



The Newsletter of The North Texas Skeptics

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Sunday Morning

by John Blanton

CBS assesses America's interest in the paranormal

From *The Inside Scoop* (CBS):

America is in love with the paranormal. First it was the Bruce Willis's hit movie *The Six Sense* which has been followed by the popular *Crossing Over* with Jonathan Edward and this Sunday Ted Danson stars in a CBS movie where he communicates with the dead. Remote viewers, as these psychics are called, are people who believe they have the power to see anywhere, at anytime in history or into the future. This *Sunday Morning* Rita Braver visits Prudence Calabrese [sic] in Carlsbad California who says her remote viewing company saw the World Trade Center disaster before it happened. We also visit Paul Smith, a retired U.S. Army Major who received a U.S. Army commendation for his remote viewing skills that allowed him to spy on the Soviet Union. However, retired University of Virginia [sic] Philosophy Professor Paul Kurtz believes it's all bunk and has started the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims in the Paranormal.¹

The incorrect University of Virginia attribution likely came the editor's confusion with the Star Gate program and related research at the University of Virginia, which was also covered on the *Sunday Morning* program for 28 April. But more on Prudence Calabrese:

Prudence Calabrese is the Director of TransDimensional Systems, which provides information solutions to government, corporations and individuals using an array of services including remote viewing, knosomatics, intuitive counseling, technology transfer, consciousness mapping, physical profiling and other techniques.

Prudence has been teaching people to remote view since 1996. Prudence has been a scientist since her teen

years when she made a national television appearance performing brain transplants on ants. She takes the scientific approach approach [sic] to the study of remote viewing and has developed methods and techniques that go far beyond the restrictive, protocol-based traditional remote viewing first developed over a generation ago at Stanford Research Institute.

Prudence is the author of: "Intentions: The Intergalactic Bathroom Enlightenment Guide"

Outside of Remote Viewing, Pru's other interests include roller blading, bluegrass music, singing, writing science fiction, belly dancing, and the Japanese game of Go.

I am available to speak on the activities of TransDimensional Systems. Just drop me an email: ²

Rita Braver visited TransDimensional Systems and gave them a small test. On a sheet of paper she wrote "the assassination of Abraham Lincoln." Prudence and her two associates concentrated, and the associates listened to mood music in headphones. Later Calabrese interpreted their findings:

So, I would have to say that there's probably someone here who isn't in the best physical state and perhaps could be dead. Somebody may be trying to run away from something – quick movement." Both men "described the exact same kind of energetics, something hitting, something slamming." ³

Later on they all marveled at their success in accurately reading the hidden message.

CBS relates other claims by Calabrese:

Calabrese [sic] says Wall Street uses her services to forecast economic trends. She says she has helped police investigate murder cases. And, most astonishing of all, she says that four years ago, one of her remote viewers predicted the Sept. 11 terrorist attack.

Sunday Morning could not verify that claim. But Calabrese says she is now helping the FBI by "looking at future terror attacks, on U.S. soil and U.S. interests abroad." She says the call from the Feds came after she and her team predicted Washington's brush with anthrax.

FBI spokesman told *Sunday Morning* they could find no record of any official contacts with her, but that it is possible that she talked with an agent. And the government has acknowledged using remote viewers, like Calabrese, in the past. ⁴

The story of the Star Gate program concerns twenty years of research into remote viewing by the CIA. After \$20 million spent with no useful results, the program was terminated in 1995. CBS interviewed "psychic spy" Paul Smith about his experiences with the Star Gate program. In a separate interview, published in *The Anomalist*, Smith describes the involvement of CSICOP, (CSICOP Fellow) Ray Hyman, and early remote viewing researchers Harold Puthoff and Russell Targ:

Gonzo Science Interview with 'Psychic Spy' Paul Smith

A Column by Jim Richardson and Allen Richardson

We got in touch with "remote viewing" veteran and chronologer Paul Smith to clarify some of the finer points of this most gonzo chapter in the history of science and intelligence. Bouncing from practically every branch of the military and passing through academic labs like Stanford Research Institute (SRI), the remote viewing project (sometimes referred to as the "Psychic Spies" program) had controversy in its wake from the very beginning. We asked Smith specifically about the CIA's agenda in having the American Institute of Research (AIR) scrutinize the project knowing full well what the result would be. Smith spoke to us from his home in Austin, Texas.

Gonzo Science One of the things we want to know more about is the circumstances in which the remote viewing skeptics, a la CSICOP [Committee for the Scientific Investigation of the Claims Of the Paranormal]

and the AIR, came to publish a report when the remote viewing program was declassified in 1995. Who brought in whom? [Remote viewing veteran] Skip Atwater has said something about the CIA facilitating the AIR getting this information, knowing full well that they would pooh-pooh it, and what their real motives behind that were.

Paul Smith Well, I think that's probably true; the CIA hired AIR. Now, that relationship goes back a bit further, or at least the connection with the AIR and skeptical reviews of the remote viewing program. A number of the folks that are associated with the American Institutes of Research were actually a part of a task force put together starting in 1984 to review the remote viewing program at that time — and a lot of other things that the Army had been involved in. It was called an anti-human performance and they published two books reporting their results which, of course, in the parapsychology area, were completely negative.⁵

CBS also touched on research being done at the Division of Personality Studies at the University of Virginia ("Studying how the mind and brain relate and the question of postmortem survival"). This research is headed up by Dr. Bruce Greyson and relates to near death experiences and life after death. A later Internet search (Google) turned up the Survival of Bodily Death page that promises to reveal more about this vital issue. Greyson and others have declared their intent on a page titled *Importance of Research*:

We, a group of scholars and scientists who have carefully studied the scattered, empirical evidence for the possibility that people may, in some form, have some kind of survival of consciousness after physical death, agree on the following five points:

(1) The answer to the question of whether we survive bodily death in some form is of enormous importance to science, indeed to all fields of knowledge, and an answer, even if only pointing strongly in one direction or the other rather than being conclusive, will usually make a great deal of difference as to how people live their lives.

(2) Rigorous scientific research in parapsychology has now established that people sometimes show what are called psi abilities, conventionally termed "telepathy," "clairvoyance," "precognition," and "psychokinesis." (There may be other psi abilities, but they have not been as rigorously documented as these four.)

(3) Although there are grounds for philosophical differences, some of us feel that psi abilities do not fit in with current, conventional materialistic views of the nature of human consciousness, views which are frequently used as a basis for denying the possibility of survival a priori or the worthwhileness of research on the possibility of survival. Thus the existence of psi abilities creates a general scientific but indirect basis for the possibility (not "proof," but possibility) of some aspect of consciousness surviving death.

(4) Direct studies of survival (mediumistic communications and reincarnation memories, e.g.) to date do not prove survival in any absolute sense, but they do make a significant case for it.

(5) There is sufficient evidence that we believe we need extensive, well-funded and sophisticated research on the survival issue. Current resources available for such research are, given the complexity and importance of the topic, negligible.⁶

The signatories to the declaration include a number of researchers from various universities and colleges. One notable entry is Charles Tart, whom we have seen before. James Randi has previously described Tart's review of the remote viewing tests by Targ and Puthoff in his book *Flim-Flam!*⁷ The Skeptic's Dictionary provides a follow-up on the doings of Tart:

Charles Tart, Ph.D., is known for his work on lucid dreams, astral projection, LSD, and ESP. He has retired from the University of California at Davis psychology department and is now associated with the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. Recently, Tart hit the jackpot by hooking up with Robert Bigelow, a very wealthy Las Vegas businessman with a penchant for funding paranormal research. Bigelow gave nearly \$4 million to the University of Nevada at Las Vegas in exchange for establishing the Bigelow Chair of Consciousness Studies, a fine name for a program to fund parapsychologists like Charles Tart, who was given \$100,000 to

develop a curriculum for this program and to teach a couple of classes. Tart plans to enlighten students on such subjects as dreams, meditation, hypnosis, out-of-body experiences, telepathy, and the ever-popular subject among college students, drug-induced altered states of consciousness.⁸

As I write this, CBS promises more tonight. "Ted Danson stars in a CBS movie where he communicates with the dead." It would appear that CBS has been doing this already.

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Psychic predictions for 2002

by Jimmy Reynolds

The sterling example provided by Miss Cleo has inspired me to tune up my own highly publicized (though likewise non-existent) psychic abilities. It's only May, but this will give the humble NTS a scoop on all those million selling tabloids.

1. Y2K disaster prophet Gary North will resurface when Washington D.C. police arrest him for allegedly performing an unnatural act with an American bald eagle in the middle of the Washington mall. North will blame the episode on FBI mind-control beams.
2. Uri Geller will take credit for Herbert Hoover's victory in the 1928 election.
3. A giant UFO will land on the White House lawn. Hideous but benign aliens will emerge and meet with President Bush. They will ask to see James Randi and a good lawyer so they can file libel suits against thousands of ufologists. They will seek financial compensation for emotional distress caused by false accusations of kidnapping, cattle rustling, and FAA airspace violations.
4. Spiritualist James Van Praagh will narrowly escape being cooked alive when Martha Stewart mistakes him for the Pillsbury doughboy during a joint TV appearance.
5. Geraldo Rivera will find Osama bin Laden hiding with a Sasquatch family in the mountains of northern California. Rivera will use the 25 million dollar reward to endow a Sasquatch scholarship fund.
6. Noam Chomsky will repudiate his previous views and join the Bush administration; replacing Tom Ridge as Homeland Security Director.

7. Conspiracy theorist David Icke will vanish. His followers will claim that he was abducted by fourth- dimensional lizards disguised as mental health workers.
8. Ariel Sharon and Yasser Arafat will patch up their differences, divorce their wives, and register as domestic partners in Vermont.
9. Creationist Kent Hovind will continue to maintain that the U.S. Government itself carried out the September 11 atrocities and the subsequent anthrax attacks. In a related development, Hovind's creationist theme park, Dinosaur Adventure Land, will relocate to Koramsshar, Iran.
10. Scandal will rock the skeptic world when one of its more noted members is arrested for attempting to sell homeopathic plutonium to terrorists.
11. In a stunning public announcement, NASA will admit that the 1978 documentary film Capricorn One is partially accurate, in that no human landings have yet occurred on the Planet Mars. Conspiracy theorists will immediately denounce the statement as a hoax and claim that secret landings have been taking place since the 1950s.
12. The North Texas Skeptics will receive a cease and desist order from attorneys representing the Disney Studios. This will allege that the group's unauthorized use of the word "quack" infringes a well-known Disney trademark.

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What's new

By Robert Park

[Robert Park publishes the What's New column at <http://www.aps.org/WN/>. Following are some clippings of interest.]

Bubble fusion: It's nothing like the cold fusion fiasco.

But it's getting there. The first warning sign that a scientific claim is voodoo is that it's pitched directly to the media. That didn't happen with the Taleyarkhan et al. bubble-fusion paper (WN 8 Mar 02). The authors went through all the hoops, submitting their paper to a respected, peer-reviewed journal. It was *Science* that seemed determined to sensationalize the work. In the course of a year, various drafts went to 13 or 14 reviewers, which does not inspire confidence. A number of reviewers reportedly advised against publication and some complain that *Science* did not tell them of Shapira and Saltmarsh's failure to confirm fusion claims. The second warning sign of voodoo science is that any failure to confirm is blamed on an "establishment" conspiracy. A *Business Week* story says one author of the Taleyarkhan paper "hinted" that Shapira and Saltmarsh were protecting "the fusion establishment."

Bubbles: To flack or not to flack.

An editorial by Don Kennedy in the March 8 issue of *Science*, "To Publish or Not to Publish," describes his courageous stand in publishing a controversial paper even though "it had become clear that a number people didn't want us to publish this paper." Last week WN revealed that *Science* would carry an article by Taleyarkhan et al. from Oak Ridge National Laboratory (WN 1 Mar 02), claiming evidence of d-d fusion correlated with sonoluminescence from collapsing bubbles in deuterated acetone. However, Shapira and Saltmarsh, also from Oak Ridge, using purportedly superior detection and analysis equipment, found no evidence for fusion. Kennedy, it turns out, was merely urged to delay publishing the Taleyarkhan result until it could be accompanied by the Saltmarsh finding. Instead, *Science* accompanied the Taleyarkhan paper with a glowing "Perspectives" article, a "News" report and an editorial. Worse, *Science* issued an embargoed press release. A press embargo is a device meant to suppress dissenting views the day a story breaks. We at WN are not press, however, nor did our information come from *Science*. After WN broke the story, *Science* dropped its embargo. Both sides, Kennedy's editorial concludes, "would do well to wait for the scientific process to do its work." But in the end, it was *Science* that refused to wait until it had a balanced report.

Vacuum energy: How do you patent a perpetual-motion machine?

First, you never call it a "perpetual-motion machine." It has always been the policy of the Patent and Trademark Office to deny patents for perpetual-motion devices. So when the PTO denied a patent to Joe Newman for an "energy machine" that generated more energy than it took to run it, he sued the PTO claiming it was not perpetual motion. The energy, he said, came from conversion of mass according to Einstein's equation; his machine was slowly devouring its copper wires and iron cores. Newman lost, but his real invention was to invoke new physics to explain where the energy comes from. The new physics of choice these days is the zero-point energy of the vacuum. Thus, patent 6,362,718 (WN 5 Apr 02) is for a "motionless electromagnetic generator" that taps the energy of "longitudinal electromagnetic waves that exist in almost infinite abundance in the vacuum of space." Or to put it another way "energy is conserved in the fourth dimension, time."

Free energy: Perpetual-motion huckster indicted in Kentucky.

Last Friday, Dennis Lee and his various screwball companies were barred from conducting business in Kentucky (WN 7 Sep 01). By Monday, a grand jury had indicted Lee on consumer-fraud charges. Each of the multiple felony counts could net him five to ten in the can. Other states are said to be lining up to file their own charges. Lee takes an old fashioned approach to free-energy scams, resurrecting failed perpetual-motion ideas from a bygone era, that still have the power to bamboozle the scientifically unsophisticated. He doesn't shy away from the term "perpetual motion," and doesn't bother with applying for patents. What he sells are dealerships. Delivery is just around the corner.

Free energy: Perpetual motion scams are at an all-time high.

In 1999, I went to Columbus, Ohio, for ABC News to witness Dennis Lee demonstrate a permanent-magnet motor that was "more than 200% efficient." Actually, he didn't really demonstrate it. He stuck a magnet on the side of a steel file cabinet; turning to the audience he asked, "How long do you think that magnet will stay there?" He answered his own question, "Forever. That's infinite energy." Don't laugh, this week, Patent 6,362,718 was issued for a "Motionless Electromagnetic Generator" that "extracts energy from a permanent magnet with energy-replenishing from the active vacuum." Already in 2002 we've had the Jasker Power System (WN 25 Jan 02), Chukanov Quantum Energy (WN 8 Feb 02), Bubble Fusion (WN 15 Mar 02), and now a permanent magnet motor.

Lie detectors: Has the polygraph ever uncovered a spy?

WN believes it has not (WN 5 Apr 02). If it has, the government has never acknowledged the fact. The National Academy of Sciences is conducting a scientific review of the validity and reliability of polygraph testing. Its final report is due later this year. It is widely expected that the report will expose the polygraph as less than worthless. But beware, this is a powerful industry.

Lie detectors: FBI expands the use of polygraph tests.

In the wake of the Hanssen spy case, the FBI began testing other agents. So far, seven flunked. But the FBI says they're not suspects. After all, the polygraph has never uncovered a single spy.

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Letters to the Editor

Hi John,

Here's an LTE for the NTS Newsletter:

John Blanton apparently misinterpreted the concluding several minutes of the Q&A session after his debate with Don Patton on March 31st. ["Creation-evolution debate" April newsletter] I was lucky enough to get the last question of that event but was stuck having to address my question to John when I really wanted to get at Mr. Patton. So I "asked" John if it wasn't true (as I know it is!) that evolution does not require any directionality of "complexity" culminating in human beings so that it is perfectly reasonable to expect that many organisms might have more genes or chromosomes than people. I also asked if it wasn't the case that, as far as the fossil record is concerned, if creationism were true we would

expect by now to have found dramatic disconfirmation of evolution such as flowering plants fossilized in the same strata as a trilobite. John, of course, agreed with both "questions" while Mr. Patton glossed over the first and then brought up the Paluxy "man tracks" in response to the second challenge. So, John, you can thank me and not God for that. Don simply took the bait he was offered. And, afterwards, for my trouble, one of Don's supporters gave me a videotape on the subject of supposed fossil evidence disconfirmations of evolution.

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