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A Skeptical View of Exorcism and Deliverance (Part III)

By Danny Barnett

I wish to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Virginia Vaughn, Pat Reeder, and Laura Ainsworth of the North Texas Skeptics and Harry Guetzlaff of the Trinity Foundation for supplying me with research materials for this report.

(This is the 3rd part of a four-part series.-Ed.)

The Mechanics of Exorcism/Deliverance

After identifying someone as demon-possessed and determining what particular demons plague that individual, the next step (provided you're an exorcist or deliverance minister) is to cast those demons out. Various preparations are recommended prior to an attempted exorcism; for example, Richard Ing offered a few practical suggestions on clothing worn by deliverance subjects:

Tell women not to wear low-cut dresses or blouses to a deliverance session. They should wear jeans, if possible. They should also wear undergarments. The same applies to deliverance workers. Impromptu wrestling matches between workers and possessed people may provide some embarrassing incidents.¹⁹

Apparently Ing never said anything about *men* wearing underwear, so let's hope there aren't too many exorcisms performed in Scotland. Another touchy subject is restroom facilities, for which Bob Larson offered this advice:

Make sure that toilet facilities are readily accessible, and never let the victim go into the rest room, once the demons have been aroused...If the victim is offended by such seeming immodesty, at least make sure that someone stands next to the bathroom door and that the door is left slightly ajar. I've had demons manifest once the victim was in the bathroom and lock the door. By holding the victim in a trance state, the demons kept the person in the bathroom for hours, and thus stopped the exorcism.²⁰

Once all the preliminaries are out of the way, the deliverance session can begin. Most deliverance ministers teach that it is possible to cast demons out of oneself, but deliverance is usually performed either by an individual exorcist or by a special prayer group. Eddie Smith presented the following account of an exorcism in the March/April 1997 issue of *Ministries Today* in which we find a computer engineer named Sid who is receiving deliverance from a special ministry team:

"Sid, I feel the Lord has shown me that you made a contract with the devil when you were 7 years old," Judy says. "Does this mean anything to you?"

Without warning, the young man explodes into a rage. He looks wildly around the room, panting, crying, terrified. The words burst from Sid's mouth: "No! It's none of your business! Leave us alone! He's ours! You have no right!"

With heightened awareness of the spiritual battle at hand, each team member begins to pray fervently...

Sid begins to shake even more violently. Then Sue speaks up with a word of knowledge that has come to her in the form of a brief, vague vision. "Sid, the Lord says this has something to do with a GI Joe doll," she says.

Instantly, Sid's hands clap over his ears. Shaking his head, he cries, "No!"

Bob, the team leader, knowing by the Spirit what is taking place, demands sternly, "Demon, in the name of Jesus, you let go of Sid's ears." Sid's hands jerk away. Then Bob asks Sid gently, "Is this true?"

Suddenly, as though a switch has been thrown, Sid becomes lucid. "Yes, it is true," he admits sadly. "When I was 7 years old, I wanted a GI Joe action figure very badly. A Saturday morning cartoon gave me the idea to offer my soul to the devil in exchange for it. Something entered me that day, and I've never been the same since."²¹

Just as Bob Larson tried to figure out what right a Death demon had to possess a woman at the Arlington rally, this team appeared to be seeking any rights demons may have claimed over Sid. Once such rights are nullified, demons are supposedly left unprotected when an exorcist tells them to leave their victim.

Roman Catholic priests recite various prayers contained in the *Rituale Romanum* when attempting to cast out demons; they may also sprinkle holy water, anoint their patients with oil, or use other paraphernalia. Deliverance ministers from Protestant and Charismatic churches do not have any universal prayers, but some of them do use items such as water and oil if they feel it will help.

What is the sign that a demon has left an individual? When Bob Larson was interviewed by religious broadcasters Marcus and Joni Lamb, he stated, "Generally, demons come and leave through orifices; now, that's just the way it functions. Don't ask me why; that's just the way it works."²² Deliverance ministers have documented demons being expelled through screaming, coughing, crying, and even flatulence, but Canadian exorcist Maxwell Whyte discussed another method of expulsion that many ministers also claim to encounter:

I have learned that strong demons usually vomit out, often bringing mucus with them and sometimes even the poison that surrounds them. This is quite an operation! The very hand of Jesus, the Divine Physician, reaches right inside them and brings salvation and healing. I have seen many expensive operations done by Jesus for free, and the results are often left on the floor or in buckets.²³

Vomiting as a means of demon expulsion has also been discussed by the Hammonds, Richard Ing, and others. In response, Lowell Streiker stated, "Many deliverance charismatics bring brown paper bags with them to worship services in order to confine the demons. (I have trouble imprisoning a sandwich in this manner.)"²⁴ Frank and Ida Mae Hammond have recommended that anyone engaged in deliverance keep a plastic wastebasket or bucket handy in case their subject starts vomiting up demons.²⁵

Under the Magnifying Lens

In the case of the 1949 exorcism of "Robbie," the Roman Catholic Church has never made an official ruling as to whether demons had ever invaded Robbie to begin with. The only mention ever made of the exorcism in a semiofficial Catholic publication was in the August 19, 1949 issue of *The Catholic Review*. Archbishop Joseph E. Ritter of St. Louis appointed a Jesuit professor to conduct an investigation, but the results were never made public. One Jesuit source told Thomas B. Allen that the examiner found no evidence of demoniac possession. Ritter asked his subordinates to stop talking about the incident after receiving the report; according to the source, "It's not that they were hiding anything. It

just was that they felt that the overall effect of the thing was counterproductive."²⁶

Father William Bowdern, the priest who was in charge of the exorcism, made this statement to Father Walter Halloran, who assisted Bowdern in the ritual:

Really, what difference does it make? Make a statement about it and you'd have a whole group of people who would want to destroy it, and you'd have another group of people who would want to make it a true exorcism. I don't think they [Church authorities] are ever going to say a word about it. I think they will never say whether it was or it wasn't. You and I know it. We were there.²⁷

Bowdern's remarks are a stark contrast to some very strong reactions from the modern-day deliverance movement concerning attempts to hold deliverance up to critical analysis. Deliverance minister Stan Madrak has issued a grim warning to anyone who questions the validity of deliverance; you may look up the scriptures cited if you wish.

In the event you are very critical of the DELIVERANCE message, or especially if you have a mocking demon (making fun of JESUS CHRIST and the Miracle of DELIVERANCE), there is a good chance that Psalm 109, Isaiah 54:17, and many other like Scriptures will take effect on you. I have seen it happen to many. You reap what you sow, but maybe, just maybe, if you sincerely ask JESUS to forgive you, there may be a chance of the judgement of God not falling on you.²⁸

When Frank and Ida Mae Hammond compiled their list of demons in *Pigs in the Parlor*, demons such as Intellectualism and Rationalization appeared in the list, but the Hammonds also included a demon of *Skepticism*.²⁹ Is anyone surprised?

In the movie adaptation of L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*, we saw the disembodied head of Oz thundering at Dorothy and her travelling companions. When Dorothy's dog, Toto, found a pair of suspicious legs hiding behind a curtain, the spectre was quick to shout, "Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain!" It seems strange that some exorcists feel the need to resort to a similar tactic in order to defend a phenomenon that they apparently consider to be unquestionably valid; they seem to have forgotten the exhortation of the Apostle Paul: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."³⁰ Some extraordinary claims have been made about deliverance, but where is the evidence to back those claims up?

Many case studies of deliverance have been cited in books by Don Basham, Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, Rebecca Brown, Bob Larson, and others. Unfortunately, none of the ones I have found are traceable; deliverance ministers often withhold the true identities of their subjects to protect their confidentiality and shield them from any possible embarrassment. Therefore, I can neither prove nor disprove any of the case studies presented by any of the exorcists. I am thus relegated to covering some of the aspects of possession and deliverance.

Popular Delusions and Parlor Tricks

Let's look at one of the supposed doorways to possession: horoscopes. Deliverance ministers such as Eddie Smith and Richard Ing say that possessing a horoscope, let alone using it, is a sure-fire way to invite possession. Enter James Randi, a celebrated magician and escape artist: "I'm a liar, a cheat, a charlatan, and a fake – but at least I admit it up front."

Randi performed an experiment involving horoscopes. Twelve students at Queens Community College in New York were contacted by the staff of NBC's *Dateline* news program and asked to supply their names, their birthdays, and their places of birth. Weeks later, they were brought into an auditorium where they were introduced to Randi, who billed himself as an expert on astrology. He then handed each of the students a personalized horoscope based on the information they gave to the *Dateline* staff weeks earlier. All 12 of the students considered the horoscopes to be accurate.

As the students marveled at the accuracy of their personalized horoscopes, Randi asked them to switch their horoscopes with each other and read them. It didn't take long for the students to realize that they'd been had: *each* student received the same "personalized" horoscope. This horoscope consisted of little more than generalizations such as "you are willing

to help others" that Randi himself borrowed from other horoscopes. Randi then told the baffled students, "Take it from me; it's nonsense. It always has been. It's 4,000 years old; that just shows you how long nonsense can last and be respectable."³¹

I am not aware if Randi has ever done an in-depth study of demoniac possession and deliverance. However, the evidence provided by his experiment makes it seem very unlikely that nonsense such as horoscopes could open people up to possession – provided that possession isn't nonsense, either.

In the excerpt taken from Eddie Smith's article in *Ministries Today*, one of the deliverance workers claimed to be receiving "words of knowledge" for Sid concerning a GI Joe doll and a contract with the Devil. Lowell Streiker had a few comments about receiving special revelations from God:

I now and then receive telephone calls from women who have received a message for me "from the Lord." I ask them to have God send me a copy of His communication to my office. It becomes so easy to move from saying, "I think" or "I feel" or "I want" such and such, to "thus saith the Lord." Among charismatics, every man or woman can function as his or her own cult, with appropriate revelation, ethics, lifestyle, and prophecy.³²

Smith claims to have led his followers and clients to throw away thousands of dollars worth of personal possessions "that God revealed were a defilement to them and to their homes." Was it actually God that revealed it to those people – or was it Eddie Smith, acting on his own prejudices and dislikes?

Receipt of a "word of knowledge" seems to parallel an old parlor trick called "cold reading" which has often been used by faith healers, stage magicians, and the like throughout the years. If I wanted to perform cold reading on a subject, I would ask that person various questions about himself or herself while carefully searching for clues unconsciously exhibited by the individual that might give me some insight into the subject's thoughts or feelings. For example, spotting an American flag lapel pin on my subject might cause me to ask the subject questions like "Do you have a deep love for your country?" with highly predictable answers.

It is quite possible to perform cold reading without even being aware of it, but some have used cold reading to deliberately deceive people. Disgraced healing evangelist W.V. Grant was caught performing cold reading on someone by James Randi, who saw the event on videotape:

A man wearing a white shirt stood beside the healer. Grant told him that he was "smoking too much." The man agreed. Grant said that he had an impression of the letters "P" and "M." The man answered that he smoked Pall Mall cigarettes. Quickly Grant asked: "Where are they? Are they in your car or in your back pocket?" The man reached for his breast pocket and pulled out a pack of Pall Malls, which Grant crushed and threw away, to the cheers of the audience.

Close observation of the videotape of that show reveals that the Pall Mall package was visible through the white fabric of the man's pocket. Grant had spotted this and used the information to his advantage.³³

It is worth noting that James Randi is currently offering \$1,100,000 in US funds to anyone who can prove that they are capable of performing any paranormal feat, be it faith healing, telekinesis, astral projection, clairvoyance, or exorcism/deliverance. Despite attempts by various individuals, the prize has yet to be awarded.

Notes

19 Ing, *Spiritual Warfare*; pg. 167.

20 Larson, *In the Name of Satan*; pg. 181.

21 Eddie Smith, "Deliverance Ministry: It Takes a Team." *Ministries Today*; March/April 1997.

22 *Celebration with Marcus & Joni Lamb* television broadcast; Daystar Television Network; May 15, 1998.

23 Whyte, *Dominion Over Demons*; pg. 60.

24 Streiker, *The Gospel Time Bomb*; pg. 116.

25 Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*; pg. 103.

26 Allen, *Possessed: The True Story of an Exorcism*; pg. 208.

27 Ibid., pp. 208-209.

28 Stan Madrak, *End-Time Deliverance Center* Web site; <http://www.demonbuster.com>.

29 Frank and Ida Mae Hammond, *Pigs in the Parlor*; pg. 114.

30 *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians*; V:21. Translation taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible. *Cum privilegio* 1611.

31 *Dateline* television broadcast; National Broadcasting Company; February 23, 1996.

32 Streiker, *The Gospel Time Bomb*; pp. 118-119.

33 James Randi, *The Faith-Healers*. 1989; Prometheus Books; Buffalo, NY; pg. 105.

Son of Web news

by **John Blanton** Just when you thought it was safe to go back out into the surf:

1. John Forester has posted on the Skeptic list server a blurb from the Harmony catalog, from Gaiam, Inc., dba Harmony: NEW. TREAT WATER ANYWHERE MAGNETICALLY TO SAVE SOAP, DETERGENT AND YOUR HEALTH. Slipped over faucets, shower heads or tossed in the washing machine or dishwasher, the Washball magnetizes water, shrinking its molecules and organizing their ionic charge to create water capable of greater solvency. The first magnetic technology to help reduce dishwasher detergent use, it removes chlorine taste and odors and keeps hard water minerals dissolved to prevent scale. Using them means you can use up to 75% less soap whether bathing or doing dishes. When ingested or applied, magnetized water promotes healthier skin and better circulation and digestion and aids detoxification. Even plants love it. Give the Washball a try and see the results for yourself. Made in Canada." Priced at \$21.00

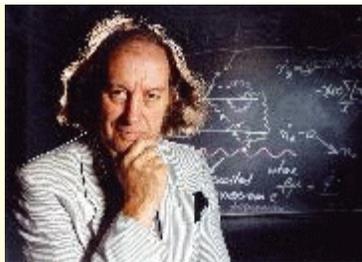
John goes on to say "I presume these health claims are carefully just this side of the law. After all, water does good things to one; the claims never say that water that has passed through the Washball does more for you than does plain water. Still the same old scams, from the first days that substantial magnets became available.

2. Reuters reports from Ivory Coast the story of an army colonel who was shot to death when testing a "magic" belt. The belt was promoted by its builder as providing protection against such an occurrence. The shooter was the son of the belt maker. Colonel Pascal Gbah, 49, died on the spot. The belt's maker was Gbah's cousin, Andre Gondo.

Actually, Gondo only promised the belt's magic would work if the wearer abstained from sex while wearing it. Gbah had a wife and six children and was an electronics engineer in the army. The cousin has been arrested, but the shooter is still at large.

3. We reprint without comment the following press release: Body's ability to emit light arouses new hopes & fears on radiation from mobile phones

New research by University of Warwick physicist Dr. Gerard Hyland on the human body's own electromagnetic radiation, raises a host of new concerns and possibilities as to the effect of microwave radiation (such as that generated by mobile phones, radar or microwave ovens) on the human body.



Dr. Gerard Hyland

This summer Dr. Hyland will give two papers at international conferences outlining his research into the phenomenon that biological systems, including the human body generate and emit extremely low intensity radiation in the form of photons (a microscopic packet of light energy), and that these photon emissions are not random but display coherence (similar to that possessed by the much more intense light generated by a laser). Dr. Hyland believes that the origin of this coherence stems from the body's own metabolism which generates its own coherent electromagnetic field, which imposes the observed coherence on the emitted photons, the very weak emission of which can be viewed as an outward sign of an orderly functioning metabolism. If this is the case then serious questions arise about the effect of external sources of microwave radiation on living tissue and its own electromagnetic patterns.

For instance, much is known about how external microwaves can have a heating effect on living tissue and other substances. There are strict regulations and restrictions on the operation of things that could generate such a heating or thermal effect mobile phones and their masts, microwave ovens etc., but few have considered the possibility that these microwave sources could also have a non thermal effect on the bodies own microwave activity. If, by unlucky chance, one of these microwave pollutants matched one of the key microwave patterns of the human body the resultant resonance effect may be quite dangerous. In Russia, where this knowledge of biophysics is more widely known, manufacturers of microwave emitting devices (such as leaking microwave ovens) have safety precautions 1000 times more stringent than those in the UK and US just in case such an effect could occur.

If we understood more of how this electromagnetic activity biosystems operated we could perhaps use external microwaves therapeutically to cause beneficial effects in the human body. Russian scientists are already experimenting with a form of electromagnetic acupuncture applying microwave radiation to acupuncture points in an attempt to treat medical conditions, and they claim they are having some considerable success. Dr Hyland postulates many other applications for his research. Sensors could be developed to measure the ripeness and freshness of food by measuring the amount and coherence of its light emission. Medical conditions could be diagnosed non-invasively, and a new understanding of how consciousness operates at a quantum level might even emerge.

One of the applications most recently to be considered is the use of resonant microwave radiation to awaken dormant phages within bacteria which then kill them; this alternative electromagnetic therapy could be particularly welcome given the increasing immunity of certain strains of bacteria to conventional antibiotics.

Note for editors: Much of the early work on this area of research was first carried out by the late Professor Herbert Fröhlich FRS of Liverpool University. Dr. Hyland was his last Ph.D. student.

4. From the Skeptical Inquirer Electronic Digest (<http://www.csicop.org>)

How psychic sleuths waste police resources

by Joe Nickell

Uncritical news reports and pseudocumentaries continue to tout the alleged successes of "psychics" who supposedly assist law enforcement agencies in solving crimes or locating missing persons. Exaggerated claims notwithstanding, most police departments (72% according to researchers) have not used psychics (Durm and Sweat 1994). And of those who have, few have done so officially or claim significant success for them. Most experienced police seem to recognize the basic trick of psychics, called retrofitting. This involves tossing out several vague "clues" (such as a number, a mention of "water," etc.) which are then interpreted to fit the true facts after they become known.

But psychics are not merely ineffectual; they actually harm investigations by misdirecting police efforts for example by having them drag rivers, search rugged areas, dig up yards, and drain ponds, typically to no avail. Following are 20 selected case studies of such wasted efforts, presented chronologically.



Boston, Massachusetts, 1964. High-profile, Dutch-born psychic detective Peter Hurkos (Pieter van der Hurk) claimed to have divined the identity of the serial killer known as the Boston Strangler. Unfortunately for Hurkos, the man he accused was eventually cleared of involvement in the rape-murders, and Albert DeSalvo confessed to the crimes. Shortly afterward, Hurkos was briefly jailed in New York for allegedly impersonating an FBI agent. Hurkos died in 1988. (Nickell 1994, pp. 23-24.)

Nutley, New Jersey, 1968. In December 1967, housewife and mother Dorothy Allison had a dream that the body of a missing 15-year-old boy was lodged in a drainage pipe in a park. The Nutley police subsequently expended an afternoon in digging up the culvert but failed to find the body or even an alleged bend that supposedly marked the site. The child's body was later found elsewhere, in a small pond, by a man walking along the river. (Nickell 1994, pp. 44-45.) Nevertheless, published sources have continued to report that the body was found in the drainage pipe. (Newport News, Va., *Daily Press*, June 22, 1988.)

Oakland, Michigan, 1977. Psychic Phil Jordan was called in by police on a multiple child-murder case. In what police dubbed "Operation ESP," Jordan was taken to the various abduction sites and provided with evidence and photos to "psychometrize" (obtain psychic feelings about). Later five senior investigators reviewed his pronouncements, finding them not only vague but even contradictory and fundamentally useless. An interoffice memorandum concluded that such psychic claims "simply cloud the facts and cause an investigator undue feelings of failure." (Lyons and Truzzi 1991, pp. 226-27.)

Patterson, New Jersey, 1980. Self-styled psychic sleuth Dorothy Allison offered to help find a missing boy whom she believed had been sexually molested and murdered. She said the boy's body would be in an abandoned building's flooded basement. The police enlisted the fire department to pump out the water but discovered nothing. The boy's body was discovered two weeks later, across town. According to Detective George J. Brejack, "She was in for seven days, but she kept making wrong predictions. We went all over the place with her." (Nickell 1994, pp. 49, 53-54.)

Boston, Massachusetts, 1981. The November disappearance of Harvard student Joan Webster attracted three psychics, one of whom envisioned her body in a Manchester, CT, pond. Nine years after the disappearance the student's skeleton was discovered, by a woman walking her dog, five miles from the pond. (Morris Co., N.J., *Daily Record*, May 2, 1990.)

Northern Alabama, 1985. The search for a missing Lockport, N.Y., native Elizabeth Kenyon, was extended to rural Alabama by a psychic who asked not to be identified. The missing woman was supposedly being held in a remote cabin in the northern part of the state. Sheriff's deputies searched some "two thousand to three thousand" cabins in a futile search, according to Kenyon's father who accompanied them. The psychic subsequently claimed the young woman had been moved. (*Buffalo News*, April 25, 1985.)

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1987. A search for the body of a 13-year-old girl, who had vanished in 1975, was directed by psychic Nancy Czetli. She had police search Schenley Park. The search was a wasted effort, and Theresa Lynn Rhodes remained missing. (*The Pittsburgh Press*, September 10, 1989.)

Beaverton, Oregon, 1988. The ten-year-unsolved disappearance of a county court reporter resulted in a Portland-area private eye consulting Illinois psychic Bill Ward. Ward envisioned the woman's body buried on one or the other side of an outdoor barbecue formerly owned by her brother-in-law. Police removed brick and concrete and dug six-foot-deep holes, each about three by five feet, as indicated. No trace of a body was discovered. (*Portland Oregonian*, March 3, 1988.)

Joliet, Illinois, 1988. In April, a grain-elevator explosion at Archer Daniels Midland buried the bodies of five men

under grain and debris; also a workman reported that he had seen another blown into the Des Plaines River. Psychic Bill Ward soon arrived on the scene and confirmed that a body would be located in water. But as it turned out, the eyewitness was in error and there was no body in the river, although one corpse was found in the grain elevator's basement where a water main had burst. Ward did admit he was wrong, according to his publicist. A fire department spokesman concluded that Ward was "totally incorrect in his predictions" and was "more trouble than he was worth," helping to create a circus-like environment. (Nickell 1994, p. 91-92.)

Shadyside, Pennsylvania, 1988. Psychic Nancy Czetli directed volunteer searchers to a cliff site in an attempt to find the remains of Michael Rosenblum who had been missing for eight years. Searchers scoured the area and discovered a fragment of bone. It came from an animal, and Rosenblum remained missing. (The Pittsburgh *Press*, September 10, 1989.)

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1989. A Springdale Borough woman, Patricia Drennan, went missing after a night of bar-hopping. Two days later psychic Doreen Boyd led police to the Allegheny River which they spent two days dragging in a wasted search. An anonymous caller, who claimed to be psychic, sent authorities on another futile search, through a Springdale park. On the sixth day, Mrs. Drennan's strangled body was found wrapped in a carpet in a local basement discovered by a handyman rather than a psychic. Springdale Borough Police Chief Jack Killian stated that the use of psychics slowed rather than aided the investigation "because it led us down other paths." The constant interference resulted in "taking the police away from the job they have to do," he said. (Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette*, September 6, 1989; The Pittsburgh *Press*, September 10, 1989.)

Vancouver, British Columbia, 1990. A six-week search for Selina Sung, who had gone missing in her blue Jeep Cherokee, attracted unsolicited reports from some 40 psychics, who offered varied opinions as to the nature and locale of her fate, without success. (One businessman with a psychic vision thought Sung had been kidnapped and was being held in an unfinished cabin on Birkenhead Lake. He rented a helicopter and flew to the site with the woman's husband to no avail.) Later, the crumpled vehicle with Sung's body was discovered by two rock climbers in Cheakamus Canyon. It had left the highway at high speed, plunged over a cliff, and lodged in a canyon crevice. (Vancouver magazine, February 1992.)

Hallsville, Texas, 1990. Twelve-year-old Kimberly Norwood disappeared in May 1989. More than a year later, a Dallas psychic, John Catchings, predicted her body would be discovered buried in the driveway of her parents' home. The prediction prompted several hours of backhoe work provided by the Harrison County road department. A week later, Sheriff's deputies with cadaver dogs (those trained to search for bodies) were back at the subdivision where Catchings directed them to six additional sites all of them negative. (Shreveport *Times*, July 27, 1990.)

South Amboy, New Jersey, 1991. The May disappearance of five-year-old Timothy Wiltsey from a carnival brought psychic John Monti to the area. But in the words of a police detective, Sergeant Ray Durski:

He gave us about four different locations that we checked out. He had strong feelings that the boy had been in an abandoned building on our main thoroughfare. We went through the entire building and found no articles of clothing that he suggested we might find. The following day he suggested an area near a railroad track where he had strong feelings that there was someone who had committed suicide, and that he could be in that wooded area. We searched that area and there was nothing there also. He then contacted our South Amboy First Aid Department and gave them strong feelings that we could possibly find a body in a landfill area adjacent to the waterfront. Then they conducted a search with over 100 people and they found nothing there.

After that, he came back again, and he stated that he sees the boy running away from the mother's house in the direction of the railroad tracks.

Of course we checked that area, too, and came up with nothing.

(Nickell 1994, pp. 165-66.)

Falmouth, Illinois, 1991. Psychic Greta Alexander clairvoyantly directed the search for an elderly man lost on a ginseng hunt September 4. She led searchers in precisely the wrong direction, even though only a four-square-mile area

was involved. Moreover, Alexander said the man was in a ravine, but he was eventually discovered in a flat beafield. Fortunately, the man was still alive. (Nickell 1994, pp. 143-50.)

Cape May County, New Jersey, 1991. On a chilly November day, 12-year-old Mark Himebaugh vanished from a park where he had been playing. When an intensive search by helicopter, ground rescue teams, and bloodhounds failed to locate the boy, psychics began showing up "like flies to horse manure" as Mark's father, Jody Himebaugh, characterizes it. He was besieged by palmists, crystal gazers, psychometrists (who imagine they get psychic visions from an object that belonged to someone) even dowsers, who used their divining rods to look for water that might contain the boy's body. All failed.

Himebaugh said the psychics did not ask for money but seemed to want some type of spiritual validation. (Albuquerque *Journal*, August 28, 1994.)

Decatur, Illinois, 1992. A woman missing since Halloween had last been seen with an unknown man at a service station. The apparently abducted woman left a note in the restroom saying the man was armed with a gun. Two local psychics soon claimed to know where the victim was held and directed authorities to an abandoned farmhouse. Visited by Sheriff's deputies about midnight, with the psychics in tow, the house was found empty. (Springfield, Ill., *State Journal-Register*, November 12, 1992.)

Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1993. The wife and son of a man arrested as a suspect in a murder were missing and feared dead. On the assurance of a psychic, who claimed to envision the pair's whereabouts, U.S. Marshals drained a large farm pond. The result? An empty pond. Diggers then waited for the mud to dry, spent a day digging by hand, and finally brought in a digging machine, using a crane truck to keep it from slipping into the pond. "We can't dig to China," concluded a U.S. Marshal, who admitted the search had produced no evidence. The suspect later hanged himself in jail. (*Tulsa World*, July 25, 1993.)

Dayton, Ohio, 1994. After her son was missing for six weeks, an Ohio woman consulted a psychic. The soothsayer stated that the son was dead and that his body was to be found in the Great Miami River. The mother enlisted the aid of seven volunteer divers who searched the river for the man's body without success. (Cincinnati *Enquirer*, November 28, 1994.)

Arlington, Texas, 1996. The abduction of a nine-year-old girl sparked "hundreds" of calls to the Arlington police department. "Everyone whose long-lost sister-in-law had a premonition called in," stated a spokesperson, along with "people interpreting their dreams. It's well-intentioned, but the volume of it gets almost unmanageable in a situation like that." One man's "vision" prompted an unsuccessful search, by helicopter and search parties on foot, of a south-Arlington park. The girl's body was later found in a rain-swollen creek near an apartment complex on the opposite end of the city. (Fort Worth *Star-Telegram*, January 16, 1997.)

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As these examples show, psychics are a hindrance rather than an aid to police. In fact, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a branch of the Department of Justice, states there is not a single documented instance of anyone finding a missing child through the use of psychic power. (Marder 1994.) The same is true of crime solving. No longer should self-styled psychics be given credit for the difficult work done by law enforcement personnel.

Permission is granted to reprint or re-post on the web. We encourage translation into foreign languages. - JN

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