



# Tampa Bay Skeptics

## REPORT

VOLUME 3 NO. 4 SPRING 1991

## My fleeting role as an expert witness on psychic phenomena

by Miles Hardy, TBS Vice Chairman

*[Editor's note: An item in the St. Petersburg Times on November 16, 1990, entitled "Psychic Testimony," discussed how the "strange case of James Matevia got stranger" when his attorneys announced that they had secured "a specialist in psychic phenomena...to help the defense." Matevia was facing trial for the murder of a woman whom he believed was about to "neutralize his brain with a psychic attack." The defense expert was described as "a psychologist from the University of South Florida [who] will testify that a strong psychic attack actually can cause death." I immediately called Miles Hardy to see if he knew who this USF psychologist might be. Little could I have imagined that it was he!]*

Last November, Mr. Alldredge of the public defender's office in Tampa called me at USF to discuss an unusual case that he was defending in criminal court. The defendant, James Matevia, had killed a 76-year-old woman whom he had never met, by nearly decapitating her with a machete. The defendant admitted killing the woman in self-defense, claiming that she was "a sorceress" planning to "neutralize" his brain by "psychic attack."

Despite clear evidence of psychotic thought processes in which the defendant claimed to be able to travel through time and space without appearing to move, and his stating that the world "is populated with spies, drug agents and sorceresses who kill 3.5 million unborn babies," the court-appointed psychiatrist found him competent to stand trial, offering only the explanation that the defendant has "a strong belief system."

There have been many documented situations, historical and recent, of individuals killing themselves, being killed, and killing others as a result of their "strong belief system." Examples include biblical accounts such as Abraham's near sacrifice of his son Isaac, martyrs that have thrown themselves in front of chariots and trains, the Salem witch trials, and more recently, the Christian Science parents who have allowed their children to die because of their strong beliefs. It is very possible that the defendant, armed with a strong belief in psychic forces, and specifically the danger of "psychic attack," may have a plausible defense. I agreed to testify for the defense in that context.

Obviously, I do not believe in the existence of psychic forces attacking individuals, or supernatural forces affecting anything except through blind, closed and

irrational "belief systems." However, in his disturbed delusional system, the defendant does. Since the court-appointed psychiatrist had convinced the court that Mr. Matevia was not insane or psychotic, his only defense became one of "a strong belief in psychic forces." The *St. Petersburg Times* item missed the point completely - it is not a "psychic attack" that can cause death, but the belief in such an attack.

By trial date I had researched all available literature in the USF medical school library on deaths from voodoo and other strong beliefs, and was ready, with naive expectancy, to educate both the court and the interested public. The defendant was exuberant. He apparently believed that a USF professor was going to establish his defense by supporting the existence of psychic attacks, and paranormal phenomena in general.

Shortly before I was to testify, Mr. Alldredge explained to the defendant that, although I was providing a "defense" for him, I was not an advocate of psychic phenomena, and was actually very skeptical of the existence of psychic forces, or any paranormal phenomena. At that point, the defendant became so agitated that his attorney dismissed me. It appeared that I had become, in the defendant's eyes, a hostile witness, a disbeliever in his delusional world, who was not going to support his claim of self-defense in the face of "psychic attack."

The jury was out forty-five minutes. It found Matevia guilty of first-degree, premeditated murder. He is now serving a sentence of life plus twenty-five years.

## NCAHF warns of paralysis, stroke from chiropractic neck manipulations

The National Council Against Health Fraud, a non-profit consumer health advocacy group based in California, has been monitoring reports of paralysis and stroke resulting from chiropractic manipulations of the neck. Its Sept/Oct newsletter reported upon a case of quadraplegia, and in its Jan/Feb issue, reports of serious complications are cited from the Manitoba College of Physicians and Surgeons and the journal *Neurology*.

The following caution concludes its Jan/Feb article: "NCAHF continues to be concerned about the justification for forceful neck manipulation under any circumstances. It is doubtful that the procedure could survive

*(continued on page 8)*

**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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## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

Terry A. Smiljanich

Watching "smart bombs" flying through hangar doors, and cruise missiles following roads to their designated targets, we all marveled at the technological superiority of America as we followed recent events in the Middle East. Too often, however, that feeling of superiority translates into an assumption that only a highly educated and vastly literate society could produce such sophisticated weapons. There is little reason to be so smug. To most people, such technological wonders are simply magical "little black boxes" that work for reasons known only to a few members of the scientific and engineering "priesthood." In spite of our advances, many Americans are scientifically illiterate.

This fact was brought home to me recently when I attended a lecture at Eckerd College by Dr. Richard Leakey, who is arguably the foremost paleoanthropologist in the world. Director of the Kenya National Museum, which houses a majority of the significant fossils of human ancestry, Leakey, and his research teams, are responsible for several major finds of hominid fossils at Olduvai Gorge, Koobi Fora, and other locations in Africa. He is currently at the center of a juicy controversy surrounding the ancestry of man and the claims by Dr. Donald Johanson that "Lucy" (an Australopithecus afarensis found by him in Ethiopia) is the direct ancestor of modern man. Dr. Leakey is also Director of Wildlife for the government of Kenya, and is spearheading major efforts to save the African elephant from extinction.

Leakey had wanted to devote his lecture to a discussion of the evolution of man from "bipedal ape" to Homo sapiens, and the geological and climatic conditions that drove this process. He found himself, however, sidetracked by questions from the audience about creationism. He stated that the evolution of man and animals was a scientific fact, and that although creationism was bunk, he (a Kenyan) did not want to get drawn into American political questions concerning its teaching in public schools.

Later, at a reception in his honor, I could not believe my good fortune when I found myself engaged in a private conversation with this great man. I told him about the Tampa Bay Skeptics and some of our activities. He told me that on his lecture tour throughout America, he had met others belonging to similar organizations. When I asked him about creationists, he told me that the subject was always being brought up at his lectures, but that the creationists tend to give him "a wide berth." I detected in him much exasperation that creationism is such a "hot" topic in this country.

I learned an important lesson during my all too brief conversation with Dr. Leakey. Here was a Kenyan (by birth and citizenship) who had extracted from the ground precious clues about our past, and who had furthered our knowledge by leaps and bounds, yet who found himself on this tour through America always being drawn into discussions about a religious fundamentalist belief that all of paleontology was the work of Satan. I'm sure he did not return to Kenya with wonderful memories of this sophisticated and literate society.

As a postscript, during Gary Posner's and my recent appearance on a radio talk show, a caller called evolution the embodiment of "darkness." Although this may be an extreme position, I have found that many, if not most, of the people I talk to think of evolution as "just a theory," and

(continued on page 8)

## South Florida woman sues Home Depot for loss of "psychic" power

During a 1987 visit to a south Florida Home Depot store, Penny Pellito, who claims the power to see the future, was unexpectedly struck on the head by a piece of falling lumber. Explains Pellito, "My husband was recovering from a major heart attack, and I was doing his cardiac rehab for him through my pipeline. And for that reason I was not on 'automatic' when the wood hit me." As a result of the incident, Pellito claims to have lost her ability to undergo surgery without anesthesia.

Despite medical evidence that she had suffered no organic brain damage, and James Randi's skeptical testimony, the jury awarded Pellito \$1,200 for her ordeal, although they reportedly did not believe her "psychic" claim. Handling her appeal will be famed Miami attorney Ellis Rubin, who promises, "I'm going back to the history of the paranormal. I'm going to bring in experts..."

--Compiled from reports in the St. Petersburg Times,  
Tampa Tribune, and TV's A Current Affair

## Merrell vs. Renier update

As reported in our last issue, Orlando "psychic" Noreen Renier has filed a countersuit against Tennessee skeptic John Merrell, charging that Merrell has "maliciously and recklessly published...false and defamatory words with intent to injure" her, and that he "has continued to contact [Renier's] employers, clients and others" with intent to "destroy and/or interfere with" her business relationships. The next step in the legal process, called "discovery," entitles Merrell to obtain from Renier the specifics of her allegations, in written responses to "interrogatories," so that a defense may be prepared. In response to his December 7 interrogatories asking "When such publication occurred" and "To whom such publication was made," Renier's reply was, "Ask John Merrell." As to what were "The specific contents of the publication," Renier responded, "Ask John Merrell, he was the publisher." When asked to "Identify with specificity each and every instance where [Merrell] has continued to contact" employers and clients, Renier responded, "Unknown with any specificity. Please ask John Merrell. John Merrell claims to be acting in the public interest which is really a ruse to destroy Noreen Renier."

Renier's responses were produced on January 28, two weeks after deadline, following Merrell's filing of a "Motion to Compel" her compliance. An "Amended Motion

To Compel" filed on January 31 said in part, "In response to requests to specifically identify an individual with knowledge as to any facts upon which [Renier] relies, [Renier] either refuses to disclose such information or simply has none...plaintiff [Merrell] cannot respond intelligently to the vague and uncertain allegations contained in the Counterclaim...[Renier] has an obligation to plead specific facts and/or to respond with specific answers to the discovery so that this matter can proceed..."

Circuit Court Judge Frederick Pfeiffer then ruled that both parties may now proceed with depositions, 15 days after which Renier must elaborate upon her initial responses to the interrogatories and be prepared to disclose information to support the allegations contained in her counterclaim. Merrell tells *TBS Report* that Renier's allegations are "both groundless and fantasized."

Merrell also informs us that the taking of verbal depositions in the lawsuits has been delayed for six more weeks, due to the need for Renier's attorney to take a medical leave.

## Hoagland's Mars update

Although TBS is still awaiting a response from NASA, Richard Hoagland announced on the Feb. 22 *For The People* show that, as per a "form letter" being mailed from NASA to those who inquire, what Hoagland calls "their version of *Hoagland's Mars*" is now being completed, for distribution to PBS stations (see last issue). Hoagland has expressed concern that NASA's plan may be to re-edit his original presentation and "distort it in such a way that the subject looks silly."

Hoagland's claimed discoveries of a "city" (not just a "face") in the Cydonia region of Mars, and a mathematical message contained within the angles of its "monuments," have taken on a new importance in light of the recent war over oil reserves in the Persian Gulf. As Hoagland stated, "We now know that the message of Cydonia has to do with energy, an alternative to oil," relating to the so-called perpetual "N Machine" generator which, as Hoagland had explained on an earlier show, works by "reaching into space-time and converting direct electrical energy from the basic properties of the space-time continuum" through a "gate" to the "4th dimension."

Hoagland has implored his listeners, upon receiving their NASA form letter, to write back asking if NASA plans, on the program, to "test Hoagland's data and his hypothesis." If not, Hoagland cautions, NASA's airing of *Hoagland's Mars* may turn out to be a "cruel hoax on the American people."

### TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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## SNIPPETS

Largo "psychic" Barbara Jett (see Spring and Summer '89 issues of *TBS Report*) offered the *Tampa Tribune* some predictions for 1990, and now, says reporter Donna Vavala, "it's report card time...Jett predicted a long period of dryness followed by a 'tremendous amount of rain.' Oops. She also predicted a hurricane would come out of season - say in August - hitting the Panhandle. Oh, well...She saw a monument being erected in St. Petersburg. Strike three...There was supposed to be a female mayoral candidate in St. Petersburg..." For 1991, "she forecasts two severe hurricanes hitting close together during the season, but she didn't know where. Jett believes a baseball team will come to the Dome, but not an expansion team ["They'll be moving from some other place - like Oakland"]...She also sees another controversial trial, possibly a murder trial, that 'will keep people glued to their sets.'"

(*Tampa Tribune*, Jan. 1)



A man who practiced voodoo and black magic was murdered by his son, who said he feared that his father was going to kill every member of the family. The father kept a small urn in his private room, which the family believed to contain an evil spirit that the father trapped and controlled. Fearful that the judge would order the urn opened during the murder trial, the family hired Jean Kent, of North Palm Beach, to exorcise the spirit. Employing "a reading from the Bible, a rope with three knots and an incense burner that pumped out black smoke and soot," the ceremony, which took place in the office of the defendant's attorney, was reportedly a success. Said Kent, "I gave the spirit inside the urn a new owner and instructed it to do good from now on through Jesus and God."

(*St. Pete. Times*, Jan. 5)

And a Tampa man has pleaded guilty to the second-degree murder of his 5-year-old stepson, whom he believed to be possessed by the devil. Elio Cerezo was sentenced to 40 years in prison.

(*St. Pete. Times*, Jan. 5)

"Where have all the UFOs gone?," asks a Minnesota reporter. Perhaps to Gulf Breeze, Florida, an imaginary and obviously dim-witted *TBS Report* reader might answer, but let's hear what some *real* people have to say about the situation. Mark Rodeghier of the Hynek Center for UFO Studies says his organization is getting less than half as many reports as it did a decade ago. Herb Strentz, a journalism professor at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, says that the Air Force's closing of Project Blue Book in 1969, denying the media an official government source to comment on reported UFOs, contributed to their loss of interest. And Gary Fine, a sociologist at the University of Georgia at Athens, adds that scientists have never found any evidence to support claims of alien visitors, and that UFOs "got to be boring after awhile."

(*Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Trib. / St. Pete. Times*, Jan. 28)

Five children from two fundamentalist families in Philadelphia died from measles this winter. Although pneumonia and encephalitis are occasional complications, health officials investigated the possibility that a new, virulent strain of the virus might explain this tragedy. Considered a more likely explanation, however, is the parents' belief that prayer, rather than medical attention, is the appropriate treatment for illness. Defending his parishioners' actions, the Rev. Charles Reinert of the Faith Tabernacle Congregation told the flock, "We're only following what God directed is his word." One other child was taken to a hospital by health authorities, after a court order was obtained over the parents' objections.

(*Reuters / St. Pete. Times*, Feb. 17 & 18)

A shimmering image that some say resembled the Virgin Mary began to appear on a church wall for about one hour each day, attracting up to 2,000 miracle seekers per day to St. Dominic's Church in Colfax, California, a town of 1,000 inhabitants. As local businesses bustled, and church coffers presumably brimmed over, the last thing the locals wanted was a rational explanation for the "miracle." After physics professor James Phelps, an optics specialist at California State University at Sacramento, postulated that the multicolored vision was likely a natural reflection of sunlight from a light fixture, church officials acknowledged that yes, its hanging light fixtures had just been repaired one day before the image began to appear. Added the son of the church's administrator, "They put wire around the outside of the glass covers and other pieces of metal, various and sundry stuff." But Bishop Francis Quinn of Sacramento said that there were no plans to test Phelps' theory. And parishioner Freda Hoffman, who was assisting at the church, added, "We believe it is the Virgin Mary. We believe in it because we are Catholics."

(*AP / St. Pete. Times*, Dec. 9)

[ Please send your Snippets to the editor at *TBS Report* ]

DECEMBER 10, 1990 LINN'S STAMP NEWS

# Inquiring minds ought to know better: Feinstein steps up Mars sheetlet promotion

Judging from telephone inquiries and other information received here at Linn's, Alan Shawn Feinstein's shameless touting of the Sierra Leone

## Editor's Choice

By Michael Laurence

Face-on-Mars sheetlet has escalated.

The Rhode Island direct-mail maven now seems to be aiming his efforts at those who get their information from the supermarket tabloids.

In Editor's Choice for April 30 I told how Feinstein was recommending a souvenir sheet from the west African nation of Sierra Leone. The sheet is part of an expensive 37-stamp space set saluting the upcoming Observer mission to Mars.

This set, incidentally, is one of a handful of new stamp issues just blacklisted by a

Swiss-based combine of international stamp organizations. The Sierra Leone stamps are said to violate the philatelic code of ethics of the Universal Postal Union. Stamp blacklisting (which I oppose) was the subject of this column two weeks ago.

The Sierra Leone sheetlet, illustrated as Figure 1, shows on its stamp portion an odd feature of the Martian landscape, first detected in photo images transmitted by the Viking spacecraft in 1976.

Scientists agree that this ghostly image is actually a random configuration of rocks and shadows. New Age pseudoscientists prefer to think that it's a mile-wide human face, carved into the surface of Mars by ancient astronauts.

Stamp collectors, more skeptical and better informed than the average Joe, will no doubt find such speculation difficult to swallow. But along with Princess Caroline and Bigfoot, the Face on Mars is a

recurrent theme in the supermarket tabloids.

Figure 2, as an example, shows a page from *The Weekly World News*, announcing that scientists have found a similar stone face 3,500 feet beneath the Antarctic ice cap.

In addition to Mars, gushes the weekly, "the mile-long monument also matches stone faces found on the moon, Venus and Neptune. And that suggests that the people or creatures who built them were capable of interplanetary travel over 500,000 years ago, when the images are believed to have been made."

Inquiring minds who believe this news are no doubt equally capable of believing that a recently issued set of space stamps from an obscure and corruption-ridden African nation will soon be worth more than \$10,000.

At least, that's the target value Feinstein is suggesting.

His recent newsletters have

reprinted ads from the philatelic press (including Linn's) offering the Face-on-Mars set for around \$150. Since this is more than Feinstein's original asking price of \$100, the ads are presented to verify Feinstein's contention that the set is a smart investment.

The October issue of Feinstein's "Wealthmaker Quarterly Report" offers the space set for "only" \$135. Just one set per customer, he cautions.

The report also includes a remarkable interview with a scientist named Richard Hoagland, a New Age space consultant whom Feinstein has used in previous newsletters as an expert witness to support the assertion that the Sierra Leone set will soon be worth five figures.

The interview is so revealing that it's worth quoting extensively. Feinstein here appears in the role of neutral interviewer, but it's clear from his other activities that he's

an ardent sponsor of the stamps.

"Feinstein: Mr. Hoagland, could you please tell us your background?"

"Hoagland: I was science adviser to Walter Cronkite and CBS News, NASA consultant to the Goddard Space Flight Center, head of special projects for Hayden Planetarium and science adviser to CNN.

"Feinstein: Why did you say that the Sierra Leone stamp set should soon be worth \$10,000 or more?"

"Hoagland: Because that's what I believe.

"Feinstein: Why? What do you know about stamps and their values?"

"Hoagland: I know basically nothing about stamps. But I know a great deal about the specific subject of the Sierra Leone stamp set. On the basis of my research, that's what I think that set is going to be worth.

"Feinstein: Why so much?"

"Hoagland: That set is a commemorative. The value of a commemorative is dependent on the intrinsic value of the event it is commemorating...

"Feinstein: What do you think that 'Face' is?"

"Hoagland: It is a constructed monument made by intelligent life. When the world finds that out, it will be nothing less than the greatest discovery in the world.

"Feinstein: What will it mean to us?"

"Hoagland: It will have an unprecedented effect on people everywhere, and on the value of the Sierra Leone set."

Those who believe such breathless nonsense probably deserve financial disappointment. And that's the likely reward in store for anyone who expects speculative profit from this overpriced and highly manipulated stamp set. ■



This souvenir sheet from Sierra Leone is being widely promoted by direct-mail investment tipster Alan Feinstein. The stamp area on the sheet shows the so-called "Face on Mars," a mile-wide configuration of rocks and shadows that is thought by New Age pseudoscientists to be the relic of an ancient civilization.

The above is Copyright 1990 by *Linn's Stamp News* of Sidney, Ohio, the authoritative philatelic news source, and is reprinted with their permission. The following letter is from Chuck Harder:

Editor: You indicated in your Winter issue that you had received a letter from Richard Hoagland in response to yours. I notice that you spend pages criticizing him, but you won't print his response that would probably shrink down to one typeset page. That's not fair. You took up his valuable time! Until I see his response in print, it's a waste of time for me to "play your game" any further, if even then.

I also wish to correct you on page 5. We have "billed" Hoagland as our "Science Advisor" [not as a "scientist"]. Let me help you a little. In the media we have reporters who study different fields. They gain a reputation as being "good" in that area. Richard is a very good reporter who hangs around with a bunch of "scientists" who have the real credentials that you don't have.

If you or Duncan Cumming want a book from us, you can order one from the catalog and pay for it. We appreciate that this is your hobby. There is no way that I can personally respond to all the mail I get. I have done the best

possible with your letters to now as a courtesy. With all the projects I have going on, I may not be able to do so in the future. So when you do your usual "Armchair Skeptical Reviews" you won't be getting a response *not* because I'm ducking you - I'm just too darn busy. Good luck in your endeavors.

Chuck Harder / *For The People*, White Springs, Florida

Despite my offer of up to 12 lines in our last issue, and a full page in this one, for his response to my article's revelations, we have heard nothing from Hoagland. As stated in the article, Hoagland's earlier letter did not address those specific facts. Interested readers may obtain a copy of the correspondence between Hoagland and myself by sending TBS a stamped return envelope.

On Harder's radio program, I have heard him introduce Hoagland on at least one occasion as "scientist and author," and the ad on Harder's show plugging Hoagland's *Monuments of Mars* book (which FTP sells) refers to him as "author and scientist." I would agree that Hoagland is "good" at reporting facts which manage to evade attempts at verification.

Readers of Harder's above letter might infer that I attempted to weasel a free book out of him. On Nov. 5, I wrote to Harder, "In the interest of full disclosure, I would request that you please send a review copy of FTP's 'N Machine' book [edited by Hoagland, about a magnetic perpetual energy generator] to Dr. Cumming [author of the *Skeptical Inquirer* article about the machine], and arrange for an on-air interview with him...If necessary, I would be willing to pay for the book and shipping costs." Harder replied on Nov. 27 by informing me that he was "sending [the letter] on to Richard Hoagland who will respond." Since Hoagland failed to do so, I wrote Harder a reminder on Jan. 12, and the above is his disappointing, though not unexpected, response. Harder recently announced that his show's ratings are soaring (up by more than 1000% in Gainesville), and given its pro-paranormal, conspiratorial bent, we can certainly understand why. --Ed.

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**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  
monthly computer forum / 3550 Water-  
melon Rd., #29-A / Northport, AL 35476

**TBS founder and chairman on radio, TV**

TBS' Gary Posner (left) and Terry Smiljanich (middle) were the guests with "Lionel" on his popular 970-WFLA radio talk show on the afternoon of Feb. 19. "Lionel" (who in 'real life' is attorney Michael LeBron) was so pleased with the show that he unexpectedly held his special guests over for the entire 2 1/2 hours, and indicated (although not on the air) that he planned to join TBS (perhaps the check is in the mail, but...).

Later in the week, the TBS duo appeared on the Jones Intercable TV talk show "Chatterbox," telecast live in Tampa from 6-6:30 PM on Sunday, Feb. 24 (rebroadcast in Tampa and St. Pete. later in the week on Jones and Paragon, and a week later in Manhattan, NY). Except for the antics of the program's notorious obscene caller, all went well.

**CSICOP '91 Conference**

The 1991 conference of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, celebrating its 15th anniversary this year, will be held at the Claremont Resort Hotel at Berkeley/Oakland Hills, California, on May 3-5.

Topics to be discussed on Day 1 include "Controversies in Hypnosis" (The "Amazing" Kreskin will be a special guest), "Subliminal Pseudoscience," and "Popular Psychology: An Evaluation." The evening's Keynote Address, entitled "In Search of Our Origins," will be given by Dr. Donald C. Johanson (see page 2 reference).

Day 2 features more distinguished panels of speakers, covering "Catastrophism and Evolution," "Urban Legends," and "Teaching Critical Thinking with *The Skeptical Inquirer*." A luncheon will feature James Randi and other CSICOP notables Phil Klass and Ken Frazier, and an evening Awards

Banquet will end the day.

Day 3 (Sunday) will include a conversation session on current issues and recent developments, led by Joe Nickell, followed by meetings of members of local skeptics' groups around the world. Please contact TBS or CSICOP for further details if you contemplate attending.

**FTP's "Mars Seminar"**

Richard Hoagland was the featured speaker at *For The People's* "Mars Seminar," held at FTP's Telford Hotel headquarters on Feb. 9 & 10. He reportedly gave two *Hoagland's Mars* presentations on each day, each to an audience of approximately 50 people, some of whom traversed the country to attend.

Anyone wishing to purchase the uncut version of the *Hoagland's Mars* videotape may do so by sending \$24.95 + \$4.00 S&H (Florida residents add \$1.50 tax) to *For The People*, 3 River St., White Springs, FL 32096.

## LETTERS / READERS' FORUM

Editor: Great newsletter [Winter '90-91 featuring "A critical inquiry into several statements of Richard Hoagland"] - an amazing effort! I was also happy to see the piece on Spook Hill. Best wishes.

Barry Karr, Executive Director  
CSICOP  
Buffalo, NY

Editor: I love your newsletter and applaud your efforts.

Ken McCarthy  
Finger Lakes Association for  
Critical Thought  
Groton, NY

Editor: Thanks for an outstanding publication. Unfortunately I can no longer make it to most of the membership meetings. My position here in Dept. of Corrections does fill my time. My medical staff has some 3.9 million inmate encounters annually for physical health, in addition to about 400,000 mental health encounters. My best wishes to my fellow skeptics.

Charles R. Mathews, M.D.  
Tallahassee

Editor: Since becoming home owners, my wife and I have become unwillingly conversant with the single-minded tenacity with which solicitors attempt to invade our privacy. On a recent Saturday morning, before I was far into my first cup of coffee, someone knocked on our door. When I answered the door, a pleasant-faced, middle-aged man in a blue business suit greeted me. Flanking this pleasant-faced solicitor were two young boys wearing blue dress suits. The man propped himself on a cane while the boys clutched Bibles, which were already beginning to

show signs of being well-thumped.

The pleasant-faced man began his pitch by telling me that many people were questioning their future in the face of the Gulf War. "Many people," he continued, "believe that the events in the Middle East are leading to more significant events, long ago predicted by Biblical Holy men." Then, he reassured me that he and his "church family are at peace in these troubled times because of the answers we have found in the Bible." One of the youngsters raised his Bible for effect.

The pleasant-faced evangelist shifted his weight, brightened his smile, and, like a car salesman about to close a deal, challenged me: "Sir, what do you think is God's plan for man during these troubled times?"

Confidently, I tapped the Tampa Bay Skeptics logo on my T-shirt. His smile broke into a laugh, and he then excused himself and his two mini-evangelists, leaving me to enjoy my coffee in peace.

Richard P. Manny, Pharm.D., R.Ph.  
Tampa

*The moral of this story, dear readers, is that there is no excuse for your not purchasing the remaining stock of TBS logo T-shirts, which contain, at no additional charge, an all-natural solicitor repellent, non-toxic to the atmosphere of rational discourse. At present we still have 1 white/medium, 2 white/large, and 2 blue/large. See page 8 box for details. Hurry! In these troubled times, dare you leave home, or even try to relax at home, without one? --Ed.*

Editor: Many thanks for the courtesy copy of *TBS Report*. It contained a lot of quite interesting material...I think we have a so-called "mystery hill" here in Oregon, but as a new resident, there are many attractions here about which I know less than I hope to...Although I have written for *FATE* and various UFO magazines, I am a skeptic - just not dogmatic about it...

George W. Earley  
Mount Hood, Oregon

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V3N4



## *Tampa Bay Skeptics Quarterly Membership Meeting*

**Scheduled:** Video of the Earth's creation (uncut), first-hand witness account of the evolution of the first human (uncensored), or other relevant matters

**SATURDAY, APRIL 20 — 10:30 A.M.  
CARMEN MANIS ROOM (2ND FLOOR)  
PUBLIC LIBRARY, 900 N. ASHLEY DR., TAMPA**

\* \* \* \* \*

### **'NCAHF warning'** (continued from page 1)

an objective benefit-risk assessment. We are unaware of any condition that can be helped by neck manipulation that merits the serious consequences of paralysis or stroke even if the probability of injury is slight. Neither are we reassured that the risk is only slight."

### **'CHAIRMAN'S CORNER'** (continued from page 2)

that no great harm would come of giving creationism some equal time in school.

The purpose of this column is not so much to discuss the issue of creationism per se, as it is to point out that although this country may be second to none in its technological superiority, too many of its citizens do not have even a rudimentary understanding of science. Dr. Leakey may well wonder how a society that can make "smart bombs" can be so stupid.

### **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.

Or, you may send a stamped return envelope for us to keep on hand for our more occasional mail Updates.

### **Members: Please contribute to TBS Report!**

Even if you're not a polished writer, we want to hear from you! Please send your letters/articles to the editor.



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