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## Condemned to repeat it

by Mike Combs

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Fiction (Part Two of two parts) Part One appeared in the August edition of The Skeptic.

Ruth!" Jonathan cried.

"What's the meaning of this interruption?" demanded the Channeler-Judge. "Who is this intruder?"

"Your honor, I am Ruth Randall, Jonathan's wife. I would have been here from the beginning, but these goons have been barring me from these proceedings. But you must hear my testimony! Jonathan could not possibly have been out hurting anybody or out doing anything that night. He spent the entire night in our bed. I know he never left, because I slept very poorly that night. At the same time Mr. Hamilton insists he was being man-handled by my husband and taken to a space ship, Jonathan lay sleeping in my arms!"

"Inadmissible," said the Prosecutor, cool as iron.

Ruth turned to gape at him incredulously. "What do you mean, inadmissible?"

"Mrs. Randall, there are any of several explanations for why you might think Mr. Randall was with you that night. It often happens that a Gray will take on human form, and substitute himself for a man while he is away. Laying with Grays is a very serious charge, and I don't think you want to prompt an investigation on that score. Another possible explanation is that your husband astrally projected himself while his body remained behind."

The Prosecutor was addressing the courtroom now. "The most recent thinking on the abduction phenomenon characterizes it as more of a psychical occurrence than a physical one. It may be less a case of corporeal beings from other planets arriving in metal spaceships as spiritual beings from another dimension intruding upon our own. The characterization of the Grays as 'spacemen' may indeed be little more than a holdover from the kind of scientific superstition common before the dawning of the New Age."

"What's the matter with all you people?" Ruth asked of them. "Are you all insane? Are you all blind?"

"Mrs. Randall," the Judge began, "Have you noticed our statue of Lady Justice we have here? Have you noticed that she wears a blind fold?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever wondered why that is so?"

"No," Ruth said, sullen now.

"She is blindfolded to remind us always that what is seen can be false, whereas what is believed in our hearts is known to be true," the Judge explained.

"What about the scales?"

"Well, I can see you missed my point," the Channeler-Judge said with disappointment. "Now please be seated."

Ruth sat down. Jonathan looked at her with an expression not yet entirely devoid of hope.

"Now," the Judge continued, "If there can be no more interruptions, I should like to pass judgment at this time. For a case of this seriousness, I can turn to none less than Sarius, Atlantean High-Priestess of the Mystical Order of Frod."

The lights in the courtroom suddenly dimmed, except for a soft spotlight on the Judge's bench. The Judge's eyes closed, and his head slowly rolled side to side. The entire court leaned forward attentively.

The Judge's mouth opened, and one silky, falsetto word came out.

"Guilty."

The lights came back up. The Channeler-Judge jerked with a start, and opened his eyes. The court buzzed. Jonathan stared off into the distance, not seeing anything.

"What was the verdict?" the Judge asked.

"Guilty, your Honor," the RV-Prosecutor supplied.

"I see. Now all that remains is the sentencing. Mr. Jonathan Randall, this court has found you guilty of the charges brought against you. You are hereby sentenced to being taken to the nearest mall parking lot, being tied to a stake, having firewood heaped about you, and having a fire lit and built up until such point as you spontaneously combust. I would additionally like to issue a restraining order against your guardian angel to prevent him or her from interfering in the carrying out of this sentence."

"NOOOO!" Jonathan screamed. He jumped up, and began to bolt from the courtroom. Several members of the gallery grabbed and restrained him until the Bailiff, now evidently recovered, was able to get Jonathan into a headlock. Ruth battered the Bailiff, and had to be restrained herself.

"ORDER, ORDER, ORDER!!!" shrieked the Judge. He was on his feet now, and began pounding his mighty brass gavel like an out-of-control pile driver. The RV-Prosecutor discreetly backed away, certain that any second the gavel was going to splinter its plate into a hundred flying fragments.

Jonathan was still struggling in the grip of the Bailiff. "Settle down. Settle down!" the Bailiff yelled. "Don't make me use my Ninja skills on you, now!"

Ruth twisted away from the mob, and staggered over to the Judge's bench to plead for mercy. She couldn't get his attention because his eyes were closed, and he was humming to himself. Behind him, the Court-Aura Reader was

working over his aura, pulling out all the negative karma lest it trouble some future life. She made little plucking motions all around the air surrounding the Judge's head and shoulders. Her head moved back and forth, and she sometimes blinked, jerking back a little, giving the impression that the judge's bad karma occasionally splashed up into her face like the water from a lawn sprinkler.

When she was finished, the Judge's eyes snapped back open. Then he held up his brass gavel, and smiled for the first time that day. The handle of the gavel was slightly bent.

"Hey, look here! Looks like all those Psychokinesis seminars are finally beginning to pay off," he related with delight. "And speaking of seminars, I have one to give myself in less than two hours. Remote Viewer-Prosecutor, is there anything else on the docket today, anything important?"

The RV-Prosecutor scanned it quickly. "Nothing of any great consequence, your Honor."

"Fine," the Channeler-Judge said, banging his crooked gavel one last time. "Then I declare this court of the Municipality of Salem, Massachusetts, to be adjourned!"

The End

A few notes for the reader...

Anyone who thinks the claims made against any character in this story are too insane to be stated by any real person should study the history of the Inquisition.

Anyone who thinks the human race is less cruel now than in the Middle Ages should turn on the Six O'clock News.

Anyone who thinks the kind of superstitions which darkened the Middle Ages are dead and gone forever should attend a New Age seminar.

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## Modern dinosaurs at MIOS

by John Blanton

In August at the meeting of the Metroplex Institute of Origin Science (MIOS) Dr. Don R. Patton, geologist, spoke on the subject of "Topsy-Turvy Fossils."

Undergraduate geology texts are deceitful regarding the geological column, according to Patton. He said that the texts implied the existence of an actual column of material containing every sedimentary layer from geological time. In fact, he correctly points out, no such column exists. Geologists acknowledge that any boring into Earth's crust will not produce a column containing a complete time record. The time record of any single boring would have to be completed by merging it with the record from other borings. This is because no single spot on the world's surface has continually accumulated sediment and also because very often erosion removes top layers of sediment before new sediment is added to the column. Patton is one of the many creationists who employ this tactic to debunk the geological argument for an old Earth.

The meeting notice quotes from *The Blind Watchmaker* by Richard Dawkins: "If a single, well-verified mammal skull were to turn up in 500 million year-old rocks, our whole modern theory of evolution would be utterly destroyed." Patton contends that this has happened, and he used the example of the "finger" fossil from the Carl Baugh's Creation Evidences Museum to illustrate (**Figure 1**). Local creationists contend this fossil was found in Comanche Peak limestone and that it indicates human existence during the time of the dinosaurs.



**Figure 1.** This photo is from the [Creation Evidences Museum](#) home page. Carl Baugh and Don Patton insist that this is the fossil of a human finger.

Don also showed a photo of what he calls a boot print in limestone at Antelope Springs, Utah. A trilobite fossil is inside the "print," and Don said this illustrates that trilobites did not go extinct prior to human existence. He did not say when trilobites did go extinct.

The coelacanth is also mentioned. This prehistoric fish was thought to be long extinct, just like the dinosaurs, because only a fossil record was known. Then a specimen was caught by a fishing trawler off the coast of Africa in 1939. Since then additional specimens have been caught, showing the coelacanth is certainly not extinct. Don argued from this that lack of dinosaurs in a zoo is no more an argument for their extinction than was the previous lack of living coelacanths prior to 1939.

Don seemed in his talk to argue that dinosaurs still exist, and he recounted tales of observations and near observations by others. He also mentioned the recordings of dinosaur sounds from the Congo region in Africa. Previously [*The Skeptic*, February 1997] David Bassett had played these recordings when he lectured on *Living Dinosaurs* for MIOS. In fact, Don covered again much of the ground that Bassett did last February.

The Anasazi ("ancient ones") disappeared from the Four Corners region of North America well before Europeans arrived, and they are believed to be the ancestors of the modern Pueblo. Don lectured that the Anasazi were contemporaneous with dinosaurs, and he exhibited Anasazi petroglyphs that he said depicted dinosaurs. Don also cited a book *Prehistoric Indians* authored by F.A. Barnes and Michaelene Pendleton, whom he called vicious anti-creationists. I did not get the meaning of the Barnes and Pendleton citation and, lacking a copy of the book, was not able to follow up.

The whole purpose of Don's talk was to impress upon us all that the world is really not that old. Dinosaurs have not had time to go completely extinct, fossils do not take all that long to form, and there is a lot of overlap between human existence and "ancient" geological formations. To reinforce this last point, Don reminded us of the "hammer-in-stone" artifact from the Creation Evidences Museum, and he also showed a photo of the "coal pot." I have previously discussed the hammer [*The Skeptic*, September 1996], and Don said the coal pot was of the same metal – iron alloyed with chlorine and sulfur with no carbon. The coal pot, he said, was found in a lump of coal, and he exhibited a 1948 affidavit by the finder attesting to its authenticity.

A bizarre artifact that Don exhibited that night was a cowboy boot containing the petrified leg bone of the cowboy. This,

he pointed out, demonstrates how rapid petrification can occur. It would appear petrification can occur very quickly, because this looks like a 20<sup>th</sup> century style boot.

It would appear that local creationists are not sitting around waiting for evolution to wither on the vine. Don recounted his recent trip to South America to check out, among other things, reports of a pterosaur find. This didn't pan out, however, he told us. He checked out the "pterosaur" and its finder. "He's a nut" we were told. Don mentioned that this fall he will be joining MIOS Chairman Dean Huffman in Ukraine for further field work.

It's during the question and answer period following these MIOS talks that the nature of the local creationists often comes out. Don was asked to comment on the "gobbledy-gook" about the Mars rover. There followed much laughter and derision directed toward this recent NASA accomplishment. Creationists tend to think of space exploration as a government attempt to refute religion by discovering other origins of life. Additionally, the MIOS crowd had some choice remarks concerning the scientists' contention that massive flooding on Mars explained what they are seeing now on the surface.

The *APS News* is published monthly by the American Physical Society, and, as recently reported here, the APS earlier this year reaffirmed its stance against creationism. John Cimbala has written a letter to APS News, defending creationism and arguing that creationists just want a voice. "I cannot think of a better way to stimulate thinking and discussion in a classroom than to present two sides of a controversial issue!" he stated. He did not mention what kind of treatment legitimate science would receive from the creationists during this dialog.

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## Flying Saucers — or Fiendish Spirits?

*Fundamentalist Christians denounce space exploration, identify UFOs as demons, and claim that Hell is found in the Earth's core*

by **Danny Barnett**

Bob Larson, once described by a critic as "the Geraldo Rivera of Jesus radio," sits behind the microphone in his studio in Denver, Colorado. Bronchitis and a rigorous traveling schedule have weakened Larson, and he's still fighting a nagging cough and the aftermath of laryngitis. Despite his poor health, Larson is fired up and launching himself into another broadcast of *Talk Back with Bob Larson*, a Christian talk radio program heard throughout the United States and Canada. The subject on this July afternoon is the movie *Contact*, based upon the novel by the late astronomer Carl Sagan. Wild horses couldn't drag Larson from the microphone today.

Larson's first salvo is fired at NASA, criticizing the deployment of the *Sojourner* rover on the surface of Mars to study its geology. In 1996, a meteorite was discovered in Antarctica that is believed to have come from Mars, and some scientists claim that the meteorite presents evidence that life may have once existed on the Red Planet. Some are hoping that the *Sojourner* mission will turn up further evidence that life once existed on Mars. This makes Larson's blood boil.

"NASA has deified Carl Satan," Larson tells his radio audience, unable to resist the pun. "And they've made the late Carl Sagan the patron saint of the search for life on other planets. Our space program is driven by occult inspiration, not scientific investigation."

With that statement, Larson segues into his discussion of *Contact*: "Listen, if you think The Last Temptation of Christ deserved a boycott, *Contact* is the most vicious polemic to come from Hollywood seeking to destroy Christian faith. It is an all-out, demoniac-inspired assault on the Bible." He makes no apologies for his disgust over *Contact*, and bears a grim warning for his audience: "God help any Christian, any parent or grandparent out there, who has willfully allowed your children to see this film; you ought to be on your knees repenting right now, and if *you* don't like that, I don't care. You can pick up the phone and call me and read me the Riot Act if you want to, but you have sinned against the Holy Ghost by letting your children or grandchildren go to see this film."

It's not just *Contact* that Larson is taking to task; he's got a real problem with the Hollywood movie industry churning

out movies that capitalize on America's fascination with the possibility of extraterrestrial life. To make a long story short, it appears that Larson believes that Earth is the only place in the physical universe where life exists. As for the flying saucers and aliens that many claim to have seen, Larson explains them as follows: "These aliens are demons. They are disguising themselves as aliens, but they are really demons."

Larson's view is based on his beliefs — which he claims are based on Biblical teachings — that mankind was created in the image and likeness of God and that we, as humans, share a unique relationship with the Almighty that other creatures such as chimpanzees, gorillas, parrots, and dolphins do not possess. The very idea of extraterrestrial life, let alone *self-aware* extraterrestrial life, could be enough to challenge this notion of humanity's unique position in the cosmos. Larson also studies religious movements, especially those that fall under the "New Age" banner, that see extraterrestrials as somehow being the saviors of Earth and look forward to having aliens come down to Earth and set humanity right — a job that Larson claims Jesus should be in charge of.

To explain his observations concerning UFOs as well as related topics such as crop circles, the Roswell incident, alien abductions, and the Heaven's Gate cult, Larson is planning to release a book called *UFOs and the Alien Agenda*. However, he's not the only one who feels this way; in fact, there are many fundamentalist Christians who share similar views on UFOs and extraterrestrials, with the common belief that UFOs are indeed demon manifestations. If you can't wait for Larson's book to come out, all you have to do is tune in to another Christian radio station, where you will probably hear a radio program like *Keep Looking Up*, the radio ministry of the Church of the Jubilee, which is located in Eden Prairie, Minnesota.

*Keep Looking Up* is a relative newcomer to Christian radio, and is currently heard on around a half-dozen AM stations throughout America. Pastor Roger Davis and his wife, Marlene, host the program, but it was Marlene who did much of the talking during a recent series of broadcasts that dealt with UFOs. Marlene explained why she felt extraterrestrials do not exist — because the Bible precludes their existence. She cited Genesis 1:1, which states that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," and Philippians 2:10, which states that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow "of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." Commenting on the latter passage, Marlene stated, "God is telling us there that all beings are limited right now — of the whole universe — to either heaven, or this earth, or the atmosphere around the earth, or Hell within the earth."

A couple of observations: (1) The author of the Epistle to the Philippians was the Apostle Paul, not God. Granted, a fundamentalist Christian can always quote II Timothy 3:16, which states that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," but that's another debate entirely. (2) Paul was making a statement concerning the ultimate sovereignty of Jesus as a result of his crucifixion on Golgotha and subsequent resurrection; he was not giving an itemized list of places where life can be found. But technicalities be damned; Marlene has an important message for all of us: "I believe from these scriptures that all life forms are...either in heaven with the angelic beings and God, or they're in earth and the atmosphere around the earth, where the evil spirits are, or they're under the earth where all the pre-Adamic man, you know, fallen, certain fallen angels, people, the evil people who have died, are now being held in Hell, which is the center of the earth."

If true, this statement would certainly rule out the possibility of life on Mars or anywhere else in the universe except Earth. So what does that make UFOs? According to the Davises, they can actually be classified in two categories: Identified Flying Objects (IFOs) and Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs). IFOs are objects that have been identified by Biblical authors such as David or Ezekiel. David recorded in one of his Psalms that God had 20,000 chariots at his disposal, and the Davises have postulated that maybe one of those carried Elijah up into the heavens as recorded in II Kings 2:11. Ezekiel related a vision he had of "a wheel within a wheel" rotating in the sky. Contrast that with UFOs, which are not identified in the Bible and therefore, according to Marlene, are "demon manifestations, some type of an aircraft that they have in the demoniac realm."

The first modern UFO sighting in America, as well as the controversial Roswell incident, both occurred in 1947. Marlene observes, "It was the year right before Israel became a nation." Roger reminds her at this time that she once stated a belief that the re-establishment of Israel heralded the beginning of the "End Times." Marlene adds: "It's no coincidence, I don't believe, that all these sightings of the flying saucer phenomenon started in 1947. See, something's going on up there in the heavenlies. And we know from Revelation that there will be a great war between Michael and

his angels and Satan and the fallen angels at the very end times. And so what could be happening is we see...the demoniac forces and angelic forces." That's right — a war between Satan's legions of flying saucers and Michael's armada of flaming chariots over the formation of Israel. As Marlene states: "When something big happens like Israel becoming a nation, there is stuff going on in the heavenly realm."

At this point, you might decide to turn the radio knob again, only to find the radio version of *Newswatch Magazine* on another Christian radio station. *Newswatch Magazine* is distributed by the Church of God Evangelistic Association, which is located in Waxahachie, Texas, and it can be heard throughout America on AM and shortwave radio. David J. Smith, host of *Newswatch Magazine* and pastor of the Church of God Evangelistic Association, preaches an eclectic blend of end-time prophecy, Anglo-Israelism, conspiracy theories, and fundamentalist Christianity.

Like Larson and the Davises, Smith believes that UFOs are the creation of Satan, but in one sermon preached back in January 1997, Smith threw a curve ball: "Satan will be coming; he's going to be kicked out of the heavens according to Revelation 12:12, and when he comes, he and his fallen angels and all of the mutants that they have created through gene-splicing — what's happened to all these little children that disappear every year? What happens to...the street people that all of a sudden just disappear, nobody ever knows what's happened to them? Oh yes, they're used, and they're used for gene-splicing; they're creating mutants — individuals they can control — and they're the ones who are flying these objects."

Smith's evidence that demons engaged in gene-splicing can be found in Genesis 6:4, where the "sons of God" coupled with human females, producing "giants" and "mighty men of renown." Smith identifies these "sons" of God as the fallen angels spoken of in Jude 6, and throws a curve ball by hypothesizing that the creation of these wicked "men of renown" owed more to ancient gene-splicing rather than procreation.

Like many others who study UFOs, Smith also has identified flying saucers with cattle mutilations in the West as well as secret government projects. In another January 1997 sermon, Smith detailed an attempt by some folks to distract a flying saucer in the deserts of New Mexico by "tagging" it with a laser scope mounted on a rifle. The laser frightened the saucer off — and attracted the attention of an unmarked black helicopter. The helicopter promptly landed next to the party and deployed black-uniformed, anonymous soldiers (possibly those pesky United Nations World Government stormtroopers) who confiscated their possessions, including the gun and laser scope.

At this point, let's return to *Talk Back with Bob Larson*, where Larson has been taking calls from listeners for a while. The first one we hear is Loretta, who talks about a Christian pilot that she knew: "He said that he often saw UFOs, and because he was a Christian, he commanded them to leave in the name of Jesus, and they disappeared. So that's proof to us that in the name of Jesus, we have power over it, so it has to be demoniac manifestations."

I don't know about you, but if I ever fly on an airplane and hear the pilot start shouting because he's seeing things, I'm going to be a more than a little concerned. There's a lot to see in the skies, including weather balloons, other airplanes, flocks of birds, unusual cloud formations, and so on. In addition, many people have what are known as "vitreous floaters" in their eyes. Slight imperfections in the eye can cause people to see "spots" in their eyes which are perfectly harmless in most cases. My caution to Loretta would be that hearsay from a pilot who may be shouting at "little green men" at an altitude of 30,000 feet doesn't exactly constitute proof of demoniac manifestations. Maybe that pilot's overdue for a nice, relaxing vacation in San Antonio or Corpus Christi. I know I certainly am.

After a couple of minutes, we hear Larson talk to Molly, who has a somewhat different perspective on the whole subject; she's amazed with the "heavy Christian overtones" that she noticed in Contact. After the two go back and forth for a while, Larson finally tells her, "You're being an apologetic for the demoniac forces of Hollywood that are trying to brainwash our children to reject the God of the Bible; you're *apologizing* for these *Godless* people. You're *apologizing* for *Carl Sagan*, bless his dead soul in Hell." Molly, on the other hand, states that it seemed like the movie was saying "God can even work through science and strange phenomena." (This despite the fact that Sagan was an atheist.)

Unable to convince Molly of her error, a somber Larson makes this remark afterwards: "My heart is broken over the Mollys of this world. Molly, I've been fightin' demons longer than you've been livin'. Please take a little piece of advice from somebody who's a spiritual warfare warrior who's been down in the trenches, taking the forces of Hell head-on before you even took your first breath. Choose this day whom you will serve."

The debate over extraterrestrials has been complicated by various trends in pseudoscience and antiscience coming from all sides. Faked saucer photos, alien abduction stories, mass suicides by UFO cultists, and legends of government cover-ups have been joined by religious believers who either anticipate the coming of humanity's saviors or, in the case of Bob Larson, David J. Smith, and the Davises, see their arrival as yet another sign that The End is near.

What is being lost in the shuffle is the very real fact that there is still much for us to learn about the universe. Only within the past few years have we discovered any tangible evidence of planets orbiting other stars. Only last month did we manage to put a rover on another planet to start an ongoing mission of exploration. The last thing we need is for hysteria to overshadow a legitimate, scientific debate over whether or not we are alone in the universe. Ginny Vaughn once told me of a *Pogo* cartoon that pondered the same question. A paraphrase of the final conclusion went like this: "Whatever the answer, it's mind-boggling."

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## The skeptic friends network

How One Phone Call Changed Their Lives:

*Authentic Testimonies from Clients of The Skeptic Friends Network*

by Paul Somerville Moore

(Samizdat OnLine News Service ----) "I had a feeling I shouldn't go to work that day, so I called my friend at the Skeptic Friends Network — where they have real skeptics, not celebrity skeptics like they do at the other skeptic networks — and told him about it," said Hortense Grigsby of Salem, Massachusetts. "And I can't begin to tell you how much he helped me."

"The first thing he said," Grigsby continued, "was that a feeling is not a testable hypothesis — although he suggested that if I'd kept a log of my feelings and premonitions over a significant period of time and could base my decision on an inductive analysis of how my hunches had worked out in the past, I might be able to predict how valid they were likely to be."

"As it turns out," Grigsby told Samizdat OnLine News Service, "I had in fact kept quite detailed records, study of which disclosed that none of my fears had ever come true! Not even one."

"So, I went to work in spite of the fact that I felt like something bad would happen if I did, and wouldn't you just know it, I turned out to be right for once in my life. The Burger King where I work was robbed at gunpoint, and I was shot by the robber and now I'm a quadriplegic."

"But even though things didn't turn out very well in that one instance," Grigsby acknowledged as her attendant adjusted her breathing tube, "I know my skeptic friend was right about the importance of rigorous inductive analysis in making decisions, and I still call him whenever I can get someone to dial the phone for me."

"My skeptic friend taught me how to win at the lottery," enthused another caller. "He used a computer model he'd created to show me just how unlikely it was that I'd ever get one of those multi-million dollar payoffs and told me how I could save hundreds of dollars each and every month by buying food at the grocery store instead of all those losing lottery tickets. And because I'm eating again, I even feel better — all thanks to my skeptic friend!"

The Skeptic Friends Network was launched last month by sincerely questioning people who were concerned by the huge profits made by so-called psychics who offered little more than emotional card tricks to callers at \$3.99 and more per minute. A group of these sincere questioners asked themselves the sincere question: How can I get in on this deal?, and the Skeptic Friends Network was born.

"We differ from those psychic networks in significant ways," said Credo Markwell of the Skeptic Friends Network. "We

don't make those disclaimers saying that our advice is for entertainment purposes only, as the psychic networks do while claiming to change lives. We promise to help people make good inductive choices in their lives based on testable hypotheses and verifiable evidence. And we charge about half of what they do — \$2.00 a minute, and the first ten minutes are free."

Markwell acknowledges that callers tend to spend most of those first ten minutes listening to their skeptic friend clarifying the fact that atheism is not, in fact a religious belief, but a belief about religion; and describing the technical shortcomings of the movie *Contact*. "Still, it's a better deal than the psychic networks, overall," Markwell claims. "Our callers have gotten better advice about their jobs, finances, and relationships from our skeptics than they have ever gotten anywhere else."

"That's something we'd be proud of," Markwell told Samizdat OnLine News Service, "if it weren't for the fact that pride isn't rational, so we don't feel it."

"I was co-dependently involved with a drunken, methamphetamine-addicted, physically abusive motorcycle mechanic," said Ron Toggle of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, "and my skeptic friend helped me look at our relationship realistically and decide not to see her anymore. After we broke up, she stopped drinking, went to rehab for her amphetamine dependency, got therapy for her abusive tendencies, began attending church, and now lives in a mansion and owns the four largest Harley-Davidson franchises in Pennsylvania."

"At first, I was a little angry over the fact that I'd let her go, but I called my skeptic friend, who asked me if I really wanted to be involved with somebody who goes to church, and I realized he was right."

"I called my skeptic friend to ask if the guy I was dating — a Ph.D. mathematician specializing in fractals — was the one for me, and he told me he was," testified Mildred Donahoe-Herbert of Modesto, California. "So I married him, and we bought a huge house and had three kids. I was very happy until he ran off with that aerobics instructor. I haven't seen him since, and my children and I have my skeptic friend to thank for that!"

Credo Markwell suggests there is reason for skepticism about Ms. Donahoe-Herbert's account of her experience with the Skeptic Friends Network. "I can't be sure," Markwell said carefully, "but it seems somewhat unlikely that this woman could have gotten married, bought a house, and given birth to three children in less than a month."

More likely to be an accurate account of an experience with the Skeptic Friends Network is that of struggling actor Lance Hansom, who called from a pay phone in Hollywood to ask his skeptic friend what would happen if he stayed in L.A. trying to be an actor. "When the skeptic told him that he would almost certainly — based on solid empirical and testable evidence — end up at age fifty cadging quarters to pay for his twenty-first facelift so he could get his first real acting job, Lance went back to his father's hardware business in Pocatello, Idaho, where he is reportedly doing very well and is extremely happy. Now, that's the kind of good advice you can expect from the Skeptic Friends Network," Markwell suggested.

To speak to your very own personal skeptic — who is, Markwell assures us, waiting eagerly for you to call — just dial 1 (800) GET-REAL. "Unlike those other skeptic networks, which use celebrity skeptics, "we have real skeptics at the Skeptic Friends Network. Don't put it off, or it will be later when you finally get around to it," Markwell concluded logically. "Call now."

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