

Tampa Bay Skeptics

REPORT

VOLUME 3 NO. 3 WINTER 1990-91

A critical inquiry into several statements of Richard Hoagland

by Gary P. Posner

Richard C. Hoagland is the author of *The Monuments of Mars*, which purports that the "face" and several other Martian features are artificially constructed. Largely self-educated, Hoagland has made a career in science-related endeavors, his resume occupying several pages of the "Publisher's Foreword" to his book. And as "science advisor" to Chuck Harder's Florida-based *For The People* radio show, Hoagland, a gifted and knowledgeable speaker, has acquired a weekly forum for his fringe-science views.

My initial inquiries had concerned the first of Hoagland's two 1990 presentations at the NASA Lewis Research Center (see our Summer '90 issue for a related discussion). On the July 13 FTP program, Hoagland reported that as NASA's Dr. John Klineberg introduced him, he credited Hoagland's research with playing a role in the President's decision that we should return to Mars. But Klineberg informs me that his remark was "of insufficient gravity to be quotable" since he has "no insight" into any such connection. Lewis' Director of External Affairs, A. F. Forestieri, says, "I understand [the remark] was made with tongue in cheek."

Hoagland also said on July 13 that his second NASA/Lewis invitation was to address a Sept. 11 "major national NASA education conference." On Sept. 17 he described "a packed auditorium full of teachers and scientists and engineers and educators," and said that NASA's Dr. Eddie Anderson had "made a very big point of congratulating me, of expressing his interest in our work." But according to Forestieri, "This conference...[of] the NASA/Oklahoma State University Aerospace Education Services Project...was attended by about 50 people... To say that this was a 'major NASA education conference' and that 'the auditorium was full' would be stretching it a bit...[Anderson's] comment to me when I asked him your question was that he was just being a genial host in expressing interest in Mr. Hoagland's findings."

Hoagland also announced on Sept. 17 that NASA was

preparing a three-part "miniseries" on his presentations, entitled *Hoagland's Mars*, to air on PBS. He added, "I and Carl now both have our own miniseries," as if to compare his to Sagan's award-winning *Cosmos*. On Nov. 9 Hoagland said that NASA told him that day that "the first installment" will be sent by satellite to PBS on 1/6/91. I had learned from NASA four days earlier that there is to be only this single 30 minute show (NASA/Lewis provides half-hour programs weekly to PBS, although few stations seem to air them). A disclaimer will distance NASA from the views expressed in *Hoagland's Mars*.

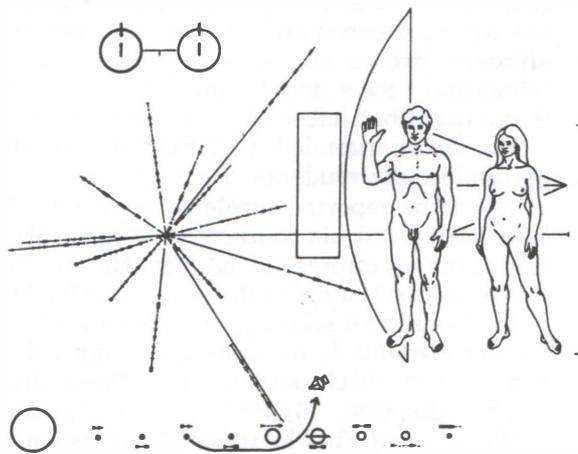
On July 6, Hoagland had accused *Omni* magazine of "the height of editorial irresponsibility" by "ascribing to Carl Sagan the work on...the pyramids and all the other things that are there," in its July article about a hypothetical Mars Rover mission to the site of the 'face.' But the article refers to the 'face' as merely a "mesa...named for its resemblance to human features," not as man-made. And there are no references to Hoagland's "work," although Sagan does refer metaphorically to the region's mile-high mountains as "beckoning pyramids."

Speaking of Sagan, the Pioneer 10 plaque and its elegant message (see insert) have always to me epitomized his poetic genius. Hoagland says that, "Carl for many years has been taking public credit for the Pioneer 10 plaque which, of course, Eric Burgess and I conceived" (July 13), although "Carl...was involved [with us] in the design of [the] message" (Nov. 16). In the "Publisher's Foreword" to Hoagland's book we find this:

"Among Hoagland's most valued contributions to history and science is the conception, along with Eric Burgess, of Mankind's First Interstellar Message in 1971, an engraved plaque carried beyond the solar system by the first man-made object to escape from the sun's influence, Pioneer 10. Hoagland and Burgess took the idea to Carl Sagan who successfully executed it aboard the spacecraft and acknowledged their creation in the prestigious journal *Science*."

Sagan and fellow astronomer Frank Drake assure me that they, with an assist from Linda Sagan, designed the plaque and its message, with no input at all from Hoagland or Burgess. In a "Note" of acknowledgements at

(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

Editorial Office:
6219 Palma Blvd. #210
St. Petersburg, FL 33715
(813) 867-3533 (Mon-Fri 9-5)

Editor and Publisher:
Gary P. Posner

Cartoonist:
Don Addis

\$10/yr. (4 issues)

(c) 1990 All rights reserved.
Press may quote if
appropriate credit given.

Interview with John Bouseman, Ph.D.

by TBS Vice-Chairman Miles Hardy

In her August 24 *St. Petersburg Times* article, columnist Diane Mason reported on a Clearwater meeting of UFO enthusiasts, sponsored by Caryl Dennis, a colorologist (one who studies the effects of color). Quoted briefly in the article was John Bouseman, a philosophy and psychology professor at Hillsborough Community College in Tampa. Explaining his presence at this meeting, Bouseman said, "I chase the nature of reality in my philosophy classes and I'm here chasing reality." Given his academic credentials and his position as a college professor, and given the vagueness of his reported comments, I arranged an interview with Dr. Bouseman for October 5, to clarify his position, hear his beliefs and scientifically assess his data.

John Bouseman is a pleasant, heavy-set man who appears to be in his late fifties. He is obviously intelligent, well-read and sincere. He has a good command of language and speaks with controlled deliberation. He is far from dogmatic, stating, "I have formed some suspicions about some things over the past fifty years."

Dr. Bouseman's career began as a fundamentalist, and he describes how, at age 12, he experienced an actual physical push from behind, moving him to the alter rail, although no one was behind him. Later that night he heard his name called "in my head" two or three times. During the next five years he recalls having two "out of body experiences" while attending church services. During his college years he lost much of his fundamentalist faith, the loss of which still disturbs him. He has since found himself being nearly thrown out of fundamentalist congregations, and is now currently happy in the Episcopal church. He denies having experienced any "non human" person or any "personal" contact with God, although five or six years ago there was an incident which bordered on the "abnormal." Says Bouseman, "I felt the physical presence beside me of a young friend that I had left some time before. I don't know what this means."

Bouseman attended the UFO meeting after having heard about it from one of his philosophy students. He had seen a video, *The Truth About UFOs*, and believed the reported incidents were probably true. He had read a book about Billy Meier and his contacts with extraterrestrial beings in Switzerland, which also made an impression on him. He also believes that there was an attempt to "scramble the brains" of the people involved in a UFO research center in Nevada.

Dr. Bouseman states that, "I have a Ph.D. in religious studies, and have even weaker credentials in philosophy than I do in psychology. No university would hire me to teach either." His three degrees are all in religious studies, emphasizing that, "My Ph.D. is not a degree in philosophy at all."

When asked what he thought was the purpose of the visits by extraterrestrials, Bouseman stated that he had read all of Ruth Montgomery's books, including one, *Heralds of the New Age*, which deals with ETs who choose to be born through humans, and ETs who move into the "egos" of disillusioned and burned-out individuals, thereby initiating a new enthusiasm within them. These books, he says, also claim that calamity is coming sometime around the end of this century: "The earth will shift on its axis." The books state that UFOs are stashed around the earth anticipating this calamity, invisible to us on a different material level.

He has also read books such as *Edgar Cayce on Atlantis* and *The Descent of Man*, which suggest to him that, "Maybe we are talking about different realities, and if that's true, we could chase all day in this reality and not find the other. Perhaps with all the effort to scan the galaxy for radio signals, they may be looking in the wrong place. The presence of this other presence may be invisible and unmeasurable with traditional scientific tools."

Bouseman discusses with some knowledge of physics the search for subatomic particles that seem to influence matter but have no substance of their own,

(continued on page 5)

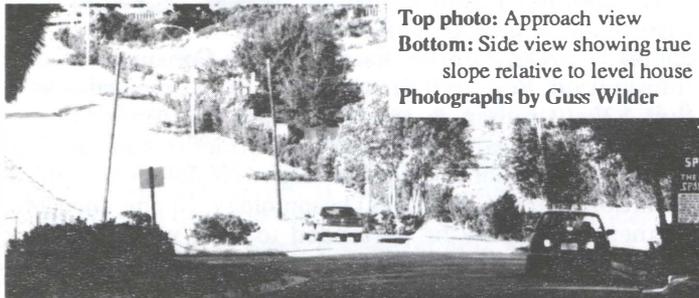
Do cars really roll up "Spook Hill"?

Spook Hill, where cars seem to drift uphill, received national press in a front-page *Wall Street Journal* article on Oct. 25, and in a Nov. 5 segment on the CBS Morning News with Charles Osgood. This "piney pitstop of the paranormal," as it is referred to in the *WSJ* piece, lies 50 miles to the south of Orlando, in the town of Lake Wales.

The *WSJ* reported that the Spook Hill Beautification Committee has convinced state and local legislators to provide \$32,000 for "new signs, a tourist information center and a parking lot." Arch Abernathy, City Editor for the *Lake Wales Daily Highlander* and a member of the Committee, tells *TBS Report* that, in his opinion, the hill is simply "an optical illusion." Says Abernathy, "It's a free attraction. We have a lot of fun with the [ghost] legends, and just enjoy people coming over."

Addressing the concern that Spook Hill might become a profit-making venture, Abernathy assured *TBS Report* that, "There will be nothing of that sort in our lifetime." The money, he says, is for necessary improvements so that the hundreds of cars per weekend will not continue to clog the narrow roadway.

TBS member Guss Wilder reports that the contours of the approach road and surrounding land create the illusion of a small dip at the designated "stop point," from which cars drift backward, seemingly uphill. From other vantage points, however, it was apparent that the true low point is actually *behind* the "stop point," adjacent to an appropriately placed storm drain.



Top photo: Approach view
Bottom: Side view showing true slope relative to level house
Photographs by Guss Wilder



UFO flap sweeps Belgium

Another front-page *Wall Street Journal* article, on October 10, discusses the recent flurry of reports of a triangular-shaped UFO over Belgium. The Flemish press is laughing, but the reports are being generated by military as well as civilian witnesses, and include radar cases and, says physicist Leon Brenig, "at least one [photograph] that is well worth investigating." A March 30 sighting involved an object which, according to Brenig, demonstrated acceleration too rapid for any human to withstand. Adds Air Force Col. Wilfried de Brouwer, who is coordinating the investigation, two F-16 pilots sent to follow the UFO "think it was something special."

TBS Report contacted J. Dommanget of the Observatoire Royal de Belgique in Brussels, whose Oct. 26 response included several newspaper articles. Says Dommanget, who also heads a skeptics group in Brussels, "As you can see, there is no 'strong evidence' of any extra-terrestrial object. One just may say that there has been an abnormal observed phenomenon in eastern Belgium. Moreover, we heard later that the Belgian Air Force did not want to pursue in investigating that problem." We await the definitive findings of the Belgian authorities.

Merrell vs. Renier Update

Since our last issue, Orlando "psychic" Noreen Renier filed on Sept. 21 a counterclaim against Tennessee skeptic John Merrell. In "Count I - Slander," Renier alleges that since her Oregon libel judgement against him, Merrell has "maliciously and recklessly published... false and defamatory words with the intent to injure... Specifically [Merrell] has called [Renier] a phony, fake, liar, dishonest...[Renier] has suffered mentally and suffered damage to her reputation." Count II alleges that Merrell "has continued to contact [Renier's] employers, clients and others" with intent to "destroy and/or interfere with" her business relationships. During a Nov. 30 hearing on a motion by Merrell to dismiss the countersuit, the judge allowed that Renier is free to begin taking depositions in support of her claims.

In clarification of a fact reported in our last issue (to which Renier's attorney took exception), Merrell, relying on information from his attorney, confirms that the judge did indeed deny a motion by Renier to dismiss Merrell's lawsuit, but then interpreted the motion as one to strike the claim for punitive damages, which he then granted. Merrell must now file affidavits or other sworn testimony to support an amendment to claim punitive damages.

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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

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

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

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

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

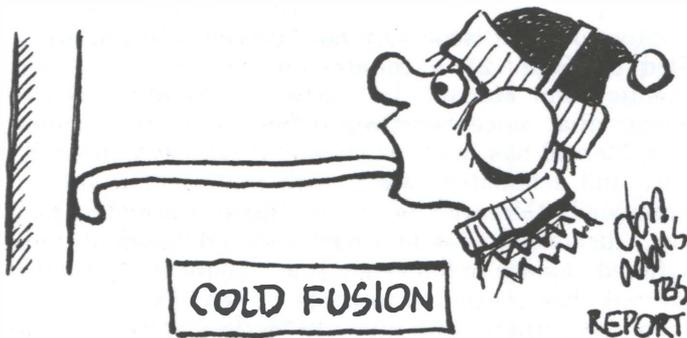
BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Gary P. Posner, Terry A. Smiljanich, Paschal N. Strong (USF Dept. of Psychology, Tampa)

SNIPPETS

Citizens for Excellence in Education (CEE), a California-based group with 550 chapters across the country dedicated to removing evil influences from the public schools and reverting them to "Christian control," sells a Public School Awareness Kit for \$195 to assist those wishing to exert political pressure. The kit contains cassette tapes, books, and helpful tips such as how to write a letter without getting angry and using bad words. (St. Pete. Times, Sept. 23)

On the eve of a scheduled meeting at the University of Utah, convened by the state's Fusion Energy Advisory Council to review the validity of the "cold fusion" research pioneered there by Drs. Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischmann, neither of the two principals was anywhere to be found. Fleischmann had earlier returned home to England for medical treatment, and did not show. Pons reportedly left town abruptly only a few weeks before the scheduled review, uprooting his young son from school, and placing their home up for sale. [Charles Osgood, in his CBS radio commentary, noted that although "cold fusion" power appears otherwise a flop, it did accomplish one thing - it made a scientist disappear!]

(AP / St. Pete. Times, Oct. 26)



The apparent ability of "cold fusion" power to cause scientists to disappear may be merely transient. At the rescheduled review meeting in Utah, Pons rematerialized, having reportedly been in France. Although he attended the closed meetings, Pons refused comment to the press.

(AP / St. Pete. Times, Nov. 8)

It would appear that a group of the world's "political and moral leaders" has determined that God is not omnipotent. Saith notables such as Czechoslovakia's president Vaclav Havel in the "Oslo Declaration" on the state of hatred in the world, "because hatred is willed by man, God himself is unable to stop it."

(St. Pete. Times, Oct. 13)

Perhaps as a result of hearing the above news about God's limitations (or perhaps not), the American Society of Internal Medicine has decided that prayer therapy ought not be considered a reimbursable health care expense. The ASIM statement, while recognizing the

right to freedom of religion, cautioned against reliance of prayer alone over conventional medical therapy.

(Internal Medicine News, Nov. 1-14)

Medical reporter Carol Gentry notes that the AIDS scare "has opened new vistas of profit...to make a killing off the dying" through dubious medical therapies. Referring to an article in the *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel*, Gentry tells of Basil Wainwright, "a convicted con man from England," who sells a machine for \$8,500 (to chiropractors, massage therapists, and others in the "alternative health care" industry) that blows ozone into the vagina or rectum to cure AIDS, cancer, Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's. Patients are then charged from \$35 to \$100 per treatment. Gentry also writes that, according to the report of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the two case reports of AIDS allegedly successfully treated earlier this year with hyperthermia were erroneous. "Both patients remained HIV positive, with no change in their condition. The young man who claimed to have been cured of Kaposi's sarcoma [as prominently reported on CNN] never had it to begin with," reports Gentry.



In another column dealing with medical quackery, Gentry quotes Dr. John Renner, founder of the Consumer Health Information Research Institute in St. Louis, who says that \$25-40 billion is spent annually by Americans on worthless medical products and treatments such as fetal sheep cell injections, eyeball analysis (iridology), colonics, chelation therapy, and (yes) bosomology. In one anecdote, Renner told of how he pretended to have written a book on "moonbeam therapy" (which explained how the brain is composed of pools of fluid that are affected by the moon's gravitational pull). He said that when he contacted a New York public relations firm to set up a book tour, he was sent a contract!

(St. Pete. Times, Sept. 18 & Oct. 2)

From our "Here We Go Again!" Department: In a small Greek Orthodox cathedral in Queens, New York, a painting of a saint is reportedly weeping, drawing onlookers (and donations?) from across the country.

(NY Times / St. Pete. Times, Nov. 5)

Research published in the journal *Lancet* indicates that a group of patients in a "near-death" state perceived the presence of a strong light, sometimes at the end of a tunnel, and a sense of floating above their bodies. However, a control group of patients who only *believed* they were near death recounted similar experiences.

(Reuters / St. Pete. Times, Nov. 11)

| Please send your Snippets to the editor at TBS_Report |

'Hoagland's statements' (continued from page 1)

the conclusion of the 2/25/72 *Science* article, Burgess and Hoagland are credited with "the initial suggestion to include some message aboard Pioneer 10." But as Hoagland acknowledges on page 98 of his own book, it was actually Burgess who first said to Hoagland, "It ought to carry a message" (although on the next line Hoagland claims that *he had already thought of the idea*).

Burgess, who was with the *Christian Science Monitor*, told me: "I came up with the idea...And I mentioned it to Hoagland [then a freelance writer] and Don Bane [*L.A. Herald Examiner*]...And I said that the right man to get this on board would be Carl Sagan. So I went around to JPL - Hoagland was in tow with me - and found Sagan... and I said, 'Hey, Carl. I've got an idea for you...' All Hoagland did was support me and say it's a good idea."

Hoagland also spoke on July 13 about "a groundswell of official NASA interest" in his Mars findings. But NASA's Forestieri says, "To my knowledge, there is no 'official' interest in any of Mr. Hoagland's claims." And elaborating upon this is Dr. David Morrison, Chief of the Space Science Division at NASA's Ames Research Center:

"...there is no 'NASA position' on either Hoagland or the 'Face.' NASA is not a monolithic organization, and the 'Face' is not an issue of any particular interest to NASA management...I speak only for myself...[and not as] an official NASA spokesperson.

Clearly Lewis Research Center makes its own decisions concerning outside speakers. They are not a Center with any direct involvement in Mars science or exploration, and they may have known little about either Hoagland or the 'Face' controversy when they invited him. My only regret is that Hoagland...a self-publicist...should be using this event as justification for his bizarre ideas...

...Speaking for myself only, as a planetary scientist...I certainly know of no evidence for a 'groundswell' of either interest or support for Hoagland within NASA...I know of no one in the scientific community, or who is associated with the NASA Mars Science Working Group, or who is working on Mars mission plans at such NASA Centers as Ames, Johnson, or JPL, who ascribes even the smallest credibility to...his weird ideas about Mars."

Hoagland and Chuck Harder have also been promoting a perpetual energy machine (the "N Machine" - see Fall '90 *Skeptical Inquirer*). Hoagland's studies indicate to him a connection between the "Monuments of Mars," the earthly "crop circles," and the physics governing the "N Machine." He said on Nov. 9 that, "If you carefully read the *Skeptical Inquirer*, they...take potshots but they never do the experiments." [Note: Dr. Cumming's *S.I.* article discusses his experiments.] *FTP* has published a book on the machine, which Hoagland edited. I am attempting to arrange for Cumming to receive the book and then be interviewed on Harder's radio program.

I wrote to Hoagland on November 15, informing him of the information to be presented in this article and offering him an opportunity to respond for publication, but as of press time (one month later) I have not received a reply. He had responded within a week to my Oct. 2 letter, in which I had asked for clarification of his role in "conceiving" the Pioneer 10 plaque, the names of any NASA scientists who find his Mars data persuasive, and

whether or not he had ever attended college, and if he is a "scientist" (as he is billed on *For The People*).

In his three-page reply (which we cannot print verbatim as he requested) Hoagland began by saying, "I am pleased with your concern for history..." He noted that the original "conception" that a message be placed aboard Pioneer 10 has led to "a veritable cottage industry" of plaques and recordings on subsequent spacecraft, and cited the "voluminous public record" linking Burgess and Hoagland. He did not name any NASA scientists who support his Mars claims, nor did he address my questions regarding his science education.

'Interview' (continued from page 2)

explaining that the mysteries of nuclear physics may in part support a different reality. He discussed "quantum leap," a theory to demonstrate the possible existence of multiple realities and parallel universes. He points out that these ideas are coming from physical scientists, not from UFO groups. He also discussed a theory, based on the idea of "Jung's Collective Unconscious," that dreams are representative of the mythology of our distant past and are imprinted in our genetic material. All organisms are tuned in to all others through this genetic field, and relate to each other from one field to another. I felt that Bouseman's selective use of physics, philosophy and psychology served to support rather than test his positions.

Bouseman said that his students' reaction to his unconventional ideas is "basically very favorable. I find that a lot of my philosophy students have read in this area, but not so many of my psychology students." He says, "At HCC, philosophy and religion courses are grouped together. One of my purposes in the class is to make every student a philosopher and have them think and wonder about what reality is. I've done my best to shake everybody up."

Dr. Bouseman repeatedly addressed the deep turmoil he felt on campus, trying to hold on to his fundamentalist beliefs. "I made a promise to myself that I will never, ever again depend upon what anybody else says, including ministers and professors. I am going to be the whole determiner of what I believe." I pointed out that he was not starting out at point zero with that new promise, but that the objectivity of his thinking was still being affected by his earlier fundamentalist programming. Said Bouseman, "Most of my life I have not really had a deep connection with people I could talk to."

As I interviewed Dr. Bouseman, I found myself liking this gentle, sincere, multi-disciplined scholar. I felt that his personal search was an attempt to fill a spiritual vacuum, and to make up for the disillusionment of false teachers and idols. His subsequent mastery of philosophical ideas may have prepared him for untethered insights into multiple realities. On the other hand, the same multi-disciplined search for personal answers appears to have failed to train him in the rigorous discipline of the scientific method. One can only hope that serious students in the sciences would be able to appreciate the different approaches.

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS CONSULTANTS

Melanie A. Banks, Ph.D.
University of Florida (U.F.) Food Science
and Human Nutrition Dept., Gainesville

The Rev. W. Thomas Leckrone
Episcopal priest
Hudson

Richard Manny, Pharm.D., R.Ph.
H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and
Research Institute, Tampa
U.F. College of Pharmacy, Gainesville

Charles R. Mathews, M.D.
Asst. Secretary for Health Services
Florida Dept. of Corrections, Tallahassee

James "The Amazing" Randi
Magician, author
MacArthur Foundation Fellow
Plantation

Jack Robinson, Ed.D.
University of South Florida (U.S.F.)
Astronomy Program, Tampa

Joseph L. Simon, Ph.D.
U.S.F. Biology Dept., Tampa

Joan Straumanis, Ph.D.
Dean of the Faculty, Rollins College
Winter Park

Paschal N. Strong, Ph.D.
U.S.F. Psychology Dept., Tampa

Jerry L. Touchton
Physics teacher, Brandon

Wilse B. Webb, Ph.D.
U.F. Psychology Dept., Gainesville

**Other skeptical sources
on the paranormal:**

- 1) *The Skeptical Inquirer* - flagship journal of CSICOP / Box 229 / Buffalo, NY 14215
- 2) *Free Inquiry* - secular humanist journal
Box 5 / Buffalo, NY 14215
- 3) *Prometheus Books* - 47-page catalogue
700 East Amherst St. / Buffalo, NY 14215
- 4) *CompuServe Skeptics Teleconference* -
a computer forum
P.O. Box 20212 / Columbus, OH 43220

**Randi writes of the wrongs
of Nostradamus**

James Randi's new book, *The Mask of Nostradamus*, blows the lid off the notion that the 16th century French astrologer and physician was also a prophet. Randi argues that among his myriad of allegorical "prophesies," there are only 103 cases in which Nostradamus actually mentioned dates, times, places, and people, and that in all of these instances his "predictions" turned out to be absolutely wrong.

**UFO sightings
throughout Europe...**

"Mystery shapes in the sky, variously described as orange balls, triangles and points of light, set off Europe's latest flying saucer scare," according to a Nov. 7 Reuters story. Sightings were reported the previous evening in France, Italy and Switzerland, as well as in Belgium, site of a recent major flap of triangular UFOs (see item on p. 3). Reuters says that in Belgium, "dozens of people reported a triangular object with three lights flying slowly and soundlessly," and that the Air Force was investigating.

...are explained

The *St. Pete. Times* reported on Nov. 10 that the French space agency has identified the source of the Nov. 6 European UFOs as the atmospheric re-entering of "the third stage of a Soviet booster rocket used on Oct. 3 to launch into orbit a...telecommunications satellite."

**"Crop Circles" profiled
in USA Today**

"There are no hoaxers in Leola, South Dakota," declares a confident Mutual UFO Network member in the November 15 *USA Today* piece on the "crop circle"

phenomenon. Reporter Maria Goodavage notes that when an 80-foot-long backward question mark was found swirled in a Dakota wheat field this summer, "many people rushed to call it a hoax." But UFO enthusiasts are having a literal field day claiming that since such "messages" are obviously of intelligent origin (as opposed to the result of swirling winds or other meteorological phenomena), they are most likely the work of UFO-nauts. The article concludes on this note, quoting Chris Rutkowski, coordinator of the Ufology Research Centre in Winnipeg, Canada: "The belief in UFOs is like a religious belief. We want to have some outer force to save us from ourselves. These crop circles are just what the doctor ordered."

**Senator Pell's aide claims
new 'backward technology'**

As reported in the *St. Pete. Times*, *Newsweek*, and no doubt elsewhere, C. B. Scott Jones, the \$50,000 per year psychic-seeking aide to Senator Claiborne Pell, claims that he and a group of psychologists are developing a "new technology" to reveal the hidden thoughts behind the spoken word. The technique involves playing audio tapes backwards, and noting any recurring normal-sounding words. While playing backwards some of President Bush's speeches on Iraq, Jones noted the name "Simone" on several occasions, prompting him to write to Defense Secretary Cheney to find out if this is a secret "code word that would not be in the national interest to be known." After being informed that such was not the case, Jones was reportedly reprimanded by Pell for having sent the letter ("Simone" is the way the word "enormous" sounds in reverse). Incidentally, Jones no-showed for the 1990 CSICOP conference in D.C., where he had agreed to substitute for Pell, who had earlier withdrawn.

LETTERS / READERS' FORUM

Editor: To properly promote our planned show with Philip Klass, we need sufficient lead time. We have not yet received the requested promotional photographs from Phil, and our October issue is now going to press. The next available issue in which to promote the show to our USA and overseas subscribers will be mailed in late December. Thus we need to get on track. If you want to do two shows, we can do one soon and still promote the other. The welcome mat is out. And your readers may call our show at (800) 878-TALK Mon-Fri from 2-5 PM Eastern.

Regarding your Kodak UFO tape item last issue, in the interest of fairness you should point out that Kodak placed many full-page ads for the tape in UFO magazines. I would imagine that Kodak viewed the tape prior, and was aware of its contents. You should also tell your readers that Kodak and other video distributors normally have rights to a film or show for a specific amount of time. Once that time passes, they no longer have the rights and stop distribution. The show in question may have gone into the "Classic" category, where a mainline distributor is no longer interested due to the small market. Often then the rights go to a classic distributor for a time, and then later may be sold to a mass-merchandise who subsequently floods the discount stores. "Oldies" record albums and videos are marketed in this fashion. Forgetting to mention this puts a bit of a "slant" on your contents.

Chuck Harder / *For The People*
Telford Hotel, 3 River Street
White Springs, FL 32096 (new location)

Harder's show with Klass has now been delayed until at least next spring, due to Klass' current 7 day/wk. work schedule. Harder has not taken me up on my offers to guest on his show and/or to provide him with a roster from CSICOP listing other possible guests available for interview. [Hoagland usually is on Fridays at 2 P.M.]

Regarding our Kodak UFO tape item, it is true that we did not write a treatise on mass-merchandising. But although Kodak, by distributing this tape, exhibited a willingness to make a buck off the UFO craze, we are informed by company representatives that Kodak played no role in the tape's production, and did not endorse

its pro-UFO contents. Kodak was unable to confirm that it placed the ads in question; its tape distribution business closed last year, and the department's personnel have left Kodak. Interestingly, this was the only tape listed under the catalogue's "Art/Science/History" heading that also appeared under "Entertainment." --Ed.

To TBS: Re: the recent *Wall Street Journal* article on "Spook Hill," consider this letter a vote for a proper investigation. It annoys me no end to see academics pontificating on something they haven't investigated, providing "solutions," and then saying, as does Professor Randazzo [Chairman of the Department of Geology at the University of Florida], that they have no time to investigate it.

George W. Earley
Mount Hood, Oregon

Please see our page 3 article. In response to our letter, Prof. Randazzo informs us that, "I was quoted out of context," and that, "I do not wish to involve myself in this foolishness any longer." --Ed.

To TBS: We are proud to inform you that a new organization has been set up in Argentina to investigate and debunk claims on pseudoscience. Our aims are similar to yours, and those of CSICOP. This is the first attempt to generate such an organization in this country...We felt the necessity due to the lack of alternative explanations being offered by the mass media...We would like to be in contact with other similar groups around the world...

Centro Argentino para la Investigacion y Refutacion
de la Pseudociencia (CAIRP)
Buenos Aires

We welcome CAIRP into the community of skeptics groups catalogued by CSICOP, which at last count number 38 (in 28 U.S. states), plus 33 elsewhere around the world. We have sent CAIRP our last six issues of TBS Report. --Ed.

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.

V3N3



Tampa Bay Skeptics Quarterly Membership Meeting

Scheduled features: *Inside Edition's* devastating investigative report on Howard Blum's "non-fiction" book, *Out There: The Government's Secret Quest for Extraterrestrials*

ABC-TV's *20/20* report on the "Crop Circles"

CNN's *Crossfire* debate on *Scientific American's* firing of a columnist because of his creationist beliefs

Also: Nominations and discussion re: annual Executive Council elections

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12 -- 11:00 A.M.
CARMEN MANIS ROOM (2ND FLOOR)
PUBLIC LIBRARY, 900 N. ASHLEY DR., TAMPA

* * * * *

Late Note:

Richard Hoagland announced on the Dec. 14 *For The People* program that, "...in the last 24 hours, NASA headquarters has put a stop on the production of *Hoagland's Mars*" (see p. 1). In an "unprecedented" move, NASA has decided to "review" again its contents. More next issue.

TBS "\$1,000 Challenge"

The Tampa Bay Skeptics is offering \$1,000 and a place in history to anyone able to provide TBS with verifiable proof of any paranormal phenomenon. We hereby extend an open invitation to any and all Florida UFOlogists, psychics, astrologers, and the like, to contact TBS for further details.

TBS logo T-shirts still available

A few TBS logo T-shirts remain in stock, made from Fruit of the Loom's top-of-the-line all-cotton Ts. They are available either in light blue or white, with logo in navy, in sizes M and L (S and XL sold out).

Please specify first and alternate choices, and enclose a check for \$10 each (plus \$3.00 P&H).

TBS Telephone Update Service

You may call us at (813) 867-3533 from 9 to 5 on weekdays, for information about any late-breaking TBS events, possible last-minute meeting changes, news of upcoming media coverage of the paranormal, etc., or just to leave us a message.

If you wish, you may continue to send a stamped return envelope for the mail Update Service.

Parlez-vous Francais???

NEEDED: Someone to translate several Belgian newspaper articles (on the UFO flap) from French to English. Please call or write TBS if you can assist us.



6219 Palma Boulevard #210
St. Petersburg, Florida 33715

FIRST CLASS