



REPORT

VOLUME 1 NO. 4 SPRING 1989

TBS to host CSICOP Council and Southern regional groups

The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) has selected the Tampa Bay Skeptics to host its semiannual Executive Council meeting on April 22-23, and concurrently, a meeting of Council members of local groups similar to TBS from throughout the Southern U.S. Activities will take place in the Tampa Hilton at Metrocenter, 2225 N. Lois Avenue, and most of the members of CSICOP's Executive Council will be attending.

CSICOP's Executive Council will meet in closed session on Saturday morning, break for a private lunch, and then hold a noon press conference. From 2-5 P.M., while most of the CSICOPers retreat once again to their chamber, CSICOP Executive Director Mark Plummer will chair a meeting of the Council members of the Southern groups, to discuss group development and activities in the South. A **banquet dinner** for all, including (of course) TBS general membership and spouse/guest(s), will commence at 7:00. All Florida, Georgia and Alabama subscribers to *The Skeptical Inquirer* are also being invited by CSICOP to attend this **\$25/person** function. **After dinner speakers and topics** will include Paul Kurtz (The New Skepticism), James Alcock (Channeling), Mark Plummer (Florida's 'Psychic Dentist') and James Randi (Psychic Surgery).

An additional "mini-conference", open to all TBS members, will take place **on Sunday** from 9:00 A.M. to 1 P.M. (**additional \$25 fee, payable to CSICOP at the door** - \$12 for students/retired/unemployed). **Speakers and topics:** Philip Klass (Gulf Breeze UFO), Joe Nickell (Shroud of Turin Tests), Lee Nisbet (Is the Animal Rights Movement Anti-Science?), Ray Hyman (Enhancing the Skeptics' Message), Ken Frazier (The Role of the *Skeptical Inquirer*), Barry Karr (chairing an open forum on the goals of CSICOP and the Local Groups in the South).

Tampa Bay Skeptics is anticipating a very productive and enjoyable "communion" (even though Whitley Strieber and his alien friends are not expected to crash the party), and encourages the enthusiastic support of all of our members. **[Must RSVP for banquet by April 8!]**

*Members of Tampa Bay Skeptics
and spouse / guest(s)
are invited to attend an evening of
dining, discussion and
entertainment with members of the
CSICOP Executive Council
on*

*Saturday, April 22, 1989
at the Hilton at Metrocenter
2225 North Lois Avenue
Tampa, Florida.*

Cash bar at 5:00 P.M.

*Banquet dinner at 7:00 P.M.
(chicken macadamia)*

\$25.00 per person

*RSVP with remittance must be
received by April 8, payable to
"Tampa Bay Skeptics"
at our mailing address.*

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS Statement of Purpose

Tampa Bay Skeptics, Inc. is a non-profit educational and scientific organization devoted to the critical examination of paranormal and fringe-science claims, and the dissemination of factual information about such claims to interested parties throughout the Tampa Bay area and environs. TBS does not reject claims on a priori grounds, but rather is committed to objective and critical inquiry. We share the philosophy of the international Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), although we are an autonomous local group, with no formal ties to CSICOP.

TBS REPORT is published quarterly. We welcome news clippings, and articles and letters for publication (subject to editing), including opposing points of view. As we are non-profit, **stamped, self-addressed return envelopes are requested with all correspondence!**

Views expressed in articles and letters are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the Tampa Bay Skeptics.

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS REPORT

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6219 Palma Blvd. #210
St. Petersburg, FL 33715

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Don Addis

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EDITORIAL

The \$1,000 Challenge

When I founded the Tampa Bay Skeptics a little less than a year ago, I envisioned much more than just a "club" for those who wish to gather together to discuss issues of common concern among themselves. We can and shall strive to play a vital role in the community, in educating the public as to the folly and the dangers inherent in the uncritical acceptance of paranormal claims.

The paranormal is a multi-billion dollar industry, eating into the hard-earned wages of those untutored in the art of critical thinking, who are often those least able to afford such a waste of precious funds (the movie stars who embrace Shirley MacLaine et al. are conspicuous exceptions to the rule). In return, the devotees receive reinforcement of their belief system - a security blanket which costs, in terms of money and loss of reality-awareness, infinitely more than K-Mart charges for a *real* piece of goods.

State lotteries such as Florida's have received much criticism for their role in relieving the poor of what is too often not disposable income. Yet, even with the Florida Lotto's 14,000,000 to 1 odds, at least one individual every week or two (or three or four) is the recipient of a pot of gold from the end of the rainbow. James Randi and other investigators have spent more than thirty years scouring the paranormal rainbow for *its* pot of gold, and have found it so elusive that, at present, it must be assumed by rational, scientific thinkers to be non-existent.

But "scientific" is the key. The world of science is in constant flux, with new theories becoming incorporated into the body of accepted knowledge as new data so warrant, and old theories (previously thought to be true) concomitantly discarded as they outlive their usefulness. Religious fundamentalists and passionate devotees of other paranormal disciplines may make claim to knowledge of the "ultimate truth", but *scientific* thinkers know better than to be so self-assured. We know that what we are taught today may be found tomorrow to be in error. We are open-minded to new, persuasive evidence, even if it causes us to reassess and discard our previously held beliefs. But we can sleep soundly at night despite the infinite uncertainties in the world, even if others cannot do so without their non-K-Mart blankets to comfort them.

I have found that, as a rule, devotees of the paranormal do not take kindly to questioning of their premises, whereas skeptics generally relish their critical mail - for it makes us *think!* Nor are many psychics, astrologers, and the like willing to be put to a fair, scientific test of their abilities, and certainly are not willing to put their money where their claims are. Yet, skeptics such as James Randi and others have standing offers of up to \$10,000, payable on the spot, if anyone, anywhere, can demonstrate any paranormal ability under conditions that eliminate the possibility of cheating or self-delusion. In thirty years, there have been a few hundred attempts, and an equal number of failures.

In the spirit of open-minded pursuit of the truth, and in the hopes that a monetary incentive might help us to obtain the publicity necessary to attract the attention of prospective test subjects, I hereby announce my own prize of \$1,000, which I will pay to anyone who can successfully demonstrate ESP, astrology, or any other talent that TBS considers to be within the domain of the paranormal. This offer is open to Janet Sciales, Barbara Jett (see p. 5), or any other potential takers. All that is required of an applicant is a brief written description of the specific power or talent that is to be tested. I will respond with my own concept of how the test should be structured. If both sides can agree as to what shall constitute a fair test, a time, place, and impartial judge shall be mutually determined. The applicant need not match my \$1,000 with even a penny of his/her own, unless, of course, he/she is confident enough of success. If any funds should be received by me in this pursuit, they will be used to pay TBS' debts, with any excess to be donated to CSICOP. Have we any takers in the Tampa Bay area?

--Gary P. Posner

Tampa Tribune features series on UFOs, abductions

A recent four-part series in the BayLife section of The Tampa Tribune (Jan. 29 - Feb. 1) examined the UFO phenomenon, with emphasis on the Gulf Breeze photo case, reported abductions, and the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence (SETI).

The first installment noted that until recently, Gulf Breeze's "most memorable feature" was "a flashing neon fish". But since last year, the town has been a focal point of the world's media as a result of reported UFO sightings, particularly those of one local businessman (referred to only as "Ed" to protect his identity) who has managed to take more than 30 photographs of the UFO.

A side article noted that Eglin Air Force Base, located just to the east of Gulf Breeze, "has no record of the Gulf Breeze UFOs - no strange radar blips, no unusual activity - and the base has received fewer than two dozen calls about UFOs in the last two years." But the lead article reports that in addition to Ed, "Among the eyewitnesses are a federal judge, a politician and a prominent physician." Vivid descriptions of UFOs by several of these local residents were recounted. A discussion of the controversy surrounding Ed's photos included mention that the Center For UFO Studies (CUFOS) remains skeptical of their authenticity, while the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) endorses them [Editor's Note: At least one of MUFON's Florida investigators has been relieved of his duties because of his skepticism of this case].

Day 2 focused upon the personality of Ed, age 42, who, according to Jennifer Tucker, the Tribune reporter, "isn't the 'UFO type'. He's a WASPish baby boomer with a kid in college and a two-car garage...he depends on personal referrals for his livelihood. He doesn't seem to need the money he could earn from a best seller...". Ed details his encounters with the alien craft, and then with the aliens themselves: "...Ed says, he was face to face with a childlike creature clad in gray. He says he saw more of these creatures at a later date...". Reportedly Ed has taken and passed psychological, polygraph and voice stress tests. He also told Tucker that "he has no plans to...sell the detailed, chronological log that he's written about the ordeal." Says Ed, "I have no monetary motive here." Yet, the article reveals that "Sources in Gulf Breeze...report Ed has signed a lucrative book contract."

The series' third installment left Gulf Breeze behind,

and dealt with the phenomenon of UFO abductions, in which witnesses claim, often under regressive hypnosis, to have been taken aboard alien spacecraft, usually to undergo extensive physical examinations before being released. The article focused on the reports of two alleged abductees. One was by a woman self-described thusly: "I'm a writer. I have a wonderful imagination." The discussion of the other report begins: "In Canada in 1970, while sitting in a circle of friends discussing various forms of psychotherapy, (48-year-old Fort Myers businessman Leonard) Farrell says he suddenly left the room. He found himself aboard a flying craft inhabited by four short creatures wearing silver clothing...whether his *body* ever actually left the room, Farrell doesn't know." Although we are later assured that "Farrell...says he's never questioned his sanity", we can't help but wonder why he hasn't questioned his "circle of friends" as to the whereabouts of his body during the alleged abduction.

An accompanying article entitled "Psychologists baffled by stories of 'contactees'" seemed unrepresentative of the profession at large. One interviewee was an "international expert on parapsychology" (Berthold Schwarz of Vero Beach); another (Elizabeth Slater of New York) works "in tandem" with abduction-author Budd Hopkins; the third (Winter Park's Ron DeVasto) was quoted at length as to the motives of the *aliens*: "It seems one of the primary purposes of abductions is to prompt a display of a variety of emotions...Somehow (the aliens) have lost the ability to be compassionate...they may die off because they are not good any more at parenting." (Of course! How could I have been so blind?)

Day four's article, by Kurt Loft, ignored UFOs, and reported upon science's real efforts to detect evidence of intelligent alien life. SETI scientists, it was noted, "want to spend \$95 million over the next decade" in an effort to "sweep the skies with millions of simultaneous radio channels, hoping to find a signal not made by nature."

In a letter to the editor of the Tribune, published on Feb. 18, I noted CUFOS' description of "Ed" as a known "practical joker and prankster". I also expressed my regret at the short shrift given to Philip Klass, whose book, UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game, offers the sort of insights lacking in the analyses of the psychologists interviewed for this series. [Further discussion of the Gulf Breeze case is planned for future issues].

--G.P.

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CHAIRMAN: Paschal N. Strong, Ph.D. (Professor of Psychology, University of South Florida, Tampa)

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AT LARGE: James W. Lett, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Indian River Community College, Fort Pierce)

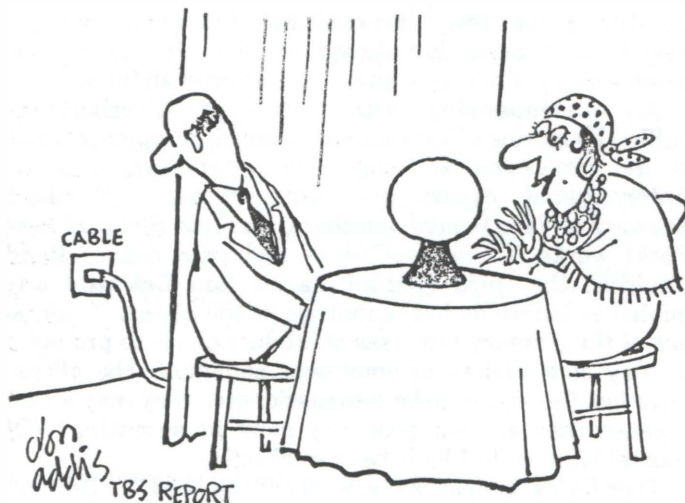
AT LARGE: Charles R. Mathews, M.D. (Medical Director, Sarasota Memorial Hospital)

COUNSEL: Terry A. Smiljanich, J.D., St. Petersburg (Blasingame, Forizs & Smiljanich, P.A.)

SNIPPETS

A Massachusetts astrologer proved unable to foresee just how powerful her crystal ball could be. Acting as a magnifying glass as the sun shone through it, the crystal ignited a fire which caused \$1000 in damage to her "astrology shop". The owner, a local radio personality, claims that she had a premonition several months earlier that a fire might occur. She claims to have been especially careful recently with cigarettes, had unplugged electrical devices, and had purchased additional fire insurance. "Who would have ever thought that a crystal ball would have started a fire?", asked the practitioner who presumably uses one (with dubious success) to predict the future.

(St. Pete. Times, December 4)



A 14-year-old Pennsylvania boy has been allowed to starve to death as a result of his father's belief that their \$3,600 bank account "belonged to God", according to a police affidavit. The father, an unemployed former minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, believed that "God would provide", according to a former boss. The 5' 10" boy weighed 69 pounds at autopsy. His parents and sister required treatment for malnutrition. Homicide and reckless endangerment charges have been filed against the parents, who could face the death penalty.

(AP/N.Y. Times/St. Pete. Times, January 6 & 7)

U.S. Representative Charlie Rose (D-N.C.) has founded the Congressional Clearinghouse on the Future, a forum for psychics and others to make their case in Washington. Says Rose, "At any given time, about one fourth of the members of Congress are actively interested in psi, be that healing, prophesy, remote viewing or physical manifestations of psychic powers [such as spoon bending or erasing computer tapes]". Featured in this article was Orlando-area "psychic" Noreen Renier, about whom TBS plans to report later this year, regarding her legal wrangling with a founder of the Northwest Skeptics.

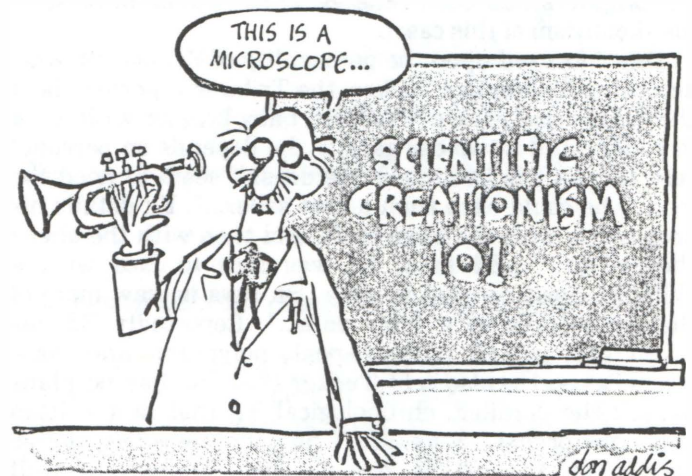
(U.S. News and World Report, December 5)

Joan Kroc, millionaire philanthropist owner of the San Diego Padres, has offered a \$100 reward for information leading to the whereabouts of a dog's missing owner. Having found the bleeding dog, Kroc nursed it at her home, and later took it to animal therapist Samantha Khury, who, during two sessions at \$50/hour, "learned Boots grieved over the separation from its owner". Kroc, who says she is not sure that Khury can really communicate with animals, added, "I'm not sure that it's not true. So what harm does it do?"

(St. Pete. Times, February 4)

The state of California has barred the Institution for Creation Research from granting master's degrees in science. The science degrees conferred by ICR will not be recognized as legitimate although, says state school superintendent Dr. Bill Honig, "No one is stopping the Institute...from granting degrees in religion or creation. But they are holding their people out to have science degrees, which they don't. The vast bulk of what they learn is not science." Countered ICR founder and president Dr. Henry Morris, "We think this is a matter of discrimination...Our program is completely scientific. There is no religion in it at all..."

(NY Times/St. Pete. Times, December 10)



Originally appeared in St. Petersburg Times

The confidence of Americans in organized religion has steadily declined since the early 1970s, accelerating precipitously during the last three years, according to a recent Gallup Poll. Compared to a peak of 68% in 1975, only 59% reported "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in organized religion in 1988, although it still remains "the nation's most trusted institution" (news-papers and, presumably, classy newsletters such as ours, garnered a 36% favorable rating).

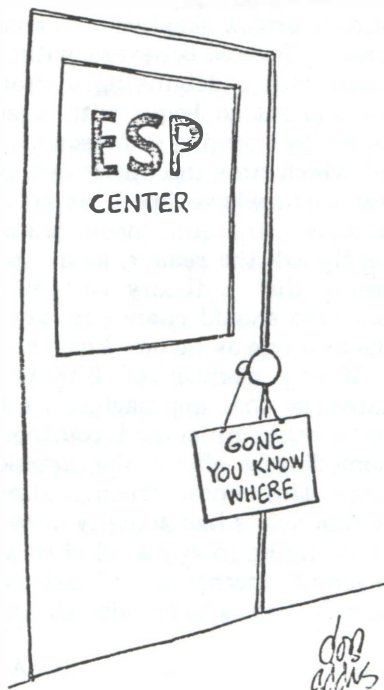
(St. Pete. Times, January 7)

[Please send your Snippets to the editor at TBS REPORT]

Psychics fail 'TBS Typo Test'

We are genuinely disappointed, although not at all surprised, to have to report that there were *no* successful psychic performers in our unplanned "TBS Typo Test" conducted in the prior issue. TBS received absolutely *no* correspondence from *any* local, regional, national, or international psychics, in advance of publication, regarding the newsletter's multiple typographical errors (we may have resolved the dot matrix "pimples", but not all the blemishes), which would have constituted the first successful demonstration of clairvoyance before a skeptical group such as ours.

All psychics who also claim to possess the power of precognition are considered to have participated in and failed this test, since this announcement of the test and their failure should have been known to them in advance. And although the editor has now devised a method of proofing the newsletter from a "hard copy" prior to laser printing (instead of having to proofread exclusively from the computer screen), we anticipate that our "TBS Typo Test" may nevertheless prove to be an ongoing one, and we certainly shall report any successful psychic performances in future issues.



Originally appeared in St. Petersburg Times

TBS community relations

Chairman Pat Strong accepted an invitation from the Nativity Men's Club of Brandon, and spoke to their group on December 18. He has also spoken to three classes of public school students at Boca Ciega High (St. Pete.), and to three classes at Riverview High (Sarasota).

Consultant astronomer Jack Robinson addressed a meeting of the Suncoast Physics Teachers Association at USF/Tampa in December, which resulted in several new memberships.

TBS founder and publisher Gary Posner has accepted an invitation to speak to a group of about 150-200 students, faculty, and others as part of USF/St. Pete's "Brown Bag Lecture Series", on March 29, 12:00 - 1:00 P.M., Room 130, Bayboro Hall. Public is invited, and admission is free. (See Vol. 1 No. 2 for directions).

Psychic invited to solve museum mystery

Largo "psychic" Barbara Jett performed readings on various artifacts from the Safety Harbor Museum, in an attempt to help determine the origin of an old well on the museum's grounds. The well will be excavated to see how closely she came to the truth.

Four members of TBS attended the February 18 event, announced in a Feb. 15 article ("Historians ask psychic for help - Age of Safety Harbor well in question") in the Clearwater edition of the St. Petersburg Times. Acting museum director Valerie Whitford was quoted as saying, "I would tend to believe what (Jett) said..." But speaking for the museum's Board of Trustees, Betty Kimmel told me that the Board does not share this view, and that the invitation to Jett was an unofficial one made by several museum employees who believe in psychic phenomena.

During interviews with the Times and the Tampa Tribune (both papers ran balanced articles the next day, thanks in part to our presence), Jett explained that "I have a spirit guide who talks to me and tells me what all this means...It comes through in a series of visual images, and then I get a strong feeling about it, and then I hear an interior voice...that gives me information. This is (also) how I read people if I do a reading for somebody. This is how I help people (who have blocked out painful events) get it out so that they can remember it so it can be healed. And this is how I read the future as well."

Moving outdoors, Jett was given artifacts to "read". Regarding the well's origin, Jett stated that "It was formed by God, I guess, or by nature...it was not built...it may (originally) have been like a geyser or something, like a fountain...(it) was a place of worship." She was given a chunk of metal from an old safe, and proceeded to tell an elaborate tale that "something was stolen from this safe...of immense value...There was some sort of plot that went on around this safe...to overthrow some type of a government..." You get the idea.

I informed Jett, in the reporters' presence, that TBS would like her to submit to a controlled, scientific test of her alleged abilities. She responded by saying, "That would be fine with me. I would read somebody." I explained that a protocol would have to be agreed upon in writing, in advance, to "make sure that there's no self-delusion" involved. Jett did not object, and later confirmed her agreement to be tested, handing me her card. TBS will attempt to follow through.

--G.P.

[Thanks also to Guss Wilder, Terry Smiljanich and Phil Lerner]

TV GUIDE adds horoscope column

Beginning with the Jan. 21-27 issue, TV GUIDE, America's highest circulation weekly magazine, has begun carrying a sun-sign astrology column entitled "HOROSCOPE by Patric Walker". As of our press deadline, TIME Magazine (the leading *news* weekly) has not yet joined the bandwagon.

Please consider donation &/or early renewal

Most of our subscriptions will expire with the next issue. By renewing now, you will help TBS through a temporary (hopefully) financial deficit, induced by the unbudgeted expense of printing and mailing 600 copies of our first issue, which was distributed free of charge. **Donations are also needed and greatly appreciated**, but please try to limit them to under \$25,000, as we are informed by IRS that sums in excess of this amount might jeopardize our tax-exempt status (sorry).

Memberships, subscriptions and donations are **tax deductible** under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code if you itemize deductions. Please consult your tax adviser for further information. Our annual financial statement will appear in the next issue.

Paul Kurtz to address Orlando humanist group

Professor Paul Kurtz, chairman of CSICOP, editor of *Free Inquiry*, and noted humanist author, will be the featured speaker at the April 23 luncheon meeting of the Orlando-area humanist group "Freethinkers". The topic of discussion will be "Ethics Without Religion". Interested non-members of Freethinkers may wish to contact its chairperson for further details: Andree Spuhler, P.O. Box 724, Winter Park, FL 32790-0724.

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Other skeptical sources on the paranormal:

- 1) *The Skeptical Inquirer* - critically-acclaimed flagship journal of CSICOP.
Box 229 / Buffalo, NY 14215
- 2) *Free Inquiry* - leading secular humanist journal.
Box 5 / Buffalo, NY 14215
- 3) *Prometheus Books* - leading publisher of skeptical works. 35-page catalogue.
700 East Amherst Street / Buffalo, NY 14215

"What is CSICOP?" contains 20 8 1/2 x 11 pages covering CSICOP's history, Executive Council, Policy on Sponsoring Research, its Fellows, consultants, staff, subcommittees, and more. This invaluable guide is available from CSICOP for \$5.00 (cost includes postage).

Note: CSICOP will make available to TBS back issues of *The Skeptical Inquirer*, its *Index*, and volume binders at a discount, for sale at our meetings. If you wish to order a particular item, either for purchase at our next meeting, or by mail from us prior, please let TBS order it for you. Upon arrival of your order, be prepared to remit a check (for 85% of retail price, plus CSICOP's postage/handling fee) payable to Tampa Bay Skeptics.

("READERS' FORUM" continued from page 7)

else, on this hypothesis. Please feel free to contact Janet, or Harold Blake, if you wish to pursue it further.

Editor: Our local public library offers nineteen books on astrology, none by an unbeliever. I presume that there must exist a considerable number of anti-astrology books (such as Culver and Ianna's *The Gemini Syndrome*, or L. Jerome's *Astrology Disproved*), but I can find none that aims to arouse skepticism in readers who may pick up the book as devoted believers, without immediately offending them with a debunking approach. To be effective, the book ought to begin with a simple factual history of astrology's origins in Mesopotamia some 4000 years ago (at which time the universe was believed to consist of a flat earth whose "roof", at an altitude of several miles, contained the sun, moon, planets and stars), and then gently ask the reader, as a rational being, how likely it seems that a theory so well tailored to the ancient universe should chance to have any relevance at all to the universe as we now know it to be.

If any member of TBS is aware of any book on astrology that approaches the topic in this manner, or some other quiet and courteous manner so as to not immediately offend the astrologophile, please let me know. This is not a trivial matter. The present generation of Americans has actually been educated to be *ashamed* of indulging in any kind of critical thought. The current reverent acceptance of astrology and religion would horrify those who founded this nation two centuries ago.

Alexander Mebane, Venice

Please send any replies directly to Mr. Mebane, or to TBS. --Ed.

Note: Letters are subject to editing for clarity, length and taste.

* * * * *

Local atheist chapter meets monthly

The Central Florida/Tampa Bay Chapter of American Atheists wishes for readers of TBS REPORT to be aware of their existence, and of their meetings on the first Saturday of each month, at 12:00 noon, Tampa General Hospital, Conference Room B-301 (cardiology wing, third floor). Mailing address: P.O. Box 280073, Tampa 33682-0073. Phone 677-7731 (Tampa).

Directions to next TBS meeting (see p. 8):

Tampa Central Library is only a block off the I-275 Tampa St./Ashley St. exit ramp. Take center route when ramp forks into three at end. Library is first building beyond Barnett Bank on right. Free parking on side streets (if allowed), or use garage (first building beyond library). Garage has 2nd level covered walkway to library. Meeting will end promptly at 8:45, when auditorium must be vacated.

READERS' FORUM

Editor: As a trained and experienced researcher, now retired, with a background in electrical and electronic engineering, and a specialty in data communications, I received Janet Sciales' presentation on October 4 with great interest.

I knew that she would get "flak" about her references to electromagnetic energy. After spending a number of years trying to resolve some anomalies in particle physics, it seems that classical physical laws change in the sub-atomic world. I felt that Ms. Sciales had a handle on this concept, but was clumsy in expressing it.

I have had a number of meetings with Ms. Sciales since her presentation, and have proposed to her the following possibility: Perhaps astrology is a refined art that has accidentally taken the cycles of a number of celestial bodies, over thousands of years of observation, and correlated them to the various cycles of the human being, although there may not be a cause-and-effect correlation. The celestial rhythms/cycles may serve as a cipher to our understanding of the complex and numerous human cycles.

I have found Ms. Sciales to be receptive to my ideas regarding these matters. She genuinely needs the assistance of scientists, and presently, I am trying to outline procedures to *scientifically* detect and identify the astrological energy that she so strongly believes exists. I can, for example, explain technically, in an unbroken sequence, the transference of energy from the sun, through photosynthesis, to starch, then by catabolism to D-glucose, its oxidation in the brain, and its release of that same energy, which researchers have now detected through various scanning techniques. This will fortify Ms. Sciales' contentions, although at other times I may have to "shoot her down". But that's science!

Ms. Sciales has given some new insights, and I hope that I can give her the scientific credibility that she seeks. I can be as comfortable contemplating the chiral symmetry of a photon as she can be contemplating a Neptune-Pluto affliction in the fifth house. We respect each other's perspective and expertise. They are the areas

in which we find the most comfort. Is this not what a reality is?

Harold E. Blake, Zephyrhills

Editor's reply: While I encourage your dialogue, I disagree that your technical explanations "will fortify Ms. Sciales' contentions". At issue is not the sun's importance as an energy source, but whether or not astrologers can perform, under controlled conditions, those feats which they claim to perform regularly with great success. No expertise in physics, or even in astrology, is necessary in order to devise controlled tests, such as those published in Nature 12/5/85. Until an astrologer can demonstrate any such ability (regardless of whether or not any confirmed celestial-human relationship is cause-and-effect) it seems difficult to justify scientific research into possible explanatory mechanisms.

Editor: Cosmic radiation from the sun (of the type discussed by Janet Sciales as reported in your last issue), even at peak times during solar flares, is in *very low energy* rays which are effectively trapped by the Van Allen belts, and which do not irradiate the surface of the earth (although they cause auroras and disruptions of the ionosphere). There are *highly* energized cosmic rays that originate from sources *outside* the solar system, which easily penetrate the earth's magnetosphere, strike the upper atmosphere, and produce showers of secondary particles that *can* strike the surface of the earth. However, the intensity of these rays does *not* correlate with the earth's annual path around the sun.

Does our astrologer take these facts into account? Her proposition is not a scientific hypothesis, but a song and dance that is strictly amateur (I did not attend the meeting, and am basing my comments solely on your article in TBS REPORT). I wish to read more about it, though, and hope you can refer me to some of her articles.

Eric Solaski, Kenneth City

Editor's reply: I am not aware of any articles by Janet, or anyone

(continued on page 6)

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS MEMBERSHIP / SUBSCRIPTION / DONATION / BACK ORDER FORM

- ☐ YES, I wish to support the Tampa Bay Skeptics in its efforts to examine and report upon fringe-science and paranormal claims. Enclosed is my check for \$10. Please enroll me as a member of TBS, and begin my annual subscription to *TBS REPORT* with issue _____. ☐ Renewal ☐ Please accept this donation of \$ ____.
- ☐ Please list me as a subscriber only, beginning with issue _____. Enclosed is my check for \$10. ☐ Renewal
- ☐ Please send back issues of _____ (@ \$2.50 per) (Vol. 1 No.1 gratis) [May be available as photocopies only]

Please make check payable to Tampa Bay Skeptics, and mail to:

Tampa Bay Skeptics
6219 Palma Blvd. #210
St. Petersburg, FL 33715

*Note: Memberships, subscriptions
and donations are tax deductible.*



Tampa Bay Skeptics General Membership Meeting

Scheduled: "Open Forum"

Will include "CSICOP in China" videotape

MONDAY, APRIL 10 -- 7:00 - 8:45 P.M.

AUDITORIUM, CENTRAL LIBRARY

900 N. ASHLEY ST., TAMPA

(See directions on page 6)

General public welcome

**Scheduled for July: BOB STEINER - Exposer of psychic fraud
President, Society of American Magicians**

Tentative for Fall: HENRY GORDON - "Extrasensory Deception"

Tentative for Winter: DR. WILSE B. WEBB - "ESP and dreams"

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Report on January TBS meeting

About two dozen skeptical inquirers participated in a lively Open Forum at the TBS general meeting on January 26. Pat Strong, TBS' usually punctual chairman, arrived 18 minutes late, a paranormal phenomenon unpredicted, as far as we know, by any psychic, tarot reader, or channeled entity (nor did his daily horoscope predict his flat tire!).

Despite its inauspicious beginning, the meeting was an unmitigated success. Gary Posner delighted the audience with a videotape of reporter John Stossel's hard-hitting "Good Morning America" series on astrology from Nov. 28-30. Hollywood astrologer Joyce Jillson (whose column is carried by the Tampa Tribune) prepared a chart on a person unknown to her (except for the birth information

requested by her). The man she described as "enormously bright [with] sexual charisma and great charm...a wacky off-the-wall sense of humor that disarms people" turned out to be a mass murderer named Ed Kemper III. When Stossel presented Kemper's horoscope to members of an adult education class, pretending that each student was receiving his/her own *personal* reading, most students swore that it was uncannily accurate! Concluded Stossel, "Scientifically, astrology is total nonsense."

Pat Strong then spoke about a book entitled, The Oxford Companion to the Mind, an encyclopedic collection of generally legitimate scientific knowledge that includes an entry on "astrology". Strong expressed his discomfort with the entry's author and content, but resolved to review the literature and examine the claims carefully (over the objection of some members who felt this to be a waste of time). Pat stressed that we must not merely "preach to the converted", but must remain open-minded, and address the concerns and beliefs of others.

Member/astronomer Jack Robinson then briefed the group on the status of his investigation into the Gulf Breeze UFO Case (see p. 3). He hopes to be able to produce similar photographic images of his own, and seeks volunteers to assist him in this effort.

Plans for upcoming meetings were also discussed, although late scheduling problems have necessitated delaying Toronto magician/author Henry Gordon's visit until at least the fall (see left for latest schedule).

--James Lett

--- TBS UPDATE SERVICE ---

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