

Shadow of a Doubt - The Electronic Edition
The Monthly Calendar of the National Capital Area Skeptics - May 1994

Send mail to the NCAS Skeptic Line at ncas@cs.umd.edu for further information.

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The Ubiquity of Anomalies
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William R. Corliss

Physicist, world-renowned author and cataloger of anomalies, William Corliss, among whose books are "Handbook of Unusual Natural Phenomena" and "The Unexplained", will speak about his unending search for those observations of nature that elude accepted scientific paradigms. After over 25 years of library research and the perusal of over 12,000 volumes of scientific publications, he has identified about 3,000 significant anomalies; this is, phenomena that are not yet satisfactorily explained by mainstream paradigms. Following a brief review of how the collection was put together, he will describe salient phenomena from six disciplines. typical of these are: the Costa Rican stone spheres (Archeology); quantized redshifts (Astronomy); pseudofish replication (Biology); giant ring structures (Geology); marine phosphorescent displays (Geophysics); and eidetic imagery (Psychology). Finally, he will have a few comments on some unusual characteristics of anomalies that seem to cut across all scientific disciplines.

2 p.m. Saturday, May 21
Bethesda Library
7400 Arlington Road
Bethesda, Maryland

Free and open to the public

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More information about our speaker, William Corliss:

Title: William Corliss catalogs oddities of heaven and earth.
Source: The Baltimore Sun
Date: Sunday, February 7, 1993
Author: Stephanie Shapiro, Staff Writer

Marine light wheels and Martian canals, lights on the moon, and Costa Rica stone spheres, calculating prodigies and missing solar neutrinos: These are a few of William R. Corliss' favorite things.

For nearly 25 years, the soft-spoken Glen Arm physicist has collected, categorized and evaluated anomalies; those observations of nature, many

quirky and bizarre, that wriggle defiantly away from any accepted scientific paradigm.

Culling through 14,000 volumes of scientific journals, Mr. Corliss has documented some 40,000 anomalous phenomena, from sightings of ball lightning and fish falls to "sane hallucinations," cobweb storms and other beguiling conundrums like ice fogs, conical hail, luminous mists, black auroras and *deja vu*.

The universe never ceases to amaze Mr. Corliss, 66. "I find new things all the time ... I always find something curious I haven't heard of before," he says.

Behind Mr. Corliss' obsession with the believe-it-or-not stuff of science is a serious purpose: "The collection and consolidation of the unknown and poorly explained to facilitate future research and explanation," is how he describes his mission.

It is Mr. Corliss' hope that one day his efforts will pay off by yielding concrete proof for a revolutionary reconfiguration of the cosmos. If that means overturning the big-bang theory or the theory of relativity, so be it. "Science progresses by taking account of anomalies", he says.

Examples of ex-anomalies promoted to breakthrough status abound throughout the history of science. Mercury's orbital anomalies were used by Einstein to support the theory of relativity, Mr. Corliss says.

But an anomaly can work both ways. In "The Moon and the Planets," his book, or "catalog" as he calls it, of astronomical anomalies, Mr. Corliss also provides examples of research by astronomers who studied Mercury's orbit that could potentially deal a serious blow to the theory of relativity.

Mr. Corliss also calls to mind the 19th century meteorologist Alfred Wegener, a "hero of anomalies," who championed the idea that the continents once fit together. "Nobody believed him then," Mr. Corliss says. But today, the theory of continental drift is a reigning paradigm of the scientific community.

Mr. Corliss' publishing company, the Sourcebook Project, is a veritable clearing house for anomalies. The atypical cottage industry is based in Mr. Corliss' home, which nestles in the woods that surround Loch Raven reservoir. Since his first book, "Strange Phenomena, Vol I," appeared in 1974, he and his wife, Virginia, have published 29 books on anomalies that appear in geophysics, geology, biology, astronomy, psychology, meteorology, and other fields. While Mr. Corliss does the research, Mrs. Corliss manages the company's finances.

One of Mr. Corliss' books, "Handbook of Unusual Natural Phenomena," was reprinted by Doubleday and then Arlington and has sold 60,000 copies. His book "The Unexplained" (Bantam) has sold more than 100,000 copies. With his current catalog series of anomalies, projected to include 30 volumes, Mr. Corliss hopes to expand his scope to eccentricities found in chemistry, physics, logic and math.

Counting the books he has written as a free-lancer on contract with NASA and other federal agencies, Mr. Corliss has written 49 books, including "Biological Anomalies: Humans II" ... the 13th work in the catalog series ... to be published next month.

In Science Frontiers, his wryly humorous newsletter, Mr. Corliss also lists accounts of idiosyncrasies drawn from such sources as Readers Digest, Classical and Quantum Gravity, and a computer bulletin board for aviators. Subscribers to the bimonthly newsletter can find a meteorological theory supporting the parting of the Red Sea next to a San Francisco Chronicle

article about 24,000-year-old bone tools found in a Yukon cave. Flip the page and there are two accounts of spontaneous human combustion and accompanying speculation, from the Journal of Meteorology.

Hoaxes and misinterpretations can and do sneak past Mr. Corliss' stringent criteria for "anomalousness," especially in fields vulnerable to fraud, such as ESP research.

In an effort to include as many anomalies as possible, Mr. Corliss has also taken pains to salvage data from the 19th century -- "Anomalous events are too rare to discard because they are old or because money cannot be found to put them into computerized data systems," he says. "People were just as smart then as they are now."

Mr. Corliss has fans scattered among universities and research facilities around the world, many of whom belong to the Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE). The society was founded in 1982 for the discussion of research "outside the established disciplines of science." Like Mr. Corliss, the members are avowed iconoclasts who are constantly "searching for ways to shift paradigms around," he says.

Scientists' Letters

Mr. Corliss' files brim with letters from correspondents including Thomas Gold, the Cornell University astronomer who discovered the physical nature of pulsars. In a letter inviting him to join the SSE, Dr. Gold wrote: "I think we could not do without the person who has done the biggest job of collecting up and organizing the relevant observations."

Marcello Truzzi, director of the Center for Scientific Anomalies Research in Grass Lake, Michigan, calls Mr. Corliss an "unsung hero of science." His work has "enormous value," Mr. Truzzi says. "It's extremely important that someone catalog for future scientific direction any scientific anomalies. He is really the driving force for developing and changing in science ... Only when we encounter exceptions that test the rules, are we forced to revise the rules. That's how progress in science is made."

Nobel laureates -- including the late geneticist Barbara McClintock -- and UFO theoreticians alike are customers of Mr. Corliss. He does not discriminate between established scientists and those who lurk in the shadows of less accepted fields of inquiry. The information is "there for everybody. I'm not trying to favor any particular group," Mr. Corliss says.

And every once in a while, it is the pariah, rejected by so-called legitimate research communities, who makes the big discovery. "Some of these people are going to be right ... those vilified yesterday are going to be famous tomorrow," Mr. Corliss says.

In his own travels, Mr. Corliss has witnessed his fair share of anomalies. He has seen ball lightning, radiating like spokes from a black cloud over Ocean City. And, while snorkeling off Borneo, he has watched clown fish nibbling peacefully among venomous sea anemones.

Daily, Mr. Corliss, the father of four grown children, takes a long walk in the woods behind his house, and then returns to the work at hand. Or he and his wife go to the Library of Congress, where he has spent a good chunk of his life tracking anomalies in the library's dusty recesses.

"William Corliss is a constant reminder to everyone else, that the world is full of awe and mystery," Mr. Truzzi says. "There's a lot more to explore ... In a way it's sad. When he goes, who is going to continue this good work?"

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NCAS Events Coming in June

Saturday, June 18 - Bethesda Library - Topic and speaker to be announced.

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Interesting Events Near You

The following events are listed for your information. Listing does not imply endorsement by the National Capital Area Skeptics. (For more information on any of these events, contact the NCAS archivist, Mike Epstein at MSE@ENH.NIST.GOV).

1994 Schedule of Meeting of INFO (International Fortean Organization)

Monthly, informal gatherings of Washington metropolitan area Forteans are scheduled throughout the rest of 1994. As in the past, these meetings are planned to complement the major annual INFO affairs. The meetings are open to anyone with an interest in Fortean topics; INFO members are encouraged to bring interested friends. The sessions are intended to examine a wide range of unusual topics and to stimulate discussions on the anomalous. You are encouraged to suggest meeting topics and places. Inquiries and comments may be left at the INFO(WMA)-info voice mail box at (301) 294-4315.

Friday, May 13, 1994 - 8 pm

Ultimate Connection Social

A social hour with the FortNight '94 speakers and conference participants
Location: Arlington Quality Inn, 1200 N. Courthouse Road, Arlington, VA
Conf. Center, Reagan Room

Saturday, May 14, 1994 11 AM - 6 PM

FortNight '94

The mid-year full day Fortean meeting featuring Bud Hopkins with an abductions update, Patrick Huyghe discussing anomalies, John Townley looking at synchronicity, Frank Joseph on Atlantis, and Dr. Laurie Vassos exploring remote viewing.

Location: Same as above - Conference Center

Saturday, June 25, 1994 - 7:30 pm

Premonitoring Earthquakes

Chris Dodge, Washington DC researcher, will discuss the accumulated evidence on the human capacity for sensing impending earthquakes. Mr. Dodge will explain his network of human sensors. Location: Party Room of the Grosvenor Park Condominium III, 10401 Grosvenor Place

Saturday, July 30, 1994 - 7:30 pm

Light and Life

The role of light quality traditionally has been a topic of interest to only a limited group of researchers. In the last few years we find NIH

supporting light therapies for certain mind-body conditions. This topic and other influences of light on human health will be explored in this talk. Location: same as above

Sunday, August 14, 1994 - 3 pm to 8 pm

Charles Fort Birthday Picnic

The annual gathering to celebrate Charles Fort's birthday and the Manassas Ice Fall of 1897 will be held in Manassas. This is a great opportunity to mix with area Forteans. Location: Call the INFO mail box for location.

Friday, Sept. 30, 1994 - 7:30 pm

Current Research in Dreams

Rita Dwyer of the Association for the Study of Dreams will discuss a range of topics being addressed in current research into dreams and dreaming. Location: Party Room of the Grosvenor Park Condominium III, 10401 Grosvenor Place

Saturday, Oct 29, 1994 - 7:30 pm

Komodo Dragons

Tom Johnson will present a slide lecture dealing with his experiences with the Komodo monitor or Ora (*Varanus Komodoensis*), the giant dragon-like reptile found only on four Indonesian islands. Location: same as above

Saturday/Sunday November 12-13, 1994

FortFest

The major Fortean event of the year, Fortfest '94, promises to be as impressive as any held to date. Arlington Quality Inn, 1200 N. Courthouse Road, Arlington, VA Conf. Center

NOTE: A \$2 donation is suggested for meetings in the Grosvenor Party Room

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POST OFFICE BOX 367

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Society for Scientific Exploration

13th Annual Meeting

June 9-11, 1994

Austin, TX

Thursday, June 9

H. Puthoff, "On the Feasibility of Converting Vacuum Electromagnetic Energy to Useful Form"

B. Haisch, "A Zero-Point Field Origin for the Inertia of Matter and Mach's Principle"

A. Berezin, B. Dunne & R. Jahn, "A Spin Model of Resonant Interaction Between consciousness and Its Physical Environment"

R. Bush, "Cold Fusion: Scientific Curiosity or Millennial Energy Prospect?"

E. Mallove, "Cold Fusion: Heat (and Light) After Death"

P. Graneau, "Capillary Fusion"

J. Bockris, "Ultra Low Nuclear Changes in Metals at Texas A&M"

M. Epstein, "The Critical Role of Analytical Chemistry in the Investigation of Anomalies"

Friday, June 10th

H. Bauer, "Two Kinds of Knowledge"

P. Sturrock, "The Role of Heresies in Scientific Research"

J. MacLean, "A New Renaissance in the Scientific Method"

Presentation of the Tim Dinsdale Award to William Corliss

Dinsdale Lecture:

W. Corliss, "The Classified Residuum"

M. Truzzi, "Pseudoscience, Pathology, or Protoscience?: Some Descriptive and Prescriptive Reflections on Scientism and Scientific Change"

A. Apostol, "The Ohio Serpent Mound: An Enigma at the Frontier of Archaeology and Geology"

B. Dunne, "Gender Differences in Human/Machine Anomalies"

R. Westrum, "Finding Out About Battered Children"

T. Mellet, "Overcoming the Triple-Nested Narcissism of the Anthropocentric Principle"

S. Krippner and M. Persinger, "Enhancement of Accuracy of Telepathic Dreams During Periods of Decreased Geomagnetic Activity"

Saturday, June 11th

H. Betz, "Recent Results on Water Dowsing"

E. Del Giudice, "Inconsistency of the Conventional Theory of Water and Liquids"

E. Brame, "The Scientific Investigation of Healing Energies Effect on Structure of Water"

G. Rein and R. McGraty, "Structural Changes in Water and DNA Associated with New Physiologically Measurable States"

M. Schlitz and S. Laberge, "Autonomic Nervous System Detection of Remote Observation"

R. Nelson, "Renormalizing Effect Sizes in Anomalies Experiments: Arguments for a Time Based Natural Unit"

S. Savva, "Mind/Body Healing: How to Integrate It Into the Health Care System"

D. Radin, "Testing Claims of Exceptional Human Abilities: The Case of a Super-Psychic Wannabe"

Y. Dobyens, "Statistical Consequences of Data Selection"

S. Jeffers and J. Sloan, "Information, Knowledge and Quantum Mechanics"

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For more details on any of the upcoming talks or information on this conference, contact:

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> ===== <
>   "Tis easy to see ... Hard to foresee" <
>           .... Benjamin Franklin <
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Updated: 5/26/94