

The REALL News

The official newsletter of the Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land

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Electronic Version

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Purpose

The Rational Examination Association of Lincoln Land (REALL) is a non-profit educational and scientific organization. It is dedicated to the development of rational thinking and the application of the scientific method toward claims of the paranormal and fringe- science phenomena.

REALL shall conduct research, convene meetings, publish a newsletter, and disseminate information to its members and the general public. Its primary geographic region of coverage is central Illinois.

REALL subscribes to the premise that the scientific method is the most reliable and self-correcting system for obtaining knowledge about the world and universe. REALL not not reject paranormal claims on a priori grounds, but rather is committed to objective, though critical, inquiry.

The REALL News is its official newsletter.

Membership information is provided elsewhere in this newsletter.

Board of Directors: Chairman, David Bloomberg; Assistant Chairman, Prof. Ron Larkin; Secretary-Treasurer, Kevin Brown; Newsletter Editor, Bob Ladendorf; At-Large Members, Prof. Steve Egger, Wally Hartshorn, and Frank Mazo.

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REALL

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From the Editor

-- Bob Ladendorf

One of the biggest news stories during the past month has been the murders of O.J. Simpson's ex-wife and her friend. Millions of us were also glued to the TV during the police chase of O.J.in his friend's Bronco in Los Angeles, alternately

moved and repulsed by the spectacle surrounding the fall - whether guilty or not - of a great sports hero. That Friday night chase will be one of those TV moments that will be remembered forever by millions of Americans.

I thought back to that TV coverage after editing Martin Kottmeyer's lead article called "The Eyes that Spoke." He attempts to prove that supposed memories of actual events - in this case an encounter with an alien being - can be jumbled with memories of a TV program! Martin makes a convincing case for the influence of TV in creating a lasting memory.

Don't miss our REALL meeting for July, as we will be showing a special tape of a presentation given by James "The Amazing" Randi. He is a marvelous individual, magician and skeptic investigator. I saw him at a St. Louis meeting recently, and he was delightfully funny as he delivered his serious message about the negative effects of pseudoscience.

This month, we have also provided a list of other organizations that may be of interest to our readers. Keep it handy for your use now or in the future.

As always, we look forward to any comments you have about this newsletter's articles or our organization.

/s/ Bob Ladendorf
From the Chairman
-- David Bloomberg

Alright! From a lousy election-meeting May turnout to a great June attendance. Perhaps the best part was that there were so many new faces at this meeting, but we definitely like to see familiar faces, too!

So, that means I hope to see you at this month's meeting, which will be only a few days after you get this newsletter (we're running a wee bit late) on the 18th. We're featuring a video of James "The Amazing" Randi, from a presentation he did for the Skeptics Lecture Series at CalTech. Those of us who saw him recently in St. Louis know you don't want to miss this opportunity to see his presentation.

And speaking of St. Louis (well, sort of), I went to the St. Louis Science Center recently and was rather dismayed to find UFO books for sale in their souvenir store. And not just any UFO books, either, but some which have been totally debunked! Were there any skeptical UFO books? Heck, no. I wonder if they've ever heard of Phil Klass. I expect to see this kind of thing occur in an everyday bookstore (though it certainly doesn't make me happy), but in a science center? People see that and have a tendency to assume that it must be scientific if it's sold there, alongside Stephen Hawkings' truly scientific books.

Also, remember folks that we still have the 20% discount available on Prometheus Books! A new one has just come out about "psychic detectives," and even has a chapter on Greta Alexander! We only need a few more books to send in our order, so hurry up and get your order to us ASAP!

/s/ David Bloomberg
The Eyes That Spoke
by Martin Kottmeyer

In his final book, *Aliens From Space*, Donald Keyhoe briefly recounted his involvement in starting the investigation of Barney and Betty Hill that eventually led to John Fuller's publication of *The Interrupted Journey*, the first major work of the alien abduction mythos. Keyhoe was mystified more than anything else by the hideous faces of the aliens. The heads were oddly shaped with no ears and compressed noses and mouths. Worst of all were long slanting eyes which extended along the side of the head creating a sinister look. "What caused the subconscious minds of these two people to create these pictures from their imaginations has never been fully explained." [1]

Keyhoe could not accept the case 100%, he later admitted in a 1975 interview, but he did not reject it either. As mysteries go, Keyhoe's question seemed safely rhetorical. Who knows why anyone dreams of one monster and not another? How would anyone even begin to investigate such a problem?

What could not have been foreseen was how serendipity might step in to break this minor mystery. The local PBS station a few years ago decided to rerun the old TV series *The Outer Limits*. It was one of the most visually amazing programs of my youth, and I eagerly tuned in to experience once more such sights as the horrifying Zanti misfits, the bee girl, moonstone, *Borderland's* ionic gale, the down-shifting time machine of "Controlled Experiment," and David McCallum's evolution into a mega-brain.

It was during the showing of the episode "The Bellerro Shield" that I felt the uncanny frisson of *deja vu*. The eyes of the alien were unusually long and wrapped around the side of the face. It quickly hit me these eyes were just like the wraparound eyes that were drawn in *The Interrupted Journey* -- and the later more detailed drawing the Hills did in collaboration with the artist David Baker.[2] Though I couldn't articulate it at that instant, there were other similarities which had contributed to the sense of a close relationship: no ears, no hair, no nose, and a cranium shaped like a bullet tilted backwards 45 degrees. I was excited by the possibility of a match because I was reasonably sure there were few or no other examples of aliens with wraparound eyes in science fiction cinema. Moments later however my excitement became subdued. It dawned on me that *The Outer Limits* was a series of the mid-Sixties and the Hill case dated to the early Sixties-- 1961 or 1962. "The Bellerro Shield" couldn't have been an influence. Still, the book came out in 1966. Could the lag be significant?

After the program ended, I dug into my library for a round of late night research. "The Bellerro Shield" aired February 10, 1964. The Hill's UFO encounter happened in the morning of September 20, 1961. That probably should have killed the idea of any kind of influence, but the resemblance was just so compelling I couldn't shake the feeling there had to be a relationship. I reread *The Interrupted Journey*. To my delight I discovered there was no mention of wraparound eyes in the earliest account. Betty's dreams, written down a matter of days after the UFO sighting, mention men with Jimmy Durante noses, dark or black hair and eyes and a relaxed human appearance that she said was "not frightening." This is all quite different from the final product. The changes emerge in the hypnotic regression with Dr. Simon. The most salient issue was to know when the wraparound eyes were first described. That turned out to be during a hypnosis session involving Barney dated February 22, 1964. Not only did "The Bellerro Shield" precede Barney's first mention of wraparound eyes, it did by only 12 days! I was immensely pleased.

I ordered the script of the show next. My thoughts were so distracted I realized I had missed the dialogue. This yielded additional evidence for the relationship. Judith, played by Sally Kellerman, is conversing with the Bifrost alien and asks it if it can read her mind. It answers, "No, I cannot read your mind. I cannot even understand your language. I analyze your eyes. In all the universes, in all the unities beyond all the universes, all who have eyes, have eyes that speak..." Judith, intrigued, asks how it speaks her language. It elaborates, I learn each word just before I speak it. Your eyes teach me." [3]

In saying all eyes speak, the Bifrost alien is conveying a truth and simultaneously dodging the human/alien language barrier problem by a unique dab of poetic license.

In the same hypnosis session in which Barney drew the wraparound eyes, there is this exercise in confusion: Yes. They won't talk to me. Only the eyes are talking to me. I-I-I-I don't understand that. Oh -- the eyes don't have a body. They're just eyes..." [4] Barney's confusion about the talking eyes is one most viewers probably shared over the writer's gimmick employed by the episode's creators. The notion shared by both texts that eyes can talk defies dismissal via appeal to commonness or coincidence. By any measure, the case for influence here is not just satisfactory, it is exemplary. At least one abduction researcher has granted this point. [5]

The discovery of this pseudomemory will not shock hypnosis experts. They have long been aware of the danger on confabulation in regression work. There was no reason to expect *The Interrupted Journey's* narrative to be immune from such contamination. Belatedly, Keyhoe's question thus finds itself answered with the mundane corollary that Barney had watched the science fiction/horror series *The Outer Limits* shortly before his subconscious was called upon to imagine what a scary alien ought to look like. Betty's dream aliens were too normal to justify the fear he displayed during the original UFO experience.

Barney's confabulation has other interesting repercussions. As Thomas E. Bullard has pointed out, "wraparound eyes" is

a term that has become common in the abduction literature. [6] Case after case can be pointed to of people describing alien abductors with eyes that wrap, curl, or taper around the head. Some that UFO buffs may recognize include: Carol Wayne Watts, 1967; "Canadian Rock Band Abducted," 1971; David Delmundo's 1972 contact with the turban-sporting Ohneshto; the 1977 Langenargen abduction (a major German case); the Andreasson Affair; Harrison Bailey; South Dakota Connection (MUFON, March 1983); Paris Colorado; the Mirassol abductions; "Jennifer"; Tom Holloway, D.D.S. (in Boylan, 1994). [7] Others exist, but this will suffice to indicate the influential nature of the Hill case on the history of the imagery of abduction experiences. Before the Hills, wraparound eyes seem largely, probably totally, absent in the UFO literature. Cinematic aliens sporting wraparound eyes are similarly largely absent. But not totally. I eventually discovered one other instance. It is an unnamed mutant in the film *Evil Brain from Outer Space*, a Japanese film imported in 1964. Interestingly, one of the heads of Projects Unlimited which provided the monsters for *The Outer Limits* was named Wah Ming Chang. He was a talented sculptor and designed most of the head sculptures for the series. This may hint at cultural roots in Eastern myth or kabuki theatre, but I'm not prepared to follow the trail the distance to prove it.

The motif of the speaking eyes did not share in the popularity of the wraparound eyes. There is one example in Edith Fiore's *Encounters*. The abductee named Victoria describes aliens communicating by simply looking at each other. It is tempting to speculate that the alien bonding practices involving staring described in *Secret Life* are descended from Barney's talking eyes, but there are many complicating factors such as strong hints of Star Trek's Vulcan mind meld and a rich cluster of psychological symbolisms in staring eyes, such as love, intimacy, supervision, contempt, and predators, that seem more rewarding avenues of interpretation. The paucity of speaking eyes probably reflects the poor nature of verbal memory compared to visual memory. The confusing nature of the idea of talking eyes probably doesn't help. It may also be that hideous eyes have a defining role in creating an appropriately paranoia-inspiring iconography. As Keyhoe apparently sensed, they are more believably alien. The eyes say *Them*.

To the psychosocial theorist, the eyes whisper us.

Notes

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Scene 24

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REALLity Check

by David Bloomberg

Write is Wrong

The *State Journal-Register* ran a *Houston Chronicle* article (6/19) about the use of handwriting "analysis" in hiring. I put that in quotes because calling this procedure an "analysis" is like calling an astrological chart an "analysis."

The article recounts the stories of several people who have had to undergo such a test one directly made the astrology comparison. However, a VP of one company which uses this nonsense to help in hiring said they've found it accurate whenever they've pulled out the "analysis" and compared it to what they know about the person after they've been there for a number of years. The problem with this, which he doesn't seem to recognize, is that these reports are vague, like astrological readings, and can apply to just about anybody. Plus you have the standard problem of only reading the "hits" and ignoring the "misses".

The chairman of the department of management at the University of Georgia, Athens, said that four major studies have concluded that there is absolutely no relationship between the results of handwriting "analysis" and job performance. Still, as with other areas of pseudoscience, I'm sure we will continue to see people ignore the studies and determine who gets what job based on nonsense.

While I'm on the subject, let me relate to you the one run-in I've had with this particular pseudoscience. My sophomore-year Spanish teacher took a "handwriting analysis" course, and then came back to try it out on us. She gave us several specifics, such as the supposed fact that people who dot their "i"s with circles, rather than just a dot, are neat and organized. Well, anybody who's ever seen my office (or my apartment before I got married) knows that certainly doesn't describe me (and never has), yet I used to dot my "i"s that way. I voiced my opinion that dotting my "i"s with a little circle probably had more to do with an earlier Spanish teacher who assumed that anything which wasn't a circle was automatically an accent mark, and reduced homework and test scores accordingly. However, her faith remained unshaken.

FMS and Me

As we all know, false memory syndrome (FMS) is big in the news lately. So, when I gave my presentation on that exact subject at last month's meeting, it got noticed.

In particular, the author of the Illinois Times article I mentioned last issue (who had written the article about the reimposition of a statute of limitations on these types of charges in Illinois, and to whom I had sent a packet of information on FMS) contacted me, came to the meeting, and wrote an article for the June 30 edition. This came in the same edition as a cover-page story on how accusations of Satanism, brought about by "recovered" memories, has torn up an Illinois family.

The first article was pretty good, and will hopefully inform the general public about an area we've been concerned with for some time now. The article about me and REALL was also pretty good, though there are a few places I would have phrased things differently and made some minor corrections and clarifications.

On the Wednesday following the meeting (6/29) I was a guest on the One-Eyed Jack show on WMAY (though Jack was not there, Danny Russell was substituting for him). I spent an hour of air time (approximately 1/2 hour of actual time, after news, commercials, etc.) talking about FMS and many of its related aspects. Russell and the WMAY newscaster asked some good questions and I felt the discussion went very well.

Stabbing Pain

The Chicago Sun-Times, "Medlife" section, had an article about the controversy surrounding acupuncture and whether or not insurance companies should/do cover it (7/10). While there was some decent information, most of it was slanted pro-acupuncture.

A large portion of the article dealt with the facts relating to insurance coverage, licensing, etc. Currently, the only people legally allowed to practice acupuncture in Illinois are M.D.'s, though there appears to be a large "black market" in acupuncture which is largely ignored by the State Board of Professional Regulation, according to a spokesman. He said that "our department does not actively seek acupuncturists unless someone reports them."

However, there were several portions of the article in which the standard jabs at skeptics were taken. "Much of the Western medical establishment scoffs at the idea of yin-yang and bodily energy forces, and insists no definitive evidence exists that acupuncture works." Do you think they might insist that because <gasp> it's true? "Insurance companies tend to cover only those treatments that are endorsed by the Western medical establishment." There's that term again. I wonder where one sends dues to become part of this "Western medical establishment" group.

Finally, the article ends with the false argument that something which has been going on for a long time must be good: "Acupuncture is a traditional Chinese medicine that's more than 3000 years old," according to one acupuncturist. "If it didn't work, people wouldn't continue to use it." Funny, people still consult astrologers and palm readers and all the other forms of "prophecy" even though those have been proven worthless...

Are Talk Shows Harming Society?

Vicki Abt and Mel Seesholtz have researched a number of talk shows (Oprah, Donahue, etc.) and have come to the not-too-surprising conclusion that television is overemphasizing the deviant. "If you are normal, no one cares," said Abt. The Chicago Tribune had an article about this research (7/11), the results of which will be published this summer in the Journal of Popular Culture.

While most of their conclusions deal more with what we might call "deviant" behavior, such as men who sleep with their mother-in-law, and are not specifically in the realm of subjects covered by REALL, we all know that these same shows often feature such topics as alien abductions, psychics, satanic ritual abuse, alternative medicine, etc. In fact, these shows are a major part of any fringe science book tour, and are often sponsored (at least here in Springfield) by "psychic hotlines."

Chris Darryn, the president of the National Talk Show Guest Registry, who tracks people looking to be guests on these shows and submits their stories to the shows, said the researchers shouldn't take it so seriously. Unfortunately, many people who watch the shows take them seriously, so I think the researchers are right in following their lead. Darryn said, "For people to watch [the talk shows] like they watch the evening news is silly." I agree completely. However, I would venture to bet that more people watch these talk shows than the evening news.

Organizations of Interest to Skeptics

Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP)
P.O. Box 703 Buffalo, NY 14226-9973 Ph.: (800) 634-1610

False Memory Syndrome Foundation
3401 Market St., Suite 130 Philadelphia, PA 19104 Ph.: (800) 568-8882

National Center for Science Education (NCSE)
P.O. Box 9477 Berkeley, CA 94709-0744 Ph.: (510) 843-3393

National Council Against Health Fraud
P.O. Box 1276 Loma Linda, CA 92354 Ph.: (909) 824-4690

St. Louis Association for Teaching and Education (SLATE)
P.O. Box 462 O'Fallon, IL 62269-0462

Skeptics Society
2761 N. Marengo Ave. Altadena, CA 91001 Ph.: (818) 794-3119
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We at REALL encourage letters to the editor about any article or topic covered in The REALL News. We want to make this a forum for all our members. (Letters may be edited if too long. Name, address and phone number must be included with the letter.)

Predictions for Future Issues

Alternative Medicine on NBC
Looking into the Sun -- and other tabloids
Loch Ness Hoax
The Panicky Guy

Skeptics Online

If you have a computer and a modem, you owe it to yourself to participate in the skeptic message areas on the computer BBS networks. Here in Springfield, call The Temples of Syrinx at (217) 787-9101. David Bloomberg operates this BBS, which carries the FidoNet SKEPTIC, EVOLUTION and UFO conferences, internationally distributed message areas for discussing topics of interest to skeptics. He is also carrying ParaNet conferences, all dedicated to UFO and paranormal topics. You can also find a wide variety of skeptic, scientific, UFO, evolution/creation, and urban legend text files.

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