meanwhile, KDFW News reported on a Kemp, Texas, man who claims that dozens of images of Jesus and crosses are appearing in the knotholes in the fake pine paneling inside his family home. No word on whether His mother is appearing in the aluminum siding.

Math professors are in a tizzy over new "politically correct" textbooks that they describe as "MTV Math" and "rain forest algebra." One seventh-grade text teaches students about pollution, multiculturalism, and Maya Angelou's poem for the Clinton Inaugural, and instead of demanding answers to math problems, asks the students how they feel about the problems. Some simple equations are wrong, and one problem suggests that kids use a calculator to figure out 75% of 600. In case that's too hard, it then gives the answer..."300".

A government committee has ruled that the original Zapruder film of the JFK assassination should be taken from the legal owners and preserved by the government, in case future technology enables new info to be obtained from the exposed area around the sprocket holes. I'll bet Oliver Stone could find new information IN the sprocket holes.

As if Scientologists and Robert Tilton having tax-free status weren't annoying enough to me on April 15, our federal government has now granted a tax exemption to the Western Bigfoot Society, a "non-profit educational institution." President Ray Crowe says the IRS agents were very helpful; one even had his own Bigfoot sighting to share. They will use the tax savings to expand their Bigfoot museum to include exhibits on UFOs, crop circles and Crowe's butterfly collection. Sounds mighty educational!

Well, if you'll excuse me, I have to go circulate a petition for the flat tax.

Perpetual Nonsense

Joseph Newman's Free Energy Machine

By John Thomas

Having recently had several questions put to me about the patenting of free energy devices, I decided to research the career of Joseph W. Newman. Newman was probably the most persistent inventor ever to seek a patent on a device that appears to violate the second law of thermodynamics.

Newman was a self-taught inventor from Mississippi. In 1980, he filed a patent application for an invention he titled: "Energy Generation System Having Higher Energy Output Than Input." Newman believed the prior art "...has failed to understand certain physical aspects of matter and the makeup of electromagnetic fields, which failure is corrected by the present invention." He claimed his motor-generator device exploited this new discovery to produce an energy output up to five times its energy input.

To get a patent, inventors have to show their invention is new, useful, and not merely an obvious improvement. Utility means that the thing actually has some use, not that it be commercially successful. Getting a patent is similar to having a lawsuit with the government. The inventor has to prove that his invention meets these standards. The Patent Office has an internal rule which allows examiners to reject applications for perpetual-motion or free energy type inventions on the grounds that they have no utility -- that is, they can't work. Newman's application hit the utility roadblock immediately. What followed was eight years of contentious litigation and three trips to the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals.

In 1984, the Patent Office required Newman to construct a working model and submit it to the National Bureau of Standards for testing. Newman had submitted test reports from other persons, but the Patent Office felt these were interested parties. Newman objected to the test requirement, but eventually he agreed to an NBS test protocol. Newman delivered a machine to NBS and testing began in 1986. Oddly, after demanding the right to observe the tests, neither Newman nor any representative showed up for any of the test runs. Newman was so uncooperative that he refused a request by NBS physicist Robert Hebner for operating instructions and the locus of the energy output. Hebner concluded from Newman's application and his other writings that the energy output was across its coil.

A Newman machine must have been an impressive sight. It consisted of a rotary magnet weighing from 90 to 500 pounds, depending on the model. The magnet was situated within an air-cored copper wire coil containing up to 55 miles of copper wire and weighing from 500 to 9200 pounds. A plastic commutator was attached to the magnet, with its periphery at intervals conductive and non-conductive. As the commutator rotated, it made contact with brushes

connected to the coil terminal. The power source, connected to the commutator, was a battery pack of up to 116 nine-volt batteries connected in series. (Each machine must have cleaned out the inventory of several Radio Shack stores). When the machine rotated, it caused sparking at the commutator, and spikes of current.

The NBS measured the energy output of the machine in various ways and came up with efficiencies between 27 percent and 77 percent. There was no free energy. This report convinced the court trying Newman's suit against the Patent Office that the invention didn't work, and therefore had no utility. After a last unsuccessful appeal to the Federal Circuit, Newman's battle with the Patent Office was over. If you want all the details, you can read the district court's opinion reported in 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1880 (D.C. Cir. 1988).

Newman's case represents a typical misconception about invention; namely, that it is the work of solitary genius, rather than slow research, experimentation, testing, and collaboration with other workers. The very existence of a patent system tends to encourage this myth. Most cranks want to rush to the Patent Office for validation of their claims, rather than submitting them to the usual scientific process of review, publication, and criticism.

But Newman's project and other free energy, perpetual motion, and anti-gravity ideas are alive and thriving yet. Just turn your internet browser to The Institute for New Energy:

<http://www.padrak.com/ine/index.shtml>,

for example. You'll find information not only about Joseph W. Newman, but about the latest in cold fusion research, the oil industry conspiracy against the water fuel carburetor, and recent experimental evidence of anti-gravity. Enjoy.

John Thomas is a patent attorney and is a former President of the North Texas Skeptics.

The '3-D' Post-Santa Syndrome

DOGMA DEFICIT DISORDER

By **Tommy Jeff Stratto**

Now that both Christmas and Easter have done come and went, the following can be openly discussed without much risk of trashing some kid's holiday fantasy:



I got me an enigma I been mauling over for some time now: Why do people that seem to be otherwise reasonably normal and sane hold to some REALLY WEIRD dogmatic beliefs? For instance: Instead of goin' back to the doctor after they learn of a bad medical problem, some folks hold hands with a slick televangelist fellow VIA THE TV SCREEN and make a "pledge of faith." Then, after mailin' off the agreed-upon "pledge" checks, they decide they're cured. Just don't seem to make much sense — or, at least to me, it don't.

I asked this psychologist feller I know — but instead of givin' me any answers, he said "Let's talk about that" — and then asked me a bunch of questions: "What do I mean by 'normal and sane'? How does that make me feel? Did my mother display any hostility toward TV preachers?" I figured that his CPU was runnin' on a few bytes less than a full program and decided not to ask HIM 'bout any more stuff! (Besides, his couch was awful lumpy.)

Anyhow — I pondered over it (which is like maulin' it over, just more intense) all by myself — and came up with this here hypothesis (that's a fancy word for "educated guess," by the way): We can blame it on Santa Claus! (Well — not really ALL on ol' Santa; part of it we can blame on the Easter Bunny — and the rest on the Tooth Fairy. Sort of the unholy trinity, if you will.) OK — about now you think MY CPU is probably trashed, too — so let me explain:

- 1) I stopped believin' in Santa — and Santa stopped comin' 'round.
- 2) I stopped believin' in the Easter Bunny — and no more of them baskets of colored eggs and candy.

(Note: That Ye Olde Easter Bunny deal MAY have beat out Santa — at least, to some degree. When I was a "younger" [as "The Duke" would say] we had a big garden and raised both rabbits and chickens. Thus, I KNEW that them bunnies never laid no eggs — and they sure weren't on no good terms with the "feathered flock." If a rabbit got loose, it headed for the vegetable patch, not the chicken coop. Whenever I saw somebody in an Easter Bunny suit, they looked a bit like "Godzilla, the rabbit" — so I 'spect I figured it got them eggs the same way I did: A combination of stealth, speed and brute force.

In any case, I DO remember bein' EXTREMELY careful to examine both the black and brown jelly beans — plus any miniature chocolate eggs — that I found in my basket.) Sorry 'bout gettin' off track a bit; let's git back to the chronology list:

3) I stopped believin' in the Tooth Fairy — and the money stopped showin' up in place of them teeth I slipped under the pillow.

4) Since I really didn't want to wipe out the whole shebang, I stopped short of deciding anything about that there "Great Pumpkin" deal — and kept my options open on it.

5) I also decided I sure as heck better not stop believin' in gravity — or I was gonna go floatin' off to who knows where, for sure!

6) I finally figured it would probably be OK to experiment a bit with some relatively "safe" things. I tried to stop believin' in pain, for instance. IT DON'T WORK! (Particularly with EXTREMELY BAD TOOTHACHES — that will require root canals — when it's 2:00 AM on Sunday morning; then it REALLY don't work!)

Well — that last one is not ENTIRELY true: It did SORTA work when I helped it with a half fist-full of them Tylenol #4s (with the extra-big dose of codeine in 'em) — washed down with a couple of bottles of Jack Daniel's — but I don't think that was really a fair, scientific test.

I tried the same experiment without the toothaches OR the Tylenol #4s (using just the Jack Daniel's) a bunch of times — strictly in the interest of science, mind you — and got roughly the same results, so I ignored the "enhancement" protocol. (I say "roughly the same results" because by the time you're well into the second bottle, ye olde memory generally don't work very well — even if you dilute the "JD #7" with Diet Dr. Pepper right from the onset.) Anyhow, after maulin' THAT over for a bit, I came up with the ultimate test: I stood on one of them digital bathroom scales and stopped believin' in gravity REAL HARD — with a "safety rope" tied to the doorknob so that I couldn't float high enough to get hurt bad if I "crashed" — but that ol' digital read-out DIDN'T EVEN FLICKER! Next, I both mauled AND pondered over my findings for a fair while — which, I think is called "evaluatin' the data" — and decided I'd been "set up" by my experiences with Santa, et al.

I call it the "The '3-D' Post-Santa Syndrome" — or "Dogma Deficit Disorder." ('Cept, of course, when one of them "send lots of money" TV preachers says that somebody's "miracle cancer cure" failed because they "didn't have enough faith." Then I call it: "A big scam to steal money from folks that already have more problems than they can handle!")