

Tampa Bay Skeptics

REPORT

VOLUME 4 NO. 1 SUMMER 1991

TBS panel addresses local chapter of Society of Professional Journalists

A panel of TBS members, including consultant James Randi, addressed a gathering of about 50 area journalists on June 3 at the monthly meeting of the Tampa Bay chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. The invitation was extended to TBS by Mel Martin, News Director of WTSP-TV Ch. 10 in St. Petersburg/Tampa, who, as a long-time subscriber to the *Skeptical Inquirer*, shares TBS's disappointment with the quality of media coverage of the paranormal.

Representing TBS at the meeting, which was held at the Ch. 10 studios, were (from right to left beginning with photo next column) founder and *TBS Report* editor Gary Posner, vice chairman Miles Hardy, chairman Terry Smiljanich, and the once again, as always, "Amazing" Randi, who had also appeared earlier in the day as guest on Ch. 10's *Murphy in the Morning* show. About a dozen TBS members were also present in the audience, participating in the lively give-and-take.

There was some difference of opinion among the reporters, and even among TBS panel members, as



to whether, for instance, the next "haunted house" claim should even be covered by the media. While Posner had "no problem" with covering such stories as long as the skeptical viewpoint is represented, Smiljanich noted that such reports are "a dime a dozen," and suggested that "there has to come a point where the media makes a judgement 'no more haunted house stories.'" Ch. 8 anchor Barbara Callahan remarked that "I think if we only got one call, we'd probably ignore it," but if another station were to cover such a claim, "then it becomes something that the other news outlets feel they must give some attention to. Added Callahan, getting a roar from the audience, "I think if we got the video we'd sure go with it."

Other topics discussed included UFOs, ESP, astrology, graphology, the "Weeping Icon," the "Shroud of Turin,"

exorcism, levitation, biorhythms, and the dichotomy between science and religion. When asked a multiple choice question by Mel Martin about the "intellectual qualifications" of reporters, there was consensus among the panel that reporters are "pretty bright," but that many too easily accept uncritically what is told to them.

Ch. 10 reporter Al Ruechel claimed to have witnessed,



while in Africa, numerous examples of levitation. He also claims to be personally aware of

Photos by Guss Wilder

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Randi resigns from CSICOP Cites stream of Geller lawsuits 'Skeptics' Legal Fund' begun

In a May 11 "Open Letter" distributed to friends, sympathizers, and particularly to leaders of the international skeptical community, magician and author James Randi has announced his resignation from the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP). An original founding Fellow of CSICOP in 1976, "The Amazing" Randi had served ever since on its Executive Council, and was perhaps the most widely-known and widely-quoted of all of CSICOP's illustrious members.

Among the many honors bestowed upon Randi, in recognition of his years of devotion to exposing fraudulent psychic and other paranormal claims, was a 1986 MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Grant. Although he is not a scientist, the American Physical Society (the national organization of physicists), in a highly unusual move, named Randi as the recipient of its 1989 "Forum Award" for "his unique defense of science and the scientific method...against pseudoscience, frauds, and charlatans..."

One of Randi's prime targets through the years has been Israeli magician Uri Geller, who achieved international fame and fortune from his claims of "psychic"

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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's "\$1,000 Challenge" is open to anyone claiming verifiable scientific proof of the reality of ESP, UFOs, astrology, or 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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Open Letter From James Randi (dated May 11)

Uri Geller has announced that he intends to sue me "in every state and in every country." He currently has four lawsuits against me, two of which I have won (at a cost of over \$155,000 in legal fees) and one of which he has told me he is bringing in Japan, with one just served on me in California. This latter case concerns two statements I made about him in response to questions by a reporter for the *International Herald Tribune*: (1) Geller has fooled some scientists; and (2) His tricks are the same kind that used to be on the back of cereal boxes when I was a kid.

Obviously, this is a frivolous lawsuit, and it seems evident that Geller is using the legal process to both break me financially and to silence me from speaking what I know to be the truth. I have a right under the Constitution to fairly say what I know to be true, and I will not surrender that right.

I have resigned from the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) since the Committee is always named in the suits, and in order that CSICOP will be spared further involvement in such suits if and when I again mention Geller's name. This has been a very difficult thing for me to do.

Should these actions continue, I will be forced into silence from my inability to support further legal costs. CSICOP has been silenced, and I'm next, it appears.

I now have no further funds to continue my defense. It has been suggested that a legal fund might be set up for my defense of these harrassing actions by Mr. Geller. I hope that can be set in motion.

I'm in trouble, folks. I need help.

Open Letter From Uri Geller (postmarked May 24)

Since the early 1970s, James Randi has been trying to debunk me. I always chose to ignore these attacks, which were directed mostly at my abilities. In recent years however, his statements and remarks about me were outrageous, libelous and defaming lies which have hurt me and my family and caused me uncalculable damage. Some of his accusations were made in public and in print.

In a magazine interview, he accused me of blackmailing him (which is a crime), which I did not do. This was denied by me in a deposition under oath, taken by Randi's lawyers in New York. I believe the deposition is available as a matter of public record.

In another magazine interview, he called me a psychopath and a social disease, which I am not and have not. He also accused me of being *responsible* for the suicide of an American scientist, describing how the man sat at his desk, pulled out a revolver and shot himself in the head.

The true facts are that this scientist did *not* commit suicide and did *not* die because of me. I have obtained the death certificate of this man, which clearly states that he died from complications from diabetes and heart failure.

Accusing me of being responsible for the death of another human being is the most outrageous and irresponsible lie. The mental and emotional distress this caused me is more than I can put into words, aside from devastating my reputation.

Randi has also libeled and slandered a friend of mine, Eldon Byrd, who is also currently suing Randi in court. According to Byrd's Court Complaint, Randi said that "Eldon Byrd was the one along with Geller who launched a blackmail campaign against me and accused me of being a child molester. Byrd is now in prison in Washington, D.C. for child molesting and is going to be there for the next six years." The Complaint also states that in a public gathering Randi said, "Eldon Byrd has been sought after by the Washington area police for 10 years and was known as the shopping market molester." The Complaint further indicates that according to Randi, Eldon Byrd "would utilize his wife's children to

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Creationism suffers setback in Lake County

Following a community debate attended by 500 people, the Lake County School Board voted 4-to-1 on May 14 not to allow "scientific creationism" to be taught in science classes. As evidenced by Dr. Eugenie Scott's letter (see p. 7), this matter had attracted national attention, and some local creationists complained of interference from "outsiders" (who also included members of People for the American Way and the ACLU). But the creationists had their own big guns as well (from California's Institute for Creation Research and New York's Creation Research Society). And the Board did agree to consider allowing creationist materials in the school libraries.

--From Janice Martin's St. Pete. Times article of May 15

"Psychic" fails to materialize for test

D. Carnegie Langley, of Dearborn Heights, Michigan, claims that during a stint in Viet Nam, a Buddhist monk taught him an ancient Chinese technique that allows one to both transmit and receive "emotions" telepathically. In search of Randi's \$10,000 prize, Langley contacted TBS's Gary Posner, later connected with Randi, and agreed to attend the CSICOP conference on May 4 in Oakland, where Randi, Posner et al. would put him to the test for their combined \$11,000. Regrettably, Langley failed to show, later explaining that his prime student (who was to do the "transmitting") found out on May 1 that he would have to work that weekend, and would be unavailable. Perhaps some other time and place. . .

ABC televises "exorcism" of Florida teen

On April 5, ABC-TV's *20/20* program broadcast film of the alleged "exorcism" of evil spirits from "Gina," a troubled 16-year-old south Floridian. A main objective of Catholic officials in allowing the veil of secrecy to be lifted from this medieval exercise was, according to New York's Rev. James LeBar, to enhance the credibility of a literal "devil" as the cause of evil in the world. However, the faith's credibility may have instead suffered a setback.

The Rev. Richard McBrien, chairman of the theology department at the University of Notre Dame, labeled the televised spectacle "indefensible," stating that it trivialized the problem of evil in the world, and subjected the faith to "ridicule." He added that the existence of a literal "devil" and "demons" are not teachings of mainstream Catholicism.

At one critical stage of the "exorcism," LeBar commented that if Gina had not been tied to the chair, she would likely have levitated. Rob Wallace, producer of the *20/20* segment, acknowledged when interviewed later that night on *Nightline* that although "we fully expected" the cameras to detect definitive proof of demonic possession, "there wasn't any physical manifestation of any kind of demonic activity there that I could see."

Gina's psychiatrist, Dr. Warren Schlanger of Miami Children's Hospital, called the ceremony "a significant risk" to his patient's health. Within days of the exorcism, Gina required re-hospitalization and institution of anti-psychotic medication. [Excerpts from the *20/20* telecast, and the follow-up *Nightline* discussion, were played at the last TBS meeting.]

For The People leaves Sun Radio Network

Chuck Harder's *For The People* radio program, featuring Richard Hoagland as "science advisor," is no longer heard on the Sun Radio Network. In a March 13 letter to Gary Posner, which Harder requested be published in its entirety (available to readers upon request for a stamped return envelope), he stated that "Sun 'fired' me in August of 1990. . . *For The People* now pays costs to be on the Sun Network." In an April 27 follow-up letter, Harder informed Posner that he had since "resigned" from Sun effective March 29. His mailing included an April 23 *Milwaukee Journal* article which says in part, "Harder [says] Sun demanded that he endorse questionable services and that he accept paying guests on his show. . . The Liberty Lobby has a financial stake in the Sun Network [and] 'they wanted to start telling me what to do. . . I was constantly encouraged to use Liberty Lobby people on my show.' Harder founded Sun in 1986. When Sun ran into financial trouble in 1988, the Liberty Lobby [which has been referred to as anti-Semitic] infused the operation with cash and took it over from Harder." *FTP* is now heard on independent stations (not locally at this time), and on shortwave (7.520 MHz from 8-10 PM EDT).

Merrell vs. Renier in *Fate* magazine

The continuing legal battle between Orlando "psychic" Noreen Renier and Tennessee skeptic John Merrell was the subject of a major pro-Renier article in the June issue of *Fate* magazine, in which passages from *TBS Report* were quoted. Depositions and interrogatories continue, with trial now anticipated to begin late this year.

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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

SNIPPETS

"We don't like them," said barber Joe Parker of his new neighbors. "We think they ought to be selling Bibles over there." Was he talking about our TBS office? No, but something almost as ghastly - the opening of a witchcraft store in a Port St. Lucie shopping center. Ygraine Osbourn, leader of a coven of witches and owner of "The Dragon's Lair," insists, however, that witches are "just boring nice folks" and are no cause for alarm.

(AP / St. Pete. Times, March 23)

Michael Jackson: The Magic and the Madness is a new unauthorized biography by J. Randy Taraborrelli. In it, we are told that Jackson believed that fellow-superstar Prince had attempted to use the supernatural to undermine Jackson's career. Prince allegedly gave Jackson a small box filled with feathers and medals. "Prince is trying to put a hex on me," Jackson is reported to have told his producer, Quincy Jones.

(AP / St. Pete. Times, May 5)

Drs. Duane Rumbaugh and Sue Savage-Rumbaugh of the Georgia State University Language Research Center claim that one of their chimpanzee subjects understands and responds to English at the level of a 2-year-old human child. When asked to "go get the carrot that's in the microwave," or to "pour the lemonade in the Coke," Kanzi is said to properly carry out the tasks, demonstrating that Kanzi "can understand individual spoken words and how they are used in novel sentences." Their 150-page research paper is scheduled for 1992 publication in *Child Development*, journal of the Society for Research in Child Development.

But Dr. Thomas A. Sebeok, distinguished professor of linguistics and semiotics at Indiana University in Bloomington, has this impression of their work: "First of all, it has nothing to do with language, and nothing to do with words. It has to do with communication. All animals communicate...non-verbally....An imperative utterance... [is interpreted] as a complex of nonverbal signals. I feel that the Rumbaughs have never understood the difference between verbal and nonverbal."

(Cox News Service / St. Pete. Times, April 7)

Dr. Jay Holder of Miami has been awarded the Albert Schweitzer Prize for Medicine, becoming the first American recipient of this prestigious international award. The honor is for Holder's work in developing a method to locate new acupuncture points. Holder uses acupuncture on addicts, to relax them and relieve their drug cravings. The Dade County judicial system began two years ago to prescribe acupuncture for addicts in the county stockade.

(AP / St. Pete. Times, May 4)

Jimmy Swaggart, the flamboyant televangelist who was down and nearly out after a sex scandal two years ago, has been healed (Nielsen style). His TV ministry is now ranked sixth among the 20 that were rated in

February, and can be seen on 92 stations across the country.

(St. Pete. Times, May 23)

About 400 UFO "experts" attended the third annual Ozark UFO Conference in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, to discuss such topics as alien abductions, animal mutilations, crop circles, and the like. Says co-chairman Lucius Farish of the generally well-versed attendees, "...we do get a few others who come out to see what kind of nuts we are."

(AP / St. Pete. Times, April 7)



Charles and Marilee Myers, a Lake City couple, have pleaded guilty to child abuse by medical neglect in the near-death of their 16-year-old son, who suffers from a non-malignant cardiac tumor. Members of "End Time Ministries," whose leader, Rev. Charles Meade, preaches that sin causes illness and that doctors are tools of the Devil, the Myers allowed their son to lose 42 pounds and to develop liver failure and bedsores before seeking life-saving medical attention for him. The parents have agreed to pay the state \$1,115 for costs, and to allow their son to undergo annual medical checkups.

(AP / St. Pete. Times, March 7)

According to the participants of *Current World Events and Biblical Prophecy*, a six-week series being taped in Orlando for airing on John Ankerberg's nationally-syndicated Christian TV show, the end of the world is, thank God, once again in sight. "The scenario that prophets predicted is coming together exactly," says author Hal Lindsey of the Gulf war, the fall of communism, and recent events in Europe. Author Dave Hunt says, "I think Christ could come any moment." Let's hope he at least waits for the series to air.

(AP / St. Pete. Times, March 30)

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

'Randi resigns from CSICOP' (continued from page 1)

spoon-bending. In *The Truth About Uri Geller*, as in other books, articles, and in innumerable public appearances, Randi has exposed many of Geller's methods, and has in turn incurred Geller's ire.

The text of Randi's "Open Letter" of May 11 may be found on page 2, followed by an "Open Letter From Uri Geller" which has been widely circulated in response to Randi's. (Although typed on Geller's British letterhead, this undated letter, whose envelope to TBS was postmarked in Baltimore, Maryland on May 24, was signed by someone else in Geller's absence.)

The "Skeptics' Legal Fund" is now in the process of being established by sympathizers to Randi's plight (further details will follow in our next issue). In addition to contributing towards Randi's legal costs, it is anticipated that funds will also be available for the defense of CSICOP, and for others who may find themselves in similar circumstances as a result of their tough stands against purveyors of paranormal claims.

Editor's note: Readers of TBS Report are encouraged to consider contributing whatever you can to this most worthy cause, and to spread the word as best you can. Every dollar from every sympathetic citizen will help, as there must be millions of us around the globe. The address will be given in our next issue.

* * * * *

'Open letters from Randi and Geller' (continued from page 2)

attract other small children into his car after which he would molest them and free them."

Eldon Byrd, as far as I know, is *not* a child molester, was never convicted of this or sent to jail for such a crime. The Complaint is on public record in Federal court in Maryland. The case is pending.

This pattern of ongoing lies is extremely damaging and libelous on the highest levels, and apparently can only be stopped in courts of law.

In his open letter, Randi says that I intend to sue him in "every state and every country." What I said is, I will sue Randi in every country where my legal rights able me to stop him from spreading lies about me.

Currently, I have two lawsuits against Randi and not four, as Randi states. The two suits that he claims he won were actually dismissed by the courts on technical grounds.

In one, I missed the statute of limitations, and in the other, a Japanese magazine he libeled me in had no circulation in the USA. The same lawsuit was then filed in Japan. At this point, Randi has never appeared to defend himself, and that case is still pending.

The other lawsuit was filed when, once again, Randi defamed me, just weeks ago, in the *International Herald Tribune* newspaper.

In his open letter, Randi avoids dealing with the real basis for why these suits are brought. If he is in trouble, he has no one to blame but himself. My lawsuits against

him are far from frivolous or harassing, as he states in his open letter. If these suits were frivolous it certainly would not have cost \$155,000 in legal fees to dispose of them.

It is difficult to believe that Randi has no further funds to continue his defense. Besides the \$275,000 he obtained tax free from the MacArthur Foundation, I recently read in a press release that his books were selling well and one is in its tenth printing. I also heard that he is currently writing another book and has just completed a six part television series.

I also wonder whether the \$155,000 in legal fees which Randi says it cost him to defend himself was spent only on my lawsuit. Or does that also include the legal fees he is paying to defend himself from the lawsuit brought against him in Maryland, that has nothing to do with me.

Randi claims that under the Constitution he has the right to say what he knows to be true. What he said about me is not the truth. I know that most of you are skeptics and perhaps not very interested in my viewpoint. But this is not merely a matter of a skeptic versus psychic debate. This is a matter of higher principles. I have written this letter to let you know my true inner feelings and how hurt I really am.

Randi responds to Geller

In a May 29 interview with *TBS Report's* editor Gary Posner, Randi had the following to say:

"It seems to me that a man who claims he has made \$50-million in the psychic field, who lives in a \$20-million mansion outside London, and who boasts that he has as many as 10 Rolex watches at a time, can't possibly understand the financial problems I'm having paying for my lawyers. Geller's letter deals not with the present situation, but with another hypothetical situation, highly hyperbolized - he is a master in that art."

Regarding the claim that Randi had accused Geller of 'blackmailing' him: "The statement is not true. I can't comment in detail on these things because that will have to wait until we're in court."

Regarding the 'psychopath and social disease' passage: "That's the Japanese case, and I cannot discuss the details. Let's just say that the facts are considerably different from that, because I can't imagine myself using such language, nor I think can anybody else who would know me." He said that Geller's 'suicide' accusation also relates to the Japanese case, and he cannot comment on it. "I'm not going to play his game, playing out all the court cases in a public forum. That's what he's trying to force me into doing." Nor would Randi comment about the Byrd case, "because it's currently in the courts."

Added Randi, "Geller sounds rather worried about the support that the academic world and the skeptical community have offered to me in this matter, since his goal remains to ruin me financially. I also note with interest that the letter was not signed by him, but by proxy. It is in legal language, and sounds as if it originates with his lawyers, not with Mr. Geller himself. Therefore, I don't know how seriously we should take this statement."

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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 Watermelon Rd., #29-A / Northport, AL 35476

**TBS Statement of Income and Expenditures
for fiscal year 1990 (6/1/90 - 5/31/91)**

I. Beginning balance from previous year	\$ 458.49
II. Income	
A. New memberships/subscriptions	\$ 170.00
B. Renewals	740.00
C. Donations	245.00
D. Sales of T-shirts (incl. P&H received)	83.00
TOTAL	\$ 1,238.00
III. Expenditures	
A. Newsletters (laserwriter, printing, etc.)	\$ 755.24
B. Postage, fax, shipping	242.83
C. Telephone calls	163.08
D. Stationery (letterheads, labels, etc.)	79.20
E. Photo developing	6.31
F. Donation of <i>Skeptical Inquirer</i> to Tampa library	25.00
G. Florida Corporation 1991 Annual Report fee	61.25
TOTAL	\$ 1,332.91
IV. Current financial assets	
A. Checking account balance	\$ 317.84
B. Stamps and post cards	23.74
C. Laser print credits	22.00
TOTAL	\$ 363.58
V. Current liabilities	\$ 0.00
VI. Net balance (I + II - III; IV - V) as of 5/31/91	\$ 363.58
VII. Est. cost of printing/mailling V.4, No.1 in 6/91	\$ 230.00

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

Faithfully submitted,
Gary P. Posner, Treasurer

**TBS's "skeptical
inquirers"**

One of the "News & Comment" items in this summer's *Skeptical Inquirer* was written by Gary Posner, regarding Marilyn vos Savant's series of *Parade* magazine columns dealing with the following question:

Suppose you're on a game show, and you're given a choice of three doors. Behind one door is a car; behind the others, goats. You pick a door - say, No. 1 - and the host, who knows what's behind the doors, opens another door - say, No. 3 - which has a goat. He then says to you, "Do you want to pick door No. 2?" Is it to your advantage to switch your choice?

If you say "No" to any advantage in switching, you are in the good company of the many credentialed mathematicians who

wrote scathing letters to vos Savant following her "Yes" response (vos Savant, by the way, has the highest known IQ in the world). But like them, you are *wrong!* Please send a stamped return envelope to *TBS Report* if you would like a copy of Posner's write-up.

And in this Fall's *Skeptical Inquirer*, a report by TBS member Guss Wilder on Florida's "Spook Hill" (see related item in our Winter '90-91 issue) is slated to appear.

TBS donates *Skeptical Inquirer* to Tampa library

TBS is pleased to announce that it has made a donation to the main library in Tampa, to cover its first year's cost of subscribing to the *Skeptical Inquirer*.

LETTERS / READERS' FORUM

[Editor's note: Although the following letter was received too late for TBS to respond in this instance, the forces of reason nevertheless prevailed in Leesburg/Lake County (see page 3).]

Dear friends: The Board of Education in Leesburg, Florida is considering introducing "scientific" creationism in the public schools. It is important that public officials, and the public in general, appreciate the serious issues that are raised when creationism is advocated as science, and when this sectarian religious view is presented in the public schools.

There is much confusion in Leesburg over whether evolution is still considered valid science by scientists (it most assuredly is), and whether "scientific" creationism is an acceptable scientific doctrine (it most assuredly is *not*). Over 30 scientific societies including the National Academy of Sciences have stated that "scientific" creationism does not qualify as a scientific theory, and is merely a sectarian religious idea masquerading as science.

There is confusion about whether it is "only fair" to teach creation "science" since evolution is taught. This shows a misunderstanding of how science works. We don't teach certain ideas in science only because they are more popular than others; we teach the ideas that have stood the test of time. Explanations that do not stand up to scrutiny are discarded. Creation "science" has been examined by scientists and found wanting. It is not "fair" to teach students incorrect information and pseudo-science. For example, even though some of the creationists promote the "theory" that the earth is the center of the solar system, this is no reason to give "equal time" to geocentrism when modern astronomy is taught! The job of the teacher is to teach state-of-the-art science, not misinformation.

Because creation "science" is not science, it then devolves to creationism, which is a specific sectarian religious idea. The view of creation presented in a literal reading of Genesis. . . To advocate it in the public schools as the true history of the world is to advance religion, in specific violation of the first amendment. . .

. . . If Leesburg can teach creationism, what is to keep fundamentalists in *your* community from making the same arguments? Perhaps helping to stop creationism in Leesburg will eventually help *you* as well. . .

Eugenie C. Scott, Ph.D., Executive Director
The National Center for Science Education
Berkeley, CA

To Dr. Posner: It seems that a number of reputable authorities offer predictions annually regarding the *number* of hurricanes likely to be produced in the coming hurricane season. Harold Blake [a TBS member] and I have been collaborating on a study in which (although we are not ready to publish our results) we both have produced a list of probable *dates* that our research [based on astrology] has led us to believe a tropical closed-system storm will develop.

You once remarked that *any* researcher using an almanac could arrive at the future dates of formation of tropical depressions and hurricanes. I thought that it would be interesting if we conducted an experiment with you as the control. Please glance through any material you might want and come up with a list of dates. . .

Janet Sciales, Astro Analyst
Lutz

This does not seem to me a particularly interesting test of astrology, since anyone sufficiently interested could indeed review past records and make well-informed guesses. If Sciales were to succeed better than I, this would prove nothing about the validity of astrology, since the poor quality of my research would be another possible explanation. A statistician could perhaps devise a statistically significant test of astrology along these lines, given a sufficiently large number of predicted events (probably requiring many years), and given sufficiently specific predicted dates and defined parameters as to what constitutes the moment of development of a "tropical closed-system storm or hurricane." But there are much simpler ways to test astrology (see Nature, Dec. 5, 1985). --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.*

V4N1



Tampa Bay Skeptics Quarterly Membership Meeting

Scheduled: Odds and ends (mostly "odds")

SATURDAY, JULY 13 — 11:00 A.M.
AUDITORIUM (GROUND FLOOR)
PUBLIC LIBRARY, 900 N. ASHLEY DR., TAMPA

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"TBS panel address SPJ meeting" (continued from page 1)

many local successful faith-healings, including, as he later told Posner, such dramatic cures as a golfball-sized malignant tumor being present one day and gone the next. He promised to get back to Posner, and to arrange a "\$1,000 Challenge" case for TBS's review.

Other highlights included Randi's story of how he coached an artist friend of his to become "Carlos," a "trance channeler," who, in only two weeks time (with the unwitting assistance of the media which uncritically disseminated Randi's phony hype about "Carlos"), became a major draw in Australia, filling the Sydney Opera House. Randi explained how "one phone call from anybody in the media could have found out that the whole thing was a fake." He then told of a fellow (Bernie Langham?) who is able to look at classical LP recordings and non-psychically name the musical piece (by the appearance of the grooves). Randi also performed the "jumping toothpick" and the Uri Geller compass-moving effect (hint: magnet taped to knee), and Posner showed, to the crowd's delight, TV video of Randi performing "spoon-bending" and "psychic surgery."



6219 Palma Boulevard #210
St. Petersburg, Florida 33715

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 scientific 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.

MASS EXPIRATION TIME STRIKES AGAIN!!!

About two-thirds of our memberships and subscriptions expire with this issue. PLEASE RENEW TODAY so that we can maintain our low \$10 annual assessment, and please consider a much-needed donation.

FIRST CLASS