



REPORT

VOLUME 2 NO. 1 SUMMER 1989

CSICOP banquet and conference - smooth and successful

The April 22-23 visit by the Executive Council of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) was a huge success, to the delight of the 120 attendees at the Tampa Hilton at Metrocenter. The only gray cloud was the inability of most of the other southern groups similar to TBS to send representatives to what was hoped would be a concurrent meeting among them. But there was no shortage of activity, or disappointment, for those who did attend.

The noon press conference on Saturday (to which TIME Magazine sent a reporter) began with CSICOP Chairman Prof. Paul Kurtz's introductory remarks. CSICOP Executive Director Mark Plummer discussed the saga of Willard Fuller, Florida's "psychic dentist" (see Vol.1, No.1), whose claims include enabling people to grow new sets of teeth, and turning silver fillings to gold. Philip Klass, Chairman of CSICOP's UFO Subcommittee, and author of four books on the UFO phenomenon, briefly discussed the Gulf Breeze UFO photo case, which would be further scrutinized the following day. James Randi, world-renowned conjurer and exposé of psychic fraud, and recipient of a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship for his efforts, discussed his live nationally-syndicated June 7 TV special, on which anyone successfully performing a paranormal feat was to be awarded \$100,000 [Note: There were no winners]. He offered a personal invitation to Largo "psychic" Barbara Jett (see V.1, No.4) to fly to Los Angeles, all expenses paid, to try for the prize [Note: She declined]. TBS founder Gary Posner then concluded with a discussion of his "\$1,000 Challenge" to any and all purported purveyors of the paranormal in the Tampa Bay area, and of the difficulties encountered by TBS in getting Janet Sciales and Barbara Jett to follow through on their prior verbal agreements to be tested.

Following an outdoor social gathering later in the afternoon, at which books by the CSICOP dignitaries were made available for purchase and autographs, the banquet hall was packed, and the diners were regaled with stories from the CSICOPers. Paul Kurtz compressed his normally one-hour lecture on the history of skepticism

Psychic accepts "\$1,000 Challenge"

Although Janet Sciales and Barbara Jett no longer plan to submit to testing by TBS (see p. 3), Pinellas Park "psychic" Joan Morin has requested a chance to prove her alleged powers (see p. 8).

into about 15 minutes. He noted that whereas the original skeptics argued that there was no reliable knowledge, this is not so in the scientific era, although there is still much to be skeptical of, and not simply in the realm of the paranormal. James Alcock, a noted psychologist from Toronto, spoke about the "channeling" craze, and how incredibly fortunate it is for all the multi-thousand-year-old entities that suddenly hundreds of gurus are now available to channel their spirits. A laughing matter was made less so when he pointed out that J.Z. Knight, who channels a 35,000 year-old warrior from Atlantis named Ramtha, packs auditoriums at \$600 per person for her one-hour stunts. The "psychic dentist" was again drilled by Mark Plummer, who bemoaned his own unsuccessful efforts in Australia and the U.S. to interest law enforcement agencies in protecting the public from this character. Randi had planned to discuss "psychic surgery", and show a videotape of his Tonight Show demonstration of it, but technical difficulties intervened, and he instead spoke about his June 7 TV special, and about his 1988 investigation (for the journal *Nature*) into the claim that water possesses memories of substances once dissolved in it. He also thrilled all as he performed the Uri Geller spoon bending/melting effect.

The conference reconvened on Sunday morning, led off by physicist Willy Smith, a UFO believer excommunicated from the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON) because of his skepticism of the Gulf Breeze case, whose slide show was convincing in this regard. Dr. Joe Nickell delivered a

(continued on page 5)

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS
Statement of Purpose
and "\$1,000 Challenge"

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 group with no formal ties to CSICOP.

TBS is presently sponsoring a "\$1,000 Challenge" for anyone able to provide evidence of the existence of any paranormal phenomenon. Further details are available upon request.

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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CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Pat Strong, Ph.D.

In my capacity as Chairman of TBS, I have recently had the pleasure of addressing high school students at Boca Ciega High in St. Petersburg, and Riverview High in Sarasota. At each school I spoke to three different classes of about thirty students each, what I feel to be a fairly representative sample of high schoolers. The students were all taking courses in psychology, and the teachers had asked for a speaker to talk about ESP and other paranormal phenomena. The implication I got from the teachers was that they had few doubts about the existence of such phenomena, and wanted someone to tell the students more about them.

My approach was to first introduce the students to what TBS and CSICOP are all about, and then to talk about skepticism in general. When I did this, I not only used examples such as psychic healers, astrology, the Amityville Horror, etc., but also I showed how a skeptical attitude is useful when one is presented with startling data from the various sciences. As examples of the latter I used studies on cannibalistic Planaria incorporating the learning of trained flatworms, the flurry of articles some years ago in *Science* and other journals on the new form of water, and the recent articles in *Nature* seeming to substantiate certain assumptions of homeopathic medicine. In the discussions that followed, certain themes seemed to recur:

(1) In every class, someone recounts an episode of having had some sort of premonition about danger or some calamity affecting a friend, relative, or loved one, and finding out later that such an event had occurred.

(2) Many believe UFOs are visitors from other planets, and that the USAF is conspiring to hide this knowledge from us, even to the extent of having the bodies of such aliens in deep freeze.

(3) Many stories are told about either personal experiences with haunted houses, or knowledge of family members or friends with such encounters. Such houses always involve having been built over a battlefield, or having had someone murdered in them.

(4) Many report so-called "out-of-body" experiences or know of people who have experienced such events, including dying-returning experience.

In discussing various explanations for the above and other paranormal events and abilities, it became clear to me that skeptical, analytical modes of thinking were sadly lacking in these students. When asked specific questions about the various sciences, they demonstrated some knowledge about facts --- but when asked to explicate the ways in which these facts were obtained, and the methods by which false theories were disproven (such as the phlogiston theory of fire) the students seemed utterly bewildered by the task demands.

In light of the recent spate of studies concerning the sad state of scientific and mathematical knowledge in American school children

(continued on page 5)

St. Pete Times report: Sciales and Jett have no plans to allow testing by TBS

An article in the local sections of some editions of the St. Petersburg Times on May 7 (reprinted in some other editions on May 11 and 14), dealing mainly with TBS' desire to test claims of such things as ESP and astrology, revealed what we had suspected for months. Apparently TBS will have no success in bringing either Janet Sciales or Barbara Jett before the glare of the cameras for testing of their alleged abilities.

Despite astrologer Sciales' professed desire to be tested by TBS (see V.1 No.2, p.5), and her comment at our October 4 meeting that "I am looking very much for your [TBS's] input on acceptable tests - what we can do", efforts by Pat Strong and Gary Posner to engage her in negotiations have been met with non-returned calls and broken appointments. Reporter Rochelle Lewis quotes Sciales as saying, "I'm not going to put my reputation on the line if they're not going to do the same thing. Why should I?" [Note: Sciales is fully aware of our commitment to award a \$1,000 prize at a press conference, and to submit a scientific paper for publication, should she succeed]. Lewis further reports that Sciales feels that a test involving "matching astrological charts with birthdates and personality test results" would be "unfair" [Q: Isn't this what astrologers are supposedly *best* at?].

"Psychic" Barbara Jett, also without benefit of negotiations, flatly states that "What [Posner is] asking me to do is something that I can't do." [Note: Our only demand is that she do something *testable*, as opposed to a vague 'cold reading' which any party entertainer can do]. Jett furthermore offers the opinion that "Dr. Posner is very psychic himself..." If Jett knows that she is no more "psychic" than Posner, this would explain her reluctance to accept his "\$1,000 Challenge".

Unless Sciales or Jett elects to contact TBS and negotiate in good faith regarding the conditions for a test, TBS has no plans to communicate further with either party on this matter.

Christian Scientist parents guilty of murder

A jury of six in Sarasota has found Bill and Chris Hermanson guilty of third-degree murder and felony child abuse, as a result of their decision to not seek medical treatment for their 7-year-old diabetic daughter.

This decision was encouraged by Frederick Hillier, the Christian Science "practitioner" whose faith-healing attempts proved futile, although he was not charged as an accessory to murder.

Hillier claims in a May 6 St. Petersburg Times article that his wife was cured by prayer of a breast "tumor" nine years ago, and that 1,493 other medical cures have been published in the *Christian Science Journal* during the past 15 years. In a letter to the religion section editor of the Times (published on June 10), TBS's Dr. Gary Posner challenged the Hilliers to release the pertinent medical records, which he suspects would fail to reveal evidence of anything more serious than a benign cyst of a type known to often regress or resolve spontaneously.

Exorcism leads to death, murder charges

The mother of a Pensacola-area 4-year-old is awaiting sentencing for the third-degree murder of her daughter, while the girl's exorcist, Mary Nicholson also faces a murder charge. The mother paid \$20,000 to Nicholson and others to rid her daughter of six demonic spirits - disobedience, wolf, gluttony, lust, profanity and lying. The prescription for cure was for the child to be starved, severely whipped, knocked down, hit in the mouth, and shown "the bottom of your foot", as reported in the St. Petersburg Times on April 6.

Florida Creation Science Center planned

Clearwater Christian College, with a student body of 320, is seeking a half-million dollars in donations to build the Florida Creation Science Center, as reported in the St. Petersburg Times on April 16 by Rochelle Lewis.

Until the Center becomes a reality, one of the college's classrooms serves in its stead, under the tutelage of Dr. Gary Parker, a former associate of San Diego's Institute for Creation Research (see p.4 of last issue re: California's crackdown on ICR's conferring of "science" degrees).

One of the college's four biology majors scheduled for graduation next year is quoted in the article as saying, "I don't see how you can have the science without the Bible. Not only is it a history book, it's also a science book." If this student is to receive a "science" degree upon graduation, perhaps Florida education officials ought to follow the lead of their California counterparts.

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

VICE-CHAIR: Miles W. Hardy, Ph.D. (Professor of Psychology, University of South Florida, Tampa)

SECRETARY: Jerry L. Touchton, Brandon (Physics Teacher, Tampa Preparatory School)

TREASURER: Gary P. Posner, M.D., St. Petersburg (*Free Inquiry* Faith-healing Investigation Project; CSICOP UFO Subcommittee)

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

Jim and Tammy Bakker have relocated to a nearly deserted Orlando shopping center, and have begun taping and broadcasting once again. They hope to purchase the entire center, and to build a religious theme park in the Orlando area.

(*St. Pete. Times, May 9*)

A Louisiana pipefitter's visions inspired a group from New Orleans to gather in a field, hoping to see the Virgin Mary. Some reportedly took instant photographs of the sun, and pointed to blotchy images as evidence of holy apparitions.

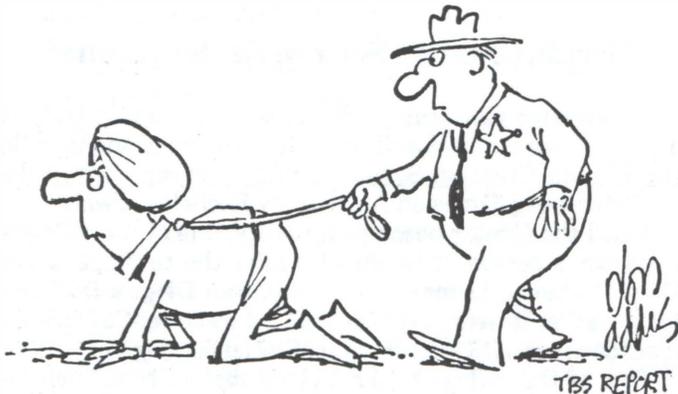
(*St. Pete. Times, March 13*)

Lee Walden, an Indiana chiropractor, has been placed on probation for telling his patients that their medical problems are caused by demons and other supernatural spirits. He has also agreed to cease performing his sinus treatments, which consisted of inserting in the patient's nose a balloon, and inflating it to the bursting point.

(*AP/St. Pete. Times, March 20*)

Wayne County, Utah Sheriff Kerry Ekker has called upon psychics to lead him to the whereabouts of one of Ted Bundy's victims. "It's a long shot...", he admits.

(*St. Pete. Times, April 24*)



The attorneys representing a group of alleged marijuana smugglers were warned by a judge not to allow their clients to continue sprinkling Santeria dust in the courthouse. The "magic" powder is used in the Afro-Caribbean religion.

(*St. Pete. Times, April 27*)

Michael and Aurora El-Legion visited the Tampa Bay area in April to deliver a lecture (\$10) and host two days of seminars (\$65/day), as well as to sell their wares, including a \$30/month "rejuvenating" herbal product. The dynamic duo directs the Extra-Terrestrial Communication Network, and reported that a colony of earthlings now numbering 200,000 has inhabited Mars for 40 years, a fact being covered-up by all agencies of the U.S. government. When asked by St. Pete. Times columnist

Jacquin Sanders if anyone outside the government was aware of this startling situation, Mrs. El-Legion responded, "Yes. Jackie Gleason."

(*St. Pete. Times, April 27*)

Rev. Barry H. Downing says that accepting the reality of UFOs, piloted by "angels" or "higher beings" from another dimension, "would establish scientific plausibility for the whole biblical field. It would reinforce faith and make it possible in a scientific context." Downing, a consultant to MUFON, is the author of The Bible and Flying Saucers, which has recently been reissued in a new paperback edition.

(*AP/Panama City News Herald, April 22*)



In her newest literary masterpiece entitled Going Within, Shirley MacLaine reassures us that our *chakras*, the body's seven centers of esoteric energy, "are always open, spinning, and in complete harmony." But she later describes how a "spiritual" healer she knows emits light from his body to "balance" the chakras. In the event that the reader should pick up on this apparent inconsistency, she restores her credibility by describing how she allowed a Filipino "psychic surgeon" to plunge his hands (sans instruments) into her abdomen to remove "negative energy clots" and bloody globs of "negative thought forms".

(*Newsweek, April 24 and Hartford Courant/St. Pete. Times, April 29*)

In another depressing assessment of the American public education system, the Nation's Report Card (mandated by Congress and sponsored by the National Assessment of Educational Progress) doled out an "F" in reasoning. "We find deficits in higher-order thinking skills...Large proportions of American students do not appear to be adequately prepared for college work, career mobility and thoughtful citizenship."

(*Cox News Service/St. Pete. Times, February 16*)

Five fortune tellers on tour in Ireland were forced to cancel appearances when their crystal balls were stolen from their car. Of course, they claim that they knew something like this was going to happen.

(*St. Pete. Times, May 10*)

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

("CSICOP conference" continued from page 1)

step-by-step slide presentation documenting how the Shroud of Turin appears to have been painted by a medieval forger. He explained that the church knew of the forgery at the time, but used the shroud for profit in staged events at which people claiming to be afflicted (but who were not) were seemingly miraculously healed (shades of modern TV evangelism). Philosopher Lee Nisbet, CSICOP's Special Projects Director, spoke about the anti-science aspects of the increasingly strident Animal Rights movement. Psychology Prof. Ray Hyman offered sage advice as to how skeptics can best get their message across to others (e.g. don't tackle too much at one time, use communication tools effectively, build your point diplomatically, leave the audience with something to do/think about after you leave). Ken Frazier recounted his personal history as a science reporter, his fortuitous involvement in the formation of CSICOP, and his current post as editor of *The Skeptical Inquirer*, a "full-time" job he performs so splendidly on evenings and weekends, when he can get away from his *real* full-time job. He noted proudly that CSICOP's circulation now exceeds 40,000, a figure unimaginable in CSICOP's formative days. The incomparable (and "Amazing") Randi was then prevailed upon to make an unscheduled appearance, for the benefit of those who did not attend Saturday's banquet. He held a Q/A session, and treated the audience to a demonstration of truly making time fly, as he made an ordinary wristwatch jump ahead from 12:30 to 1:30. Barry Karr, CSICOP's Local Group Liaison, wrapped things up with a short talk about the rise of the local skeptics groups, and of the importance of greater participation in the groups by the members. This was followed by a closed meeting to discuss problems of this nature within ours and other such groups.

TBS Board member Terry Smiljanich graciously volunteered to take Mark Plummer and Barry Karr sight-seeing after lunch, and earlier in the day member Jacques Musy provided Paul Kurtz's transportation to Orlando to address the "Freethinkers" group. Council member Jim Lett also deserves special note for having taken charge of the book sales booth on Saturday.

CSICOP's Executive Council (as well as the rest of us) seemed to thoroughly enjoy their visit to Tampa Bay, and appreciated the organizational work done by TBS, which resulted in a smoothly flowing conference of which we can be justifiably proud. Please be advised, however, that TBS did not gain *financially* from the event (all funds received for the banquet were turned over to the Hilton), except for the addition of about 10 new members.

--Gary Posner and Mary Ann Hartman

TBS media coverage

The Press Release sent to the local media with our previous issue, detailing Gary Posner's "\$1,000 Challenge", generated press interest beyond the St. Petersburg Times article noted on page 3. Posner was interviewed by Cheryl Reszka of WTKN Radio on March

17, by Tampa Tribune Religion Editor Karen Long for her March 26 story on faith-healing, and by San Diego reporter Mike Dale (for the Copley News Service), whose June 5 "Wireless Flash" report to radio stations across North America resulted in on-air interviews (so far) on WDUN (Gainesville, Ga.), CKWW (Windsor, Ontario), WSPD (Toledo, with psychic Shawn Robbins), WHDH (Boston), CKO (Edmonton, Alberta), WJJD (Chicago), and WCKY (Cincinnati, with Janet Sciales). Posner also made listeners aware of their own local skeptics groups.

Posner was also a guest on Ric Rollins' live call-in TV show on April 8 (Jones Intercable public access in Tampa). Opposite Posner, in addition to the host, were Sister Briege McKinna ("The Healing Nun"), and Anita Skinner, a friend and co-worker of Rollins', who claimed to have been miraculously cured of scleroderma in her home in 1968 by prayer. A caller (Anita's friend Georgette), intending to verify Anita's miracle, instead told a story of how just "two years ago" Anita "many times couldn't show up [for work] because of her illness", and how after a trip to Medjugorje (the Catholic shrine in Yugoslavia) "she came back healed". Although Skinner had earlier agreed on air to sign release forms so that Posner might obtain documentation of her medical history, so as to award her his "\$1,000 Challenge" prize if her records were to verify a miraculous healing, to date (two months later) she has failed to return the forms in the stamped return envelope he provided, and Ric Rollins has failed to respond to Posner's two follow-up letters and three telephone messages.

Gregory Enns of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune interviewed Posner at length for an April 23 front-page story on faith-healing, a major disappointment in which neither Posner nor TBS was mentioned, but which contained several very subtle variations of information provided by Posner, just enough to cause faith-healing to be portrayed in a more scientifically justifiable light.

Member/astronomer Jack Robinson was interviewed by Jackie Ripley for her March 30 cover story on UFOs in the Clearwater Sun's *Sunrise*. As a result, we received one report of an apparent fireball meteor which streaked across the sky late one night this spring. Alas, no alien abduction to report.

("CHAIRMAN'S CORNER" continued from page 2)

(not to mention geography and history), it might be a better strategy to educate our children in the critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate the many sensationalized reports of various paranormal and natural phenomena, rather than to emphasize the so-called facts of science. Unfortunately, little research has been done in how to inculcate a general mode of skepticism in students, possibly because such attitudes are often inimical to the structure of formal educational institutions. It might be fun to have a TBS workshop someday to explore innovative methods for instilling such values in students.

**TBS Statement of Income and Expenditures
for fiscal year 1988 (6/1/88 - 5/31/89)**

I. Income	
A. New memberships/subscriptions	\$1,290.00
B. Early renewals	130.00
C. Sales of back issues and other miscl. items	0.00
D. Donations (monetary and stamps)	110.25
E. Interest	6.20*
F. 4/22 CSICOP Banquet reservations	2,650.00
TOTAL	\$4,186.45
II. Expenditures	
A. Printing (newsletters)	671.89
B. Stationery (letterheads, labels, etc.)	165.98
C. Postage	297.20
D. Telephone calls	77.40
E. Bank service charges, checks	74.44*
F. UFO Conference attended (11/5/88)	10.00
G. Florida Corp. Annual Report Fee	35.00
H. 4/22 CSICOP Banquet (to Hilton)	2,650.00
TOTAL	\$3,981.91
III. Current Financial Assets	
A. Checking account	186.54
B. Stamps	9.50
C. Laser print credits	8.50
TOTAL	\$ 204.54
IV. Current Liabilities	
	\$ 0.00
V. Net Balance as of 5/31/89 (I - II; III - IV)	
	\$ 204.54
VI. Est. cost of printing/mailling V.2, N.1 in 6/89	
	\$ 195.00

*We were unable to obtain *free* checking until 12/27/88, at which time we changed banks. No further bank charges are anticipated.

All financial records are available for inspection by anyone with a legitimate need or concern.

Faithfully submitted,
Gary P. Posner, Treasurer

First anniversary renewals due

This issue marks the end of the first year of operations for TBS, and is the fourth and final paid issue for the bulk of our current members and subscribers (Vol.1 No.1 was free). The Board of TBS, generally pleased with our progress to date, and with the high quality of our newsletter, elected *not* to raise the price of renewal at this time, confident of a high renewal rate among what we hope is an appreciative following.

As you can see from the above financial statement, TBS requires the continued support of the bulk of our readers, in order to continue operations at our current level, or to consider expansion.

Please renew your membership or subscription promptly, to help insure the continuing success of the Tampa Bay Skeptics.

* * * * *

--- **TBS UPDATE SERVICE** ---

If you would like to be kept more closely informed of TBS' activities (and other relevant community/media events) than a quarterly newsletter allows, send us a stamped, self-addressed envelope with "TBS Update Service" printed in the lower left corner. As events warrant, notices will be sent to all interested parties. Upon receipt, if you wish to remain on the service, please send another stamped return envelope.

CSICOP Conference available on videotape

TBS has available for loan a videotape of the April 22-23 CSICOP conference (except for the after-dinner addresses, which could not be recorded due to technical difficulties).

Included is the Press Conference, and all of the Sunday morning presentations, including slide shows. Running time is nearly 4 hours.

VHS only - \$10 fee (includes round-trip postage costs)

* * * * *

How would you like to sport a **Tampa Bay Skeptics logo T-shirt**? If the prospect excites you no end, please write ASAP, including a stamped return envelope for further details. We will place an order if there is sufficient interest.

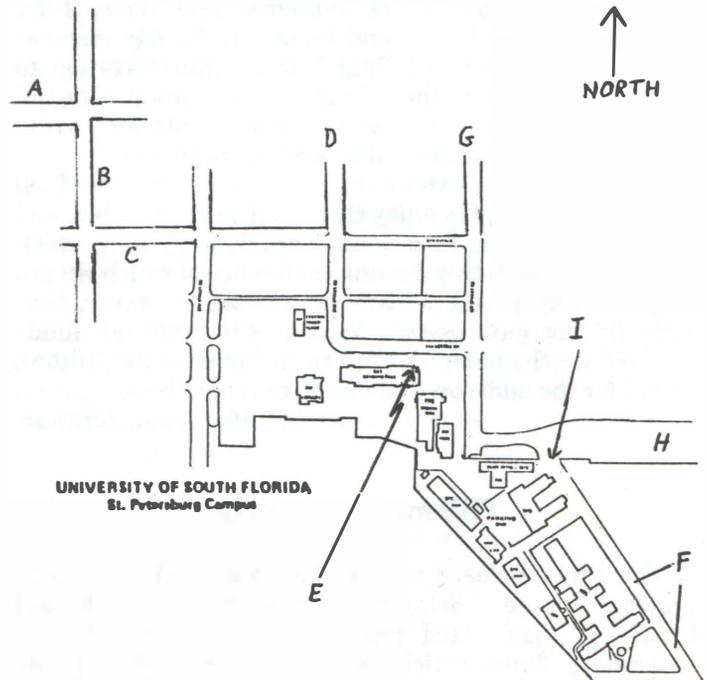
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Directions to next TBS meeting (see p. 8):

- Take I-275 to Exit 9 (I-175 East / S. Bay Dr.) (A)
- Turn Right at 6th St. S. exit (B)
- Turn Left at 6th Ave. S. (C)
- Turn Right into campus at 2nd St. S. (D)
- As you reach the "bend in the curve", Bayboro Hall is the long building on the right (E)
- Must enter building at the NE or SE corner only, for entrance to Room 130.

NOTE: "Streets" run N/S and "Avenues" run E/W

PARKING: The lots may be filled to near capacity by evening class students. All lots have "Decal Parking Only" signs, but the campus police have promised not to ticket after 7:00. May park in any lot (or on street where permissible), but best bet for spaces may be at far SE corner along the water (F). To get there, proceed to 1st St. S. (G), and turn right. Turn left at 8th Ave. SE (H), then right at "Florida Institute of Oceanography" sign (I).



READERS' FORUM

Dear Gary: On behalf of CSICOP we would like to thank you for your group's kind hospitality to our Executive Council on April 22-23, and congratulate you personally on the smooth preparation of the function. We have wonderful memories of Tampa Bay and your skeptics, and look forward to seeing you all again.

Paul Kurtz, Chairman
Mark Plummer, Executive Director
Barry Karr, Group Liaison
Buffalo, NY

Gary: The meetings were excellent, as was the dinner. I can understand your chagrin at the workload that was put on you. Hopefully, this will change - wish I was living closer. You sure did a great job, however.

I saw the enclosed at the public library (April 22 article about Rev. Barry H. Downing's book, The Bible and Flying Saucers) and thought it may be of interest to TBS, and to Philip Klass (CSICOP UFO Subcommittee Chairman).

Many thanks again for forming up such a successful meeting.

Winston Matthews
Tallahassee

There are plenty of other members living in the Tampa Bay area who I'm sure would love to volunteer to assist in the operations of the group, if they wish for TBS to flourish. I know that I will receive a deluge of such offers, and contributions to the newsletter, as a result of this shameless plea. --Ed.

Dear Skeptics: When I read the May 7 St. Pete. Times article about the Tampa Bay Skeptics, I said to myself, "That's me!". Please send a newsletter along, and sign me up for membership.

John Baird
Clearwater

Editor: About five years ago I began an investigation into the Big Bang Theory, as a hobby, because it seemed to be weighted down with too many assumptions and too few observations. In the process of this investigation, I discovered a simple overlooked fact in Einstein's and Planck's observations that proved exactly what mass was. This simple fact also proved that the Big Bang could not have happened.

When I disclosed this, I was attacked by the dogmatic Big Bangers with religious fervor, but they could not dispute the observation. I was surprised by this, so I offered these scientists a contest to prove me wrong, and put up a few thousand dollars as a prize, hoping it would cause them to realize their dogmatic foolishness.

As you can see by the enclosed, the contest still survives. Now I want to offer this contest to your group of skeptics. Has the Big Bang Theory become a dogma, or not? Does anything other than electromagnetic quanta really exist? If you can prove it does, you can collect the prize.

Vernon Brown
Electro-Mag TOE (Theory Of Everything)
P.O. Box 496
Rockaway, NJ 07866

Any members interested in pursuing this (which I am not), are encouraged to correspond with Mr. Brown directly, and to notify TBS, so that we may get all of you in touch with each other. --Ed.

Editor's notes: TBS needs a **recorded telephone message service** (in the event of last minute meeting changes, etc.). Please notify TBS if you have an extra telephone line for this purpose. Answering machine can be provided by TBS if necessary.

*We are also considering setting up a **computer bulletin board**. If you are interested in being the system operator, and have an IBM PC-XT-compatible computer, 20-megabyte hard disk, one floppy drive, and a 1200-baud modem, please notify TBS. Software will be provided (fully configured and ready to run, courtesy of California's Bay Area Skeptics).*

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 paranormal and fringe-science 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 Quarterly Membership Meeting

Special guest: BOB STEINER (California)
Renowned "psychic" entertainer and investigator
President, Society of American Magicians

***** Don't miss this first-rate performance!!! *****
Mark your calendars TODAY!!!

MONDAY, JULY 24 -- 7:30 P.M.
ROOM 130 - BAYBORO HALL
USF, ST. PETE. CAMPUS
(See directions on page 6)

General public welcome
if sufficient seating available

* * * * *

Report on April TBS meeting

The April 10 general membership meeting drew a disappointing "crowd" of 14, and even Chairman Pat Strong was unable to attend. Per usual, Gary Posner reported upon the latest membership and treasury figures, and once again requested contributions to the newsletter. Details of the upcoming CSICOP banquet/conference were discussed.

Gary Posner had received a phone call during the previous week from a Mr. Gene Ray, who has assigned himself the title of "Sage" (and who is also known by the

copyrighted name of "Mr. Marbles"), who has spent the past several years writing to the President of the United States and other officials about a system of thought which he has devised, which he believes contains the key to the universe. Although Dr. Posner explained to him that he seemed to be suffering from a thought disorder, and that the rest of the group would probably agree, Mr. Ray desired to address TBS, and was invited to the meeting.

Mr. Ray on several occasions repeated the refrain that "There is no truth in wordage". His system, involving the principles of the game of marbles, and various spirits, is untestable, and therefore not pertinent to the work of TBS. Dr. Posner felt the interchange was of benefit, however, as it may lead Mr. Ray to seek counselling. My own judgement is that Mr. Ray did demonstrate that the statement "There is no truth in wordage" can be true.

There was discussion of "psychic" Barbara Jett's attempt to "read" the past by touching objects unearthed near the Safety Harbor Museum (see V.1, No.4).

A videotape of CSICOP officials visiting China in an effort to test claims that some Chinese children have "special powers" was shown. The deception was clear - the children could not perform their feats under controlled conditions. Also exposed as fraudulent was the Chinese art of Qigong, in which the "master" allegedly effects movements (and medical cures) in the "patient" by merely waving his hands. Controlled tests revealed the obvious truth.

--Phillip Lerner

(\$1,000 Challenge from page 1 box)

Joan Morin, who lectures at the Spiritual Center (a metaphysical church), will attempt to determine "psychically" in which boxes are hidden objects. The test will begin at 10:00 A.M. on Saturday, July 22, at the Spiritual Center, 560 Clearwater-Largo Rd., Largo (5 blocks north of West Bay Drive). Results will be unveiled at a press conference to immediately follow.



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FIRST CLASS