



REPORT

VOLUME 2 NO. 4 SPRING 1990

Consumer protection group alleges Gov't UFO cover-up

The "For The People" Foundation, based in Cedar Key, Florida, has concluded that "UFOs are real and are indeed from another world." Chuck Harder, FTP founder and owner/CEO of the Sun Radio Network (which broadcasts his three-hour daily call-in program to approximately 80-100 stations across the country, including WEND-AM-760 locally), has published the results of FTP's investigation in the Winter issue of its 64-page quarterly magazine, which contains, in addition to consumer-oriented material, five UFO-related articles.

FTP's letterhead defines the three-year-old organization's "Purpose: Providing education, understanding and response to consumer needs in order to preserve the American way of life." In this pursuit, Harder explains in the magazine that "Over the last two years we have gotten many calls and letters about UFOs. At first we discarded the letters, but later realized that all these people writing us were sincere...Realizing that you wanted to know more we began an investigation..."

Harder mailed a "Dear UFO Investigator" letter last summer to various persons/groups, including CSICOP, stating in part that "We are planning a radio program to address the current situation of UFOs and wish to do on-the-air interviews...We ask that you send us any materials that you may wish reviewed. Naturally we will publish your address and phone on-the-air and in the magazine." CSICOP Executive Director Barry Karr replied on August 23, stating that "We are interested in your proposed radio show on UFOs", and enclosed two copies of *The Skeptical Inquirer* containing relevant articles. Karr also offered "help in arranging for a skeptical UFO investigator to be on your show". In his Aug. 30 reply, which criticised what he termed the "venom" and "ridicule" permeating the *S.I.* articles (although he cited no examples), Harder nevertheless promised that "Our upcoming magazine will have a...contact list in it. You'll be there."

Harder's three-hour UFO program aired on January 1, and contained not a hint of skeptical commentary. Harder endorsed the reality of the UFO abduction phenomenon, as well as the validity of the top-secret "MJ-12" documents

Psychic vs. Skeptic Update:

Judge denies motion to dismiss Noreen Renier's \$25,000 judgement against John Merrell (see page 3).

which, if genuine (which they are not - see later comments), would prove a Government cover-up of crashed saucers. Contrary to the pledge in Harder's initial mailing to CSICOP, he did not provide CSICOP's address or phone number during the program.

Nor did Harder include CSICOP in his magazine's "contact list" as promised. In fact, skepticism is nowhere to be found within its pages, as one might immediately surmise upon reading the cover's headline: "UFO STORY UNCOVERED - FLYING SAUCERS EXIST!". In his introductory comments, he reports that "First hand information has reached us that the U.S. Government has nine (9) of the craft in a hanger near Nellis Air Force Base near Las Vegas, Nevada." But although five pro-UFO articles follow, I am unable to find the first-hand information alluded to (presumably it will appear in the Spring issue, which promises, among other disclosures, an "Interview with...Bob Lazar...a scientist who has actually worked on ALIEN UFOs").

The first of the five UFO articles was written by FTP's researcher Richard Walters. It contains synopses of many reports, and the speculations of numerous ufologists as to such matters as the motives of the aliens. It reports that "Maurice Chatelain, former chief of NASA Communications System...claims that all Apollo and Gemini flights were followed by UFOs...[and] that Neil Armstrong reported seeing two UFOs on the rim of a lunar crater". It also spotlights the claims of Stanton Friedman and William Moore with regard to the "Roswell Incident" involving a crashed UFO in New Mexico in 1947. Friedman, one of the handful of UFO promoters with a science background (nuclear physics), declares the existence of "a 'Cosmic Watergate' engineered by the

(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 TBS with verifiable evidence of the existence of any paranormal phenomenon. 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 would be appreciated 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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\$10/yr. (4 issues)

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An Open Letter to Chuck Harder
from TBS Chairman Terry Smiljanich

The Winter issue of *For The People* really surprised me. Your generally informative consumer advocacy magazine, with valuable articles on such topics as job interview tips and product recalls, contained in its midst some articles I would have expected to see in a supermarket tabloid, e.g.: the old "Hanger-18" story, with three irrelevant UFO photos; the old Billy Meier story of encounters with a "Pleiadian" from the planet Erra, who predicts that the "negative and hostile energy" emanating from the Vatican(!) will cause Vesuvius to erupt, thus signaling the start of WWII; the story of the Brazilian tractor driver abducted by aliens 32 years ago and given a tour of another planet; etc., etc.

When I read the exchange of correspondence between you and Gary Posner, Barry Karr of CSICOP, and Philip Klass, I then understood. You, Chuck, have made up your mind to accept an extraordinary scientific claim (i.e. that UFOs are alien spacecraft) without rigorously applying the recognized rules of scientific analysis. I'm not a scientist either, Chuck, but we both should be able to agree that rules of rational thinking should guide us in discussing UFOs. These rules should be second nature to you, given your years of successful consumer advocacy which have taught you to treat with skepticism the claims of corporations such as General Motors.

Let's subject the UFO claims in your magazine to some of this same hard-nosed consumer skepticism (we are, after all, consumers of UFO claims by people selling the books mentioned in your articles). Page 4 of this newsletter contains neutral guidelines for scientific inquiry (i.e. it doesn't make any difference if one is a "believer" or an "against", as you put it) compiled by TBS Council member Jim Lett. Let's use those to examine FTP's Winter UFO articles.

Before we do, Chuck, a word of caution. Do not construe my remarks as either a personal attack or as ridicule of you. You have accused Posner, Karr and Klass of same, when they simply were pointing out errors and inconsistencies in the various UFO claims of others. This is not about *you*, Chuck; it's about the "evidence".

By starting out with a belief in a pervasive conspiracy and cover-up, these UFO claims quickly and decisively fail the test of **falsifiability**. No proof of forgery could change the minds of the MJ-12 believers - indeed, any such "proof" is construed as further evidence of a conspiracy (as in your comments about Philip Klass, as reported in Posner's article herein). Pleiadians and abductions can never be disproved no matter how many such claims are investigated. Compare this situation to "cold fusion", a *scientific* claim which can and will ultimately be proven true or false by the quality of the evidence.

FTP's conclusion of a UFO cover-up is **logical**, in that it does follow from the premise. But is the premise (i.e. aliens in Air Force storage) true? If not, the conclusion is **unsound**. I served in D.C. for a year as Associate Counsel to the Senate Iran-Contra Committee, and received the highest security clearances. I discovered that the government can't keep much of anything secret for more than about a year, especially something as explosive as proof of extraterrestrial visitors (or am I part of the conspiracy, too?).

As for **comprehensiveness**, do the MJ-12 and abduction articles tell the whole story? Hardly. They don't even mention Klass' painstaking analysis of the documents, in conjunction with expert document examiners, or the many other problems that have been found with these stories. Contrary evidence cannot be dismissed by simply ignoring it. FTP asks for nominations for its "Great American Rip-off Award". I nominate the MJ-12 and UFO abduction books. Chuck, why don't you scrutinize them like you do General Motors?

The test for **honesty** as a guideline for scientific inquiry is a tricky one. UFO believers are generally honest and sincere people. But are they honest with *themselves* when they seemingly close their minds to the evidence that, for

(continued on page 8)

Renier vs. Merrell Update:**Judge denies motion to dismiss judgement**

On February 14, Tennessee bankruptcy Judge Richard Stair, Jr. denied skeptic John Merrell's motion for summary dismissal of Orlando "psychic" Noreen Renier's \$25,000 judgement against him. Merrell had contended in his January 9 motion that Renier's successes in her 1986 Oregon libel action against him, in the subsequent appeal, and in Merrell's bankruptcy trial, were in part the result of "fraud, misrepresentation and...perjury" on Renier's part (see Vol. 2, No. 3 for background story).

Without elaboration, Stair ruled that the court's judgement "was not based in any part on perjury, fraud, misrepresentation or other misconduct of the plaintiff. It is accordingly ORDERED that the defendant's Motion is DENIED." On February 26, Merrell filed an appeal of his motion's denial.

In response to our last article, Renier telephoned TBS on Feb. 5, and spoke at length with Chairman Terry Smiljanich. Renier alleged errors in Merrell's motion, which she said she would specify in future correspondence (she has sent us a Feb. 23 "Press Release" - see excerpts on p. 7). The one "error" in the article that she did specifically dispute was the matter of her credentials at Rollins College, telling Smiljanich that she is indeed a member of the school's faculty, holding "adjunct professor" status (see the Dean of Faculty's response on p. 7). Although non-committal to being tested by TBS, she did invite us to submit a proposal for a test of her "psychometry" abilities, which we did on February 27, and to which we await a reply. TBS will continue to follow these matters closely.

Local astrologer quoted in Newsweek

St. Petersburg astrologer Jan Walsek was quoted in *Newsweek's* January 15 'Lifestyle/Trends' article, "The Stargazers Strike Back". Walsek is one of 2,000 members of the Association for Astrological Networking (AFAN), which *Newsweek* says "now reviews press coverage for derogatory comments and [which] has sent the media lists

of reputable astrologers who can cast the profession in a fairer light." Said Walsek, "We are not women who hang onto superstitions and watch soap operas all day. We are professionals with a body of knowledge that enables us to render advice." (Note: See Pat Strong's "Chairman's Corner" comments in this regard in *TBS REPORT*, Vol. 1, No. 3).

Astrologer Janet Sciales addressed TBS on October 4, 1988 (see same issue of *TBS REPORT* for details). Walsek participated in the Q/A session from the audience when the matter of the devastating 12/5/85 *Nature* study on astrology was raised. She criticised the researchers for having tested the most *available* (i.e. the least busy) rather than the most *qualified* astrologers. (Note: The astrologers were specifically recommended by the National Council for Geocosmic Research). Walsek implied that the results might have been different had she, or Sciales, been tested.

Despite Sciales' expressed desire to be tested by TBS, she ultimately elected not to follow through (see *TBS REPORT*, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 3). As a result of the recent *Newsweek* article, we wrote to Walsek on January 30, offering "to develop with you a simple mechanism or test to determine whether or not you are capable of demonstrating that astrology is real", noting the opportunity "to prove the validity of astrology, to collect our \$1,000 prize, and to make history in the process." We have received no response to our offer.

**In brief...**

At our TBS meeting on February 5, the Executive Council elected Dr. Joan Straumanis, Dean of Faculty at Rollins College, to be a TBS Consultant...

The "Eye on Tampa Bay" program on investigating paranormal claims, featuring James Randi (see previous issue), was aired on January 31...

TBS founder Gary Posner was a featured speaker on February 17 at the Mensa Regional Gathering in Lake Wales...

Posner has also been invited to speak briefly on April 1 at the CSICOP conference in Washington, D.C. He plans to discuss the "For the People" UFO crusade...

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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

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AT LARGE: Vincent E. Parr, Ph.D. (Clinical psychologist, Temple Terrace)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Gary P. Posner, Terry A. Smiljanich, Paschal N. Strong (USF Dept. of Psychology, Tampa)

A Field Guide to Critical Thinking

by James Lett

[Excerpted/edited from *The Skeptical Inquirer*, Winter 1990]

There are many reasons for the popularity of paranormal beliefs in the United States today, including (1) the irresponsibility of the mass media, who exploit the public taste for nonsense; (2) the irrationality of the American world-view, which supports such claims as life after death; and (3) the ineffectiveness of public education, which generally fails to teach students the essential skills of critical thinking. As a college professor, I am especially concerned with this third problem. Most of the freshman and sophomore students in my classes simply do not know how to draw reasonable conclusions from the evidence. At most, they've been taught in high school *what* to think; few of them know *how* to think.

In an attempt to remedy this problem at my college, I've developed an elective course called "Anthropology and the Paranormal", which examines the range of contemporary American beliefs from precognition and psychokinesis to channeling and cryptozoology, and everything between and beyond, including astrology, UFOs and creationism. The anthropological perspective is conveyed by teaching the students how to evaluate evidence employing the scientific method. I offer six simple rules, and show how to apply them to the examination of any paranormal claim.

The six rules are my own distillation of the scientific method, simplified into an acronym "FiLCHeRS", standing for the rules of Falsifiability, Logic, Comprehensiveness, Honesty, Replicability, and Sufficiency. Apply these rules to the evidence for any claim, and no one will ever be able to sneak up on you and steal your belief. You'll be filch-proof.

Falsifiability - It may sound paradoxical, but in order for any claim to be true, it must be falsifiable. If the claim is false, evidence can thus prove it false; if the claim is true, the evidence will not disprove it. This rule says that evidence matters; if nothing conceivable could ever disprove the claim, evidence would not matter, and the claim would be meaningless. It is logically impossible for a claim to be true *no matter what*. **Examples:** "Crystal therapy restores balance to one's spiritual energy." What does it mean to have unbalanced spiritual energy? What evidence would prove that one's unbalanced energy had been balanced? Or, "There is a government conspiracy to withhold information on crashed UFOs." What possible evidence could convince the proponents of the conspiracy theory that there is *not* a conspiracy?

Logic - An argument is said to be "valid" if its conclusion follows unavoidably from its premises; it is "sound" if it is valid and if all the premises are true. **Example:** Erich von Daniken's claim that the 16th century world map made by Turkish Admiral Piri Re'is is so "astoundingly accurate" that it could only have been made using satellite photographs. Not only is the argument *invalid* (any number of imaginable techniques could result in an "astoundingly accurate" map), but also *unsound* (the premise of astounding accuracy is not true; the Piri Re'is

map contains many gross inaccuracies) [see R. Story's article in *Skeptical Inquirer*, Fall/Winter 1977].

Comprehensiveness - It is never reasonable to consider only the evidence that supports a theory, and to discard that which contradicts it. **Example:** Biorhythm proponents point to airline crashes that occurred on days when the crews were experiencing critically low points in their intellectual, emotional, and/or physical cycles. But what about the even larger number of crashes when the crews were at high or neutral points in their biorhythm cycles? [see T. Hines' book *Pseudoscience and the Paranormal*, Prometheus, 1988].

Honesty - It is essential that you be honest with yourself about the results of your examination of the evidence, and that you accept the obligation to come to a rational conclusion. **Examples:** Parapsychologists violate this rule when they conclude, after numerous subsequent experiments fail to replicate initially positive psi results, that psi must be an elusive phenomenon. Believers in psychic power violate this rule when, after a "psychic" is caught surreptitiously bending a spoon with his hands, they claim that he only cheats *sometimes*. Eric Dingwall, in his article in *A Skeptic's Handbook of Parapsychology* (Prometheus, 1985), observes that "After sixty years' experience and personal acquaintance with most of the leading parapsychologists of that period, I do not think I could name a half dozen whom I could call objective students who honestly wished to discover the truth."

Replicability - A single experimental result is never adequate in and of itself, but is subject to the possibility of implicit bias, undetected error, coincidence, or even fraud. This rule requires independent observers to follow the same procedures and to achieve the same results. **Example:** Famous "psychic sleuth" Gerard Croiset allegedly solved numerous baffling crimes and located hundreds of missing persons. The truth is that the overwhelming majority of his predictions were either vague and non-falsifiable or simply wrong. Given his thousands of predictions, it is hardly surprising that by coincidence he enjoyed one or two chance "hits".

Sufficiency - The evidence offered in support of any claim must be adequate to establish the truth of that claim, with these stipulations: (1) the burden of proof for any claim rests on the claimant; (2) extraordinary claims demand extraordinary proof; and (3) evidence based simply upon authority and/or testimony is *always* inadequate for *any* paranormal claim. **Examples:** UFO proponents argue that because their claims have not been *disproved*, they are therefore true. And claims of UFO abductions demand more substantial evidence than merely the testimony of the "victims", and their support by so-called UFO experts/proponents.

In conclusion, I should note that passing all six tests does not, of course, guarantee that the claim is true (there might be new and disconfirming evidence tomorrow), but it does guarantee that you have good reason for believing the claim, and that your belief has not been filched from you. You may be required to change your belief tomorrow, if the evidence warrants, and you should be willing and able to do so. Such, after all, is the essence of skepticism: to believe if and only if the evidence warrants.

("Alleged Gov't UFO cover-up" continued from page 1)

government to mislead the public for over 40 years." Proof of this conspiracy, we are told, is contained in the "MJ-12" documents, which reveal that Presidents Truman and Eisenhower were briefed on the existence of crashed saucers and recovered aliens. Nowhere are we informed that the "MJ-12" documents have actually been conclusively shown to be counterfeit, and that their mixed military/civilian dating format is coincidentally the same idiosyncratic one used by Mr. Moore in his personal correspondence (see Philip Klass' three "MJ-12" exposes in *The Skeptical Inquirer*). And one of the article's accompanying photographs appears to be from the Hudson Valley, NY hoax case (see *Discover*, Nov. 1984).

The second article concerns Swiss UFO-contactee Billy Meier and his famous photographs, most of which show what appears to be a model either sitting on the ground or supported by a tree, and which were dismissed as hoaxes long ago by mainstream Ufologists. The article, by J. Randolph Winters, a Meier disciple, also contains much detail of the religious teachings of Meier's extraterrestrial friends from the Pleiades.

The third article, by Wendelle Stevens, recounts the alleged 1958 UFO abduction of Artur Berlet, a tractor driver in Brazil, who was taken to the ET's home planet "to see if he could help them with their agricultural projects". Berlet's memories of his visit, which were chronicled in "14 scholar's notebooks", are available from Mr. Stevens at P.O. Box 17206, Tucson, AZ 85710. You may send him \$16.95 (plus \$2.00 P&H) for the 224-page book entitled, UFO Contact From Planet Acart.

Article four is a transcript of Harder's Nov. 17 radio interview with reporter George Knapp of KLAS-TV, Las Vegas. Knapp has interviewed and endorses the claims of Bob Lazar, an MIT-trained scientist involved in clandestine government research being conducted aboard alien craft in the Nevada desert. Knapp believes that Lazar's credibility is enhanced by the fact that "We called MIT where he says he went to school and they had never heard of him. We called for his birth records and they had disappeared...as if someone was trying to make him a non-person." There is no indication that Knapp considered the possibility that perhaps Lazar may not have attended MIT, and may not have provided his real place and date of birth. To further enhance Lazar's credibility, Knapp reports that "Bob Lazar says the [one] saucer that he saw fly, he dubbed it the sport model, was the same saucer in the Meier photos, exactly the same...he saw the nine saucers, he said all nine of them were different, like we got the variety pack..." Although Knapp acknowledges that the Meier photos had been "pretty-much written off by the UFO community", he claims that "The photos...film footage and video had been analyzed" (presumably passing tests for validity), and that a "metal sample [from the UFO] had been confirmed as something we don't have - technology of cold fusion was used to produce this metal". No laboratory reports are offered to confirm these remarkable claims.

And last but certainly not least, Harder presents "The John Lear Document", written by the son of the designer

of the Lear jet, himself "a captain for a major US Airline" who "holds 17 world speed records in the Lear jet". Although Harder says that "We cannot comment on the contents except to say that we have verified that Mr. Lear is who he says he is", he reports that "many researchers... now feel that the 'Lear Document' may indeed have substantially correct information." The following is but a representative morsel:

"The EBEs [Extraterrestrial Biological Entities]... have a genetic disorder in that their digestive system is atrophied and not functional....In order to sustain themselves they use an enzyme or hormonal secretion obtained from the tissue that they extract from [abducted] humans...The various parts of the body are taken to various underground laboratories, one of which is known to be near the small New Mexico town of Dulce. This jointly occupied (CIA-Alien) facility [contains] huge vats filled with amber liquid with parts of human bodies being stirred inside...During the period between 1979 and 1983 it became increasingly obvious to MJ-12 that things were not going as planned...some, not all, but some of the nation's missing children had been used for secretions and other parts required by the aliens."

In seven pages of correspondence to Chuck Harder, I attempted to illustrate the need for skepticism in any "investigation" of this nature. Harder responded with such comments as, "You remind me of the General Motors folks I encountered when I exposed the GM Diesel Engine fiasco...Your letter is more of the same stuff. Pure nonsense." And, "[Philip] Klass makes his living from a magazine [*Aviation Week & Space Technology*] that is the mouthpiece for the military/ industrial complex. He is best served by keeping the lid on anything that would obsolete his present advertisers product line." And, "Not everybody is crazy. Many FAA certified ATC pilots are offended at being branded 'Goofy' for reporting what they see. John Lear is one of them who has said so on TV in Las Vegas on KLAS."

In his Jan. 9 letter to me, Harder says, "I'll be happy to grant you or any CSICOP person an on-the-air interview. As your 'type' has controlled the press and ridiculed the general public, I will also have on the phone a PRO-UFO expert at the same time. You can have at it for three hours." Harder was informed in my Jan. 23 letter that Philip Klass (Chairman of CSICOP's UFO Subcommittee) had accepted his offer. Klass wrote to Harder on Jan. 30 to confirm. But Harder has once again failed to fulfill such a promise (see his latest correspondence on page 7).

Harder's radio programs subsequent to Jan. 1 have included many discussions on UFOs, including one with George Knapp on February 23 during which Harder advised Knapp to "go to your nearby supermarket and pick up a copy of the [Mar. 6] *Weekly World News*. They've got a fascinating article this week about a supposed Soviet satellite photo...showing a World War II bomber on the moon." Harder reports 25,000 regular FTP subscribers, and response to his UFO theme has been so great that he has had to reprint his Winter magazine (\$15/yr. from "For The People", P.O. Box 101, Cedar Key, FL 32625).

Gary P. Posner

Book Review - by Jerry Touchton

Paradigms Lost, John L. Casti (William Morrow and Co., 1989)

There are a number of interesting, unsettled scientific issues in our time. This is a normal state of affairs in science. I often find students a bit disconcerted that we never seem to have the *final* answers to all the burning questions of life. But science is an inductive process, meaning that we gather evidence needed to build convincing theories. Since it is, in principle, impossible to examine every piece of potential evidence in the universe, we can never say that we have achieved absolute truth. The best we can do is to build powerfully explanatory theories and models, which provide useful predictions about the world we see. Absolute truth is for theology, not science.

Paradigms Lost is a fascinating book that explores some of those issues on which the evidence has not yet provided satisfying, well-accepted theories. In this well-written book, Casti, a mathematician with the Technical University of Vienna, examines the evidence on all sides of various scientific questions. He puts forward the issues as "claims", such as "Life arose out of a natural physical process taking place here on earth." He refers to the evidence in each case as the "defense" and the "prosecution", and presents it in language that an intelligent layman can understand. Completing the trial/jury format, he renders the "verdict" - telling on which side of the issue the most compelling evidence lies. This is strictly a matter of opinion, and I disagree with some of his verdicts, but the presentation of the evidence is much more interesting than the verdict anyway. Casti wants to do more than convince you that he is right - he wants to show you that these questions are genuinely worth an attempt to understand them. In this he succeeds admirably.

Casti recommends that you not start with Chapter One; it is a long and rather tedious review of the philosophical underpinnings of scientific activity, which might put the reader off a bit. He suggests starting with some of the claims first, to get an idea of how the game of evidence goes in science, and then later returning to the philosophy section. He also makes it clear that each of his six claims can be investigated separately; each chapter can be read independently. You can pick out the claims that interest you and dig in, without having to read the entire book.

One interesting chapter deals with the origins of life. I enjoyed this because Casti deals nicely with creationism. He finds that it utterly fails to follow the commonly accepted workings of science, and that it shows all the common characteristics of pseudoscience. He has praise for Judge Overton's decision in the Arkansas creationism trial, in which Overton summarized the criteria for what constitutes science: it is guided by natural law; it explains by reference to natural law; it is testable against the observable world; its conclusions are tentative, pending further evidence; it is falsifiable.

Falsifiability is the most difficult of these for most people to understand. Suppose I suggest that the world was created ten minutes ago. All the people, all the

physical world, are only ten minutes old. Our memories beyond ten minutes ago were created intact in our heads. Fossils were created right in the ground. The Grand Canyon was created with the appearance of being millions of years old. There is no way such an argument can, even in principle, be proven false, because the argument suggests that all evidence is deceptive. Clearly, the assertion is non-falsifiable, and beyond the realm of science.

There is one jewel in that intimidating first chapter, though. Casti compiles a fine list of the common characteristics of pseudoscience:

(1) It relies on anachronistic thinking, often digging up outmoded ideas that were dismissed by scientists years ago as inadequate.

(2) It seeks mysteries - real scientists rarely go looking for mysteries like the so-called Bermuda Triangle.

(3) It appeals to myths.

(4) It takes a casual attitude toward evidence, often arguing that a massive amount of poor evidence is as good as a little quality evidence.

(5) It makes non-falsifiable claims.

(6) It draws false similarities between itself and real science.

(7) It explains by scenarios, without regard for whether they are consistent with known natural laws.

(8) It treats scientific statements as being open to any and all interpretations, in much the same way that politicians often revise the meaning of their statements after the fact - meaning is blurred.

(9) It refuses to revise, which is vital in real science - it views criticism as rhetorical combat, not as a mechanism for progress.

Every single one of the criteria is met nicely by creationism. But this book deals with many more interesting claims: that human behavior is basically genetic; that machines can think; that there is intelligent life elsewhere in the universe. Each argument is fascinatingly presented in enough detail that you can form your own conclusion. You may disagree with Casti, but that will not stop you from enjoying this remarkable book.

* * * * *

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
- 4) *CompuServe Skeptics Teleconference* - computer forum for anyone with a CompuServe ID.
5000 Arlington Centre Blvd. - P.O. Box 20212
Columbus, OH 43220

READERS' FORUM

[Late note from Chuck Harder/"For The People"]:

Dear Dr. Posner: We have recently filed a "Freedom of Information Request" with NASA. I'm sure that you are aware that former astronauts have publicly stated that they have seen UFOs they believe to be extraterrestrial.

Also, I recently sent you the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS) report on the Soviet sightings. You may wish to advise the USSR of your position.

George Knapp of KLAS-TV was recently able to verify and obtain more gov't information on UFOs, and will be sharing that shortly.

The Belgian Government and Ministry of Defense cite that the UFOs recently seen there are not theirs or anyone else's. If you have the answers they would love to know. Don't tell them they are nuts, because they have too many radar and Belgian Air Force jet sightings.

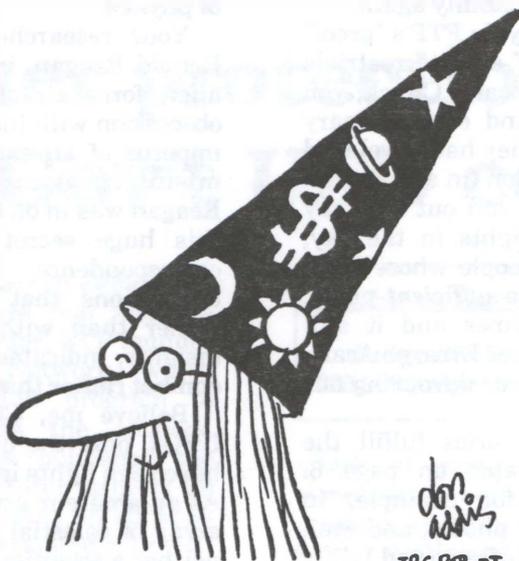
You may call in to the show and tell my audience of your position. The number is (800) 683-7861 toll free, from 2-5 PM EST Mon-Fri.

We doubt that NASA has any proof of ETI under wraps. The fact that foreign press reports, including UFO articles, are monitored by FBIS (a US gov't service) is hardly news; we knew that UFO reports are not confined to the US. Knapp has failed to reply to Phil Klass' letters regarding Knapp's errors about Klass in FTP's published interview. The Belgian situation is news to me, and I look forward to learning more about it. Harder's invitation to call his show (which is open to anyone) hardly makes up for his failure to fulfill his promises as reported in my page 1 article. --Ed.

libel suit against a skeptic who sought to discredit her psychic abilities, has won yet another round....Merrell sought to have the lawsuit dismissed, charging the \$25,000 judgement was a result of perjury, fraud and misrepresentation by Renier. However, his motion was denied when the same court found no such evidence. On the contrary, [Renier's] Tennessee attorney Edwin

Shoemaker's CONCLUSION in the Post-Trial Brief finds Merrell guilty of the very charges he made about Renier. Shoemaker states that Merrell "stepped over the line of fair and objective inquiry into the realm of distortion and fabrication. In short, when his research didn't turn out the way he wanted, he simply faked the results...changed the tone [and] meaning...put his own words into the mouths of people who never said them..."

Noreen Renier, 110 E. Evans St.
Orlando, FL 32804 (407) 898-9623



TBS REPORT

Dear Mr. Smiljanich: In response to your letter dated Feb. 13, please be advised that Noreen Renier is employed as a part-time, *adjunct instructor* in the Rollins College Center for Life-Long Education, a program which offers non-credit learning opportunities to the public. The instructional activity she is engaged in *does not confer faculty status at Rollins College* (emphasis added). Instructors in the Center's programs are recruited and employed by its director, Dr. Richard Bommelje, and report directly to him. I trust that this clarifies the matter...

Joan Straumanis, Ph.D.
Dean of the Faculty, Rollins College
Campus Box 2749, Winter Park, FL 32789-4496

[Excerpts from Noreen Renier's Feb. 23 Press Release]:
SKEPTIC FAILS TO DISCREDIT FLORIDA PSYCHIC
Noreen Renier, an Orlando psychic who won a \$25,000

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 \$ _____ .
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V2N4

("An Open Letter to Chuck Harder" continued from page 2)

example, the MJ-12 documents are forgeries, or that certain photographs are hoaxes?

Replicability is an easy test. If UFOs are regularly photographed by Ed Walters in Gulf Breeze, skeptics ought to be able to photograph them, too, and proof of alien visitation ought to eventually appear on the evening news. UFOs don't seem to be playing "hard to get", so how come they're so hard to get? What's that? They only appear when there's no "negative energy" around? There's that problem with **falsifiability** again.

Finally, there is the test of **sufficiency**. Is FTP's "proof" sufficient to establish the existence of extraterrestrials visiting the earth? As a consumer advocate, Chuck, you know that extraordinary claims demand extraordinary proof. If GM asked you to believe that they had developed a Cadillac that gets 500 miles to the gallon (in secret tests only), would you urge your readers to run out and buy one? Personal anecdotes of unusual lights in the sky, dubious photographs of saucers, and people whose birth records cannot be found do not add up to **sufficient** proof. Multiply that evidence a thousand times and it still wouldn't prove that aliens from the planet Erra, or Acart, or anywhere else are buzzing our skies or devouring our children.

Now let's see how FTP's saucer stories fulfill the criteria of **pseudoscience**, as enumerated on page 6. **Anachronistic thinking** is evident, for example, in dredging up the discredited Billy Meier photos, and even in the idea that the incredible numbers of reported UFOs could be "nuts and bolts" spacecraft (an idea dismissed years ago by the late Dr. J. Allen Hynek as far fetched, given the incredible distances involved).

"Pleiadians" from the planet Erra sounds like a borrowed **mystery and appeal to myth** from an old Flash Gordon serial I once saw. You wouldn't let GM officials get away with such a **casual attitude toward evidence**; you'd cross-examine them to the *n*th degree, and you know it. Your magazine contains a **massive amount of poor**

evidence, but none compelling. [The next criterion, **non-falsifiability**, has already been addressed.]

A physicist or a NASA employee with a credulous belief in UFOs, who accepts less than extraordinary evidence as proof of extraordinary claims, draws a **false similarity between his investigations and real science**. Chuck, can we reasonably hypothesize that a strange aerial light must be a Pleiadian saucer with cold fusion drive? As mentioned earlier, even Allen Hynek acknowledged that the ETI hypothesis for UFOs seems to necessitate a **scenario contrary to the known natural laws of physics**.

Your researcher's article in your magazine quotes Ronald Reagan, in a U.N. speech, as asking, "Is not an alien force already among us?", in referring to "our obsession with [national] antagonisms" and the unifying impetus of an external threat. The author manages to **misinterpret and blur the meaning** by inferring that Reagan was in on the MJ-12 conspiracy and decided to let this huge secret slip out in his speech. And your correspondence with Gary Posner, replete with accusations that you are being personally ridiculed rather than with relevant responses to his skeptical insights, indicates that you **view criticism as rhetorical combat rather than as a mechanism for progress**.

Believe me, Chuck, I'm not ridiculing believers in UFOs, only the quality of the "evidence". Many people have seen lights in the sky that they couldn't understand. As an amateur astronomer, I can attest to the confusing array of celestial objects, satellites, etc. Like you, I am neither a scientist nor an armchair expert on UFOs, trick photography, optical illusions, hypnosis or psychology. I'm just a consumer who appreciates hard-nosed skeptics like Phil Klass (when it comes to UFOs) and Chuck Harder (when it comes to General Motors).

Chuck, I look forward to the Spring issue of *For The People*, for its useful consumer advice, though I suspect that its UFO articles will be as sad as the Winter ones. I hope that your 24 pages on "suppressed cancer cures" will be better researched. If not, we may "talk" again.



6219 Palma Boulevard #210
St. Petersburg, Florida 33715

FIRST CLASS

Next Meeting: Saturday, April 28 — 12:00 P.M.
Tampa Central Library, 900 N. Ashley Dr. (Carmen Manis Room - 2nd floor)
Scheduled: Open forum (Q: Will Noreen Renier agree to be tested there?
A "Press Release" will follow if she does.)



6219 Palma Boulevard #210
St. Petersburg, Florida 33715

March 21, 1990

ADDENDUM TO "TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS REPORT" - SPRING, 1990

By Gary P. Posner, Editor and Publisher

The Spring issue of "TBS Report", featuring extensive coverage of Chuck Harder's "For the People" radio program and magazine, has created a firestorm. In the interest of fairness and full disclosure, after discussion with Mr. Harder, I wish to make our readers aware of the following clarifications, which are factual and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Chuck Harder regrets that due to his overwhelming workload, his letters to me were not as responsive as they could have been to the points raised in my letters. I regret that I did not telephone Mr. Harder prior to publication of the current "TBS Report" to inform him that the newsletter would deal largely with his organization's recent UFO activities.

Had I called, I would have been informed that since late 1989, Mr. Harder is no longer owner/CEO of the Sun Radio network, which has been purchased by another company. Peoples Network, Inc., doing business as "For the People", is recognized by the IRS as a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, from which Harder receives a very modest weekly paycheck. Most of Harder's income is derived from his employment by the Sun Radio Network as an on-air talent.

Had I called, I would have been informed that FTP's "UFO Contact List" will appear in their Spring magazine, and that CSICOP is included. Harder explains that when he referred last August to "our upcoming magazine", he was

not referring to the upcoming Winter Issue, which had already been completed, but to the upcoming Spring Issue, which he was then working on (he works one or two issues ahead).

Although Harder did not inform me of the following in his letter of response to my Jan. 1 letter of complaint, he now informs me that he was originally not even scheduled to broadcast a show on January 1. He put the three-hour UFO program together with only a few hours notice, and thus it was not the show that he had planned to do. Had he attempted to reach CSICOP that day to arrange for an interview, it would have been impossible to reach them, since their office was closed.

Regarding the 1947 Roswell incident, people who have stated that they are first-hand witnesses have appeared on national television, giving accounts of either having seen the wreckage or being aware of a government cover-up. They include Walter Haut (USAF public information officer) and Major Jesse Marcel. In addition, the wife of the late AF pilot Cmdr. "Pappy" Henderson has stated on national TV that her husband had flown cargo which included alien bodies and/or wreckage.

Regarding the Billy Meier case, there are three books in print that do not dismiss the matter as a hoax. Additionally, George Knapp's two-hour documentary entitled "UFOs: The Best Evidence", produced in 1989 by KLAS-TV, Las Vegas, contains an interview with private investigator Lee Elder, who says he spent five years investigating the case (including months in Switzerland with Meier), and who concludes with 98% certainty that the case is genuine. Harder also points out that both Gary Kinder and Lt. Col. Wendelle Stevens have been to Switzerland, have studied the Meier case, and do not believe it to be a hoax. I am not aware of any UFO investigators who have gone to Switzerland and have concluded that the matter is a hoax.

Regarding the Ed Walters/Gulf Breeze case, Harder notifies me that for \$10, one may obtain from the Gulf Breeze Sentinel a prepared package which includes UFO photographs taken by other local residents. The March 11, 1990 issue of the Pensacola News Journal quotes other locals who claim to have been skeptics until seeing UFOs for themselves.

The Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), mentioned on p. 7 of our newsletter, is a CIA information gathering organization.

I acknowledge that in the course of my "book review" of the Winter "For the People" magazine, I did not interview any of the authors of the articles contained therein.

A constructive dialogue has now been established between Harder and myself, including exchanging of materials between us (Harder has generously supplied me with newsclippings, and a tape of Knapp's TV documentary). There is discussion of my doing an on-air interview, and Harder also still plans to present a three-hour debate between Phil Klass and a pro-UFO researcher as soon as the Sun Radio Network is settled in its new quarters and is technically able to accomodate the program..

For those of you wishing to discover "For the People's" dally broadcast, the current station list is included [see next page].

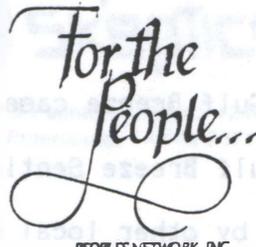
Since publication of TBS Report, "For the People's" phone # has been changed. The active numbers are:

Florida (800) 242-9968

National (800) 642-7861

BROADCAST STATION LIST

Call your station for schedule.



PEOPLES NETWORK, INC.
a Non Profit Corporation
POST OFFICE BOX 109
CEDAR KEY, FLORIDA 32825

For Home Satellite Antenna owners, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope requesting an instruction sheet telling where and how to receive our program nationwide.

STATE	CITY	CALL	FRQ.		STATE	CITY	CALL	FRQ.	
ALASKA	Anchorage	KENI	550	am	MISSOURI	Bolivar	KYOO	1200	am
ALABAMA	Montgomery	WACV	1170	am	MISSISSIPPI	Saint Louis	WGNU	920	am
ARKANSAS	Jonesboro	KBTM	1230	am		Crystal Springs	WCSP	590	am
CALIFORNIA	Anaheim	KORG	1190	am		Laurel	WLAU	1430	am
	Mendocino	KPMO	1300	am		Natchez	KAIN	1040	am
	Palm Desert	KNWZ	1270	am		Tupelo	WTUP	1490	am
	West Hills	KWNK	670	am	MONTANA	Billings	KBLG	910	am
FLORIDA	Chipley	WBGC	1240	am	NORTH CAROLINA	Aberdeen	WQNX	1350	am
	Clearwater	WEND	760	am		Fair Bluff	WJHB	1480	am
	DeLand	WXVQ	1490	am		King	WKTE	1090	am
	DeFuniak Springs	WZEP	1460	am		Lexington	WLXN	1440	am
	Fort Walton Beach	WFTW	1260	am		Rocky Mount	WEED	1390	am
	Gainesville	WGGG	1230	am		Weldon	WSMY	1400	am
	Kissimmee	WMJK	1220	am		Whiteville	WTXY	1540	am
	New Smyrna Beach	WCCZ	1550	am	NEVADA	Laughlin	KROL	870	am
	Punta Gorda	WCCF	1580	am	NEW YORK	Lockport	WLVL	1340	am
	Sanford	WNSI	1400	am		Schenectady	WVKZ	1240	am
	Saint Augustine	WFOY	1240	am	OHIO	Bellevue	WNRR	92.1	fm
	Tallahassee	WTAL	1450	am		Jackson	WKOV	1330	am
	Vero Beach	WTTB	1490	am	OKLAHOMA	Blackwell	KOKB	1580	am
GEORGIA	Camilla	WCLB	1400	am	OREGON	Saint Helens	KOHI	1600	am
	Garden City	WNMT	1520	am	SOUTH CAROLINA	Clemson	WCCP	1560	am
	Vienna	WWWN	1550	am		Greenville	WFBC	1330	am
IOWA	Clinton	KCLN	1390	am	TENNESSEE	Chattanooga	WGOW	1150	am
IDAHO	Idaho Falls	KID	590	am		Oak Ridge	WORI	1550	am
ILLINOIS	Chicago Heights	WCGO	1600	am	TEXAS	Amarillo	KFNS	1360	am
	Crete	WTAS	102.3	fm		Bellville	KACO	1090	am
	Harrisburg	WEBQ	1240	am	UTAH	Ogden	KJQN	1490	am
	Herrin	WJPF	1340	am	VIRGINIA	Norton	WNVA	1350	am
	Metropolis	WRIK	750	am		Onley	WESR	1330	am
	Murphysboro	WINI	1420	am	WASHINGTON	Tacoma	KLAY	1180	am
INDIANA	Fort Wayne	WGL	1250	am	WISCONSIN	Port Washington	WGLB	1560	am
	Mount Vernon	WPCO	1590	am		Ripon	WCWC	1600	am
	Noblesville	WYIC	1110	am	WEST VIRGINIA	Bluefield	WKOY	1240	am
KENTUCKY	Paducah	WRIK	98.3	fm					
LOUISIANA	Gonzalez	WSLG	1090	am					
	Lake Charles	KAOK	1400	am					
MASSACHUSETTS	Lowell	WCAP	980	am					
	Springfield	WSPR	1270	am					
	West Yarmouth	WOCB	1240	am					
MAINE	Lincoln	WTOX	1450	am					
	Sanford	WSME	1220	am					
MICHIGAN	Caro	WKYO	1360	am					
	Escanaba	WBBC	680	am					
	Gaylord	WSNQ	900	am					
	Grand Rapids	WYGR	1530	am					