



REPORT

VOLUME 4 NO. 2 FALL 1991

CSICOP responds to the Randi/Geller/Byrd controversy

[Our last issue featured "Open Letters" from James Randi and Uri Geller. The following is reprinted from the May, 1991 Skeptical Briefs, newsletter of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal.]

In June, 1989, CSICOP was served with suit papers setting out a claim by Eldon Byrd. Byrd is suing James Randi, *Twilight Zone* magazine, and CSICOP for statements about his personal life allegedly made by Randi at a May, 1988 meeting of the New York Area Skeptics and in an interview published in a June, 1988 issue of *Twilight Zone*.

CSICOP was named in this lawsuit because, according to Byrd, Randi was acting as an agent of CSICOP and was authorized to speak on CSICOP's behalf.

CSICOP's Executive Council, including Randi, has always maintained that members shall not speak for CSICOP unless previous agreement has been obtained from a majority of the Executive Council members. Randi neither sought nor obtained approval from the Executive Council before making the alleged comments concerning Byrd's personal life that are the subject of this lawsuit.

CSICOP has maintained throughout this suit that Randi was not acting as CSICOP's agent and therefore was not authorized to make on CSICOP's behalf the remarks he allegedly made concerning Byrd's personal conduct. Moreover, CSICOP's insurer has denied Randi coverage in this lawsuit.

In September, 1989, CSICOP and Randi were served with a lawsuit brought by Uri Geller alleging libel, slander, and invasion of privacy. This suit revolved around statements allegedly made by Randi, concerning a personal issue between Geller and himself, at the aforementioned New York Area Skeptics meeting and in the *Twilight Zone* interview. The suit was dismissed on procedural grounds because it was filed beyond the one-year statute of limitations date. CSICOP's insurer denied Randi coverage in this lawsuit.

In May, 1991, CSICOP and Randi were served with a lawsuit brought by Uri Geller alleging defamation and invasion of privacy. This suit stemmed from an interview Randi allegedly granted the Paris-based *International Herald Tribune*, published in its April, 1991 issue. On May 5, Randi resigned from CSICOP. We deeply regret Randi's decision.

**The James Randi Fund is now accepting
contributions (see page 8 box)**

Misstatements have been circulated regarding the lawsuits and CSICOP's relationship with Randi. The burdens, financial and otherwise, that these suits have placed on both CSICOP and Randi are onerous. We strongly support the right of freedom of speech guaranteed by the First Amendment, and freedom of scientific inquiry. As an organization, CSICOP "attempts to encourage the critical investigation of paranormal and fringe-science claims from a responsible, scientific point of view and to disseminate factual information about the results of such inquiries to the scientific community and the public."

Because of the ongoing litigations, CSICOP must decline more extensive comments upon these cases at this time.

Randi responds to Geller

[Our last issue contained a response from Randi, given in a brief interview with TBS Report. The following is Randi's formal response, as published in CSICOP's May, 1991 Skeptical Briefs.]

Uri Geller, apparently alarmed at the widespread support I have been receiving through the academic community and the skeptics' groups, has issued a colorful "Open Letter" to all concerned. I hasten to respond.

The very first line of Mr. Geller's tirade sets the pattern for what follows: "Since the early '70s, James Randi has been trying to debunk me." No, Mr. Geller, in the early '70s I *did* debunk you.

Far from handling the present "libel" suit that is now being answered, which is the real matter at hand, Mr. Geller next launches into the account about events he says took place in Japan in 1988. He chooses to accept what he has been told I said there, without any question, quoting at one point from one faulty translation that suits his purpose, then switching to another. Since no action has yet been brought against me in Japan, I will be wise not to comment on his accusations in that matter, but I assure you that the facts are rather different from what he represents.

(continued on page 5)

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICSStatement 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 *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 for length, clarity, and taste), including opposing points of view. As our budget is very limited, **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**

Founded in 1988

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\$10/yr. (4 issues)

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GUEST EDITORIAL**Reversals and Distractions**By Yves Barbero, Editor, *BASIS* (Newsletter of the Bay Area Skeptics)

[San Francisco's Bay Area Skeptics was the first of the local skeptics groups, and remains the largest and perhaps the most active and influential. The following is reprinted from the July BASIS.]

When I took over as editor last September, I had it in my mind that *BASIS* would be largely devoted to public education in matters of scientific policy. I see many of our country's problems a result of a lack of awareness about scientific and technical matters.

I never imagined that I'd be devoting most of an issue to the business of psychics. I never imagined I'd be writing a lengthy piece on the matter. Yes, I agree that questioning their practices is an important part of educating ourselves in scientific methodology, but figured that our magicians (Randi, Bob Steiner et al.) would mostly handle it.

I thought I could stand aloof and do the science "stuff" and print whatever output the "others" handed me when they wrote on the matter. There was never any question that it was important. I just didn't think it was for me to do. May rolls around and magician Bob Steiner is suddenly doing a superb scientific piece on the fluoride controversy. Two months later, I'm writing about psychics. A nice reversal. Life is more interesting than fiction.

June sees a letter from James Randi appealing for help. The psychics, having no scientific recourse, are using the courts. The letter sparks a phone call from Uri Geller to me explaining his position. I invite a reply saying, "If it's civilized enough and I think it of interest to my readers..." So Geller's letter is largely printed in these pages. *[Note: Barbero refers to the "Open Letters" that were subsequently distributed around the world and published in our last issue. —G.P.]*

Becky Long of the Georgia Skeptics was kind enough to send me a copy of ghostbuster Loyd Auerbach's provocatively titled "Taking a Skeptic to Court" in the June issue of *Fate* magazine. She also sent me some Tampa Bay Skeptics background material on the same subject. *[Note: Copies of each TBS Report are sent to CSICOP for distribution to the other skeptics groups. —G.P.]*

The Geller letter speaks about personal and hostile entanglements between Randi and himself. Auerbach's article, despite the eye-opening title, only speaks about a loose cannon in the skeptics' movement *[John Merrell, who is not named in the article —G.P.]* who uses facts loosely and, if what Auerbach says is true, should be stopped. It is not a cookbook about taking skeptics to court as the title suggests. The *Tampa Bay Skeptics Report* pieces (Winter 1989-90 and Spring 1991) are somewhat less partisan in presenting the facts and probably should be referred to for the whole picture. What makes it interesting is that both the Geller letter and the Auerbach article dwell on personalities and not on the issue of the accuracy of psychic phenomena.

I recall being told that it is the magician's stock-in-trade to distract the audience and am informed that both Geller and Auerbach are excellent practitioners of the art. I wonder if perhaps taking skeptics to court has something to do with getting *any* judgement against them, even about issues that don't strike at the heart of the matter, to show the public that skeptics can be "wrong." A perfect distraction!

It's a no-lose situation. If the court case goes for the skeptic, he's still out costs (maybe his house), and if he loses, it "proves" he's wrong in the eyes of many, and he might still lose his house.

I'd like to see a lawsuit which truly tests the scientific questions. Maybe we should borrow a leaf from the psychics and force the issue in a court of law. It would be costly, certainly, but manageable if some well-organized outfit like CSICOP organized it. I can daydream, can't I?

As long as we let them pick us off one by one, we'll be in the position of winning every battle and losing the war.

Skeptics participate on Ch. 13 "Haunted Houses" TV show...

I represented TBS on Ch. 13's *Eye on Tampa Bay* program on July 25. The topic: "Individuals Who Have Lived in Haunted Houses." Another TBS member, Harold Blake, participated from the audience.

Host Kathy Fountain was brilliant in weaving together all the elements: ghosts, personal reports, audience, and skeptics. The panel also included three individuals and their two children who described their experiences living with ghosts. I was pleased that the audience was more skeptical than I had anticipated.

The accounts were familiar, except for one panelist whose haunted house was her office/residence in Tampa. She described, along with other experiences, a loud, vicious beast-like roar, ferociously scratching and threatening to break through the walls as she walked through the house. She says she vacated her home the next day.

I felt that the program went well, and that "skepticism," at least as far as "ghosts" are concerned, made some friends. An interesting note: One woman panelist, who had described living in four different haunted houses in Milwaukee, told me privately after the show that, "It would blow your mind, Dr. Hardy, to know that I have quit my job and have become a channeler." She gave me her card - and it didn't.

—Miles Hardy

...but 'maybe next time' on Ch. 8 news

On July 19, I happened to catch the last five minutes of a three-part series on "near-death experiences" by Ch. 8 reporter Jeff Patterson. Two hypnotists being interviewed were claiming that past-life regression is a scientific fact. Curious about what I had missed, I called Patterson. When I asked him if any opposing viewpoint had been presented, he said no. I then asked if he was aware that CSICOP and TBS were readily available resources. To this question he responded yes, but added that he had not used us because we were used so often!

When I pointed out that some very good sources had been missed because of this approach, Patterson agreed that perhaps he should have included an opposing viewpoint. He told me that a co-worker, whose husband is an anesthesiologist (who induces "near-death" experiences), had asked why her husband had not been approached, and he then indicated that in the future he would seriously consider using a more balanced approach to controversial issues of this sort. I volunteered to provide him with any needed articles or other references, and names of people available for interview. He was very agreeable to my offer. We'll see what happens.

—Douglas Kinney, D.M.D.

Breast boom, or just bust ???

As reported in the *St. Petersburg Times* and picked up by AP, and as he has explained on *Eye on Tampa Bay*, *Murphy in the Morning* (Ch. 10), and *A Current Affair*, local hypnotist Michael Stivers has recently been making a name for himself, and a financial killing, by performing "non-surgical breast enlargement" at his clinics in St. Petersburg and Largo. Stivers is charging \$1,000+ for his 8- to 12-week hypnotic course, guaranteed to please or your money back (before the 3rd session).

Stivers is described in *Times* medical reporter Carol Gentry's July 21 article as "a 34-year-old former police officer and professional wrestler whose stage name was 'Pretty Boy Behning.'" He acknowledges that he has no medical training, but apparently is in violation of no laws. And, as is the case with psychics and astrologers, most of his clients (if those interviewed in the paper and on TV can be believed) swear that the effect is real (Stivers estimates a 75% success rate).

Gentry quotes Dr. Charles B. Mutter of Miami, former president of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, as saying that "This is the unauthorized practice of medicine." Michael R. Nash, president of the American Psychological Association's hypnosis division, told Gentry, "I know of no reputable person who claims that hypnosis can change the contour of the body."

Ch. 10 reporter Dave Wagner interviewed TBS founder Gary Posner by phone, who pointed out that using a tape measure is subject to variables such as degree of inflation of the lungs and tightness of pull, and that a woman with an emotional and a \$1,000 investment, with an expectation of success, might honestly report that she measured an increase in her breast size.

Carol Bryant, identifying herself to the press as a client of Stivers', claims a three inch gain after eight sessions. Yet, despite his allegedly remarkable abilities, Stivers modestly offered on *A Current Affair* that, "I am not a God by any means...[but] don't ever forget that Thomas Edison didn't have a formal education either."

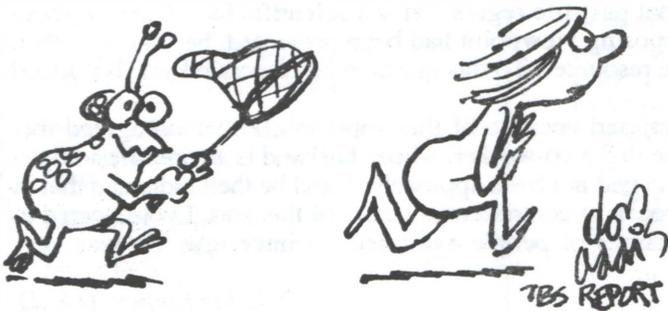
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SNIPPETS

James S. Gordon, professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University School of Medicine, has written an article for *Atlantic* magazine endorsing the reality of UFO abductions. Though he reportedly had previously dismissed the phenomenon as merely delusional, his opinion changed after he attended this year's Rocky Mountain Conference on UFO Investigation and listened to the stories being told under hypnosis. Example: "Hi, I'm Mary and I had my genitalia closely investigated by a giant grasshopper wearing skin-tight black coveralls." Concludes reviewer William Booth in this newsclipping, "Gordon raises the possibility that contactees were sexually abused, perhaps as children, and that they transferred the experience into a UFO delusion. Sounds plausible to me. But not to Gordon."

(*Washington Post via St. Pete. Times, Aug. 12*)



The prestigiously named Citizens Commission for Human Rights is actually a subsidiary of the Clearwater-based Church of Scientology, long an opponent of psychiatry and psychiatric drug therapy. For the past year, CCHR has been behind the highly publicized scare campaign to persuade the FDA to ban U.S. sales of Prozac, the world's top-selling antidepressant, claiming that it allegedly causes suicidal and/or violent behavior. But the FDA has determined that there is presently no evidence to substantiate such claims which, according to Harvard professor Martin Teicher, are largely the result of CCHR having seriously distorted the findings of his study of the drug.

(*Wall Street Journal, Aug. 2*)

"As a matter of law, the house is haunted." So declared the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court in Manhattan on July 18, in a 3-2 decision regarding a Victorian house in Nyack, N.Y. whose new owner, Jeffrey Stambovsky, wanted out, and the return of his \$32,000 down payment, after learning of the house's "ghoulish reputation." Helen Ackley, the former owner, in a 1977 *Reader's Digest* article had described one of the "poltergeists" as a "cheerful apple-cheeked man" who resembled Santa Claus. "My feeling is that Mrs. Ackley is a very neat old lady who likes to spin tales," said Stambovsky. "But if my wife is influenced enough by that stuff to feel uncomfortable, that's a good enough reason not to sink our life savings into the place. We were the

victims of ectoplasmic fraud."

(*St. Pete. Times, July 20*)

From our Lost & Found & Lost & Found Dept.: Published reports in May indicated that the "Lost Squadron" of Bermuda Triangle fame might have finally been located 10 miles off the Fort Lauderdale coast. It was later determined, however, that this was not the case, and that "Squadron 19," which ditched in the Atlantic in 1945, remains in limbo. But another prospect has been located by a group of underwater explorers, and the National Museum of Naval Aviation has received a request to allow them to recover and examine the wreckage. "The only way to tell is to actually take it out of the water or to take it to a certain depth and find the identification number," explained the museum's curator. [Late update: CNN reported on Aug. 26 that the plane has been recovered, but that the museum has not been able to identify it due to missing or unreadable identification plates and deterioration of the paint.

(*AP / St. Pete. Times, July 21*)

Tom Steenburg, a 30-year-old maintenance worker in Alberta, Canada, doesn't plan to continue indefinitely spending all of his spare time on his obsession with Bigfoot, as he has since childhood. Once he finds "hard, physical evidence that it exists, then I'll let the Smithsonian take over." But thus far, despite having investigated more than 100 reported sightings, and having a shelf full of plaster casts of allegedly beastly footprints, his Smithsonian dream apparently remains a distant one. Steenburg claims to be less than 100% convinced himself. "You have to be skeptical to do research."

(*AP / St. Pete. Times, June 17*)



Pat Robertson's new Virginia Beach hotel will allow anyone as a guest, regardless of religious belief. But job applicants, to be considered for hiring, must affirm a belief in Jesus, and profess that faith has changed their lives. The matter is presently under review by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

(*AP / Tampa Tribune, Aug. 16*)

["Snippets" are derived and rewritten from the referenced sources. Please send your clippings to the editor.]

Major Tampa Tribune article on psychics, skeptics

The Tampa Bay Times magazine section of the August 15 *Tampa Tribune* featured a major article by Denise Gee entitled "Modern Mystics." Both James Randi and Gary Posner were quoted at the end of the piece (though Gee erred when she said that TBS was founded "almost 10 years ago"). Although a number of "psychics" were more than happy to be interviewed, Gee reported that "Most of the 'roadside' fortune tellers contacted weren't interested in talking. They said they felt battered by skeptics and investigations of fraud, and preferred to remain known only to their faithful customers."

"Spontaneous Human Combustion"

A front-page story in the June 30 *St. Petersburg Times*, "Burning death remains mystery," dealt with the gruesome demise of Mary Reeser, who literally melted away to nearly nothing one summer night in 1951. To read reporter Jacquin Sanders' version of this case of alleged SHC (defined by him as when "for no known reason, the human body suddenly catches fire"), "Nothing could explain the fury of flames that consumed a human body, shrank its skull and then, as if obeying some unearthly power, simply stopped, pulled back, disappeared." But no neighbors reported seeing any such so-called "fire from hell," and heat, no matter how intense, cannot shrink a skull.

For those familiar with the investigation by researchers Joe Nickell and John Fischer, as published in the Summer 1987 *Skeptical Inquirer*, no paranormal phenomenon need be invoked. Reeser, an obese woman, had apparently taken a sleeping pill and then fallen asleep with a lighted cigarette. "What probably happened," concluded Nickell and Fischer, "was that the chair's stuffing burned slowly, fueled by the melted body fat and aided by partially opened windows." And as for the legend of the 'shrunk skull,' "as a forensic anthropologist (David Wolf) theorized at our request, Mrs. Reeser's skull probably burst in the fire and was destroyed, and the roundish object could have been merely 'a globular lump that can result from the musculature of the neck where it attaches to the base of the skull.'"

Sanders (and, more importantly, his readers) would have learned all of this had he contacted TBS. His failure to do so was all the more disappointing given his familiarity with us - he had interviewed Gary Posner for a column, "Club hits you in the head with reality," shortly after TBS was founded. And the article was picked up by at least one other newspaper that we are aware of (the *Scottsdale, Arizona Progress*). But at least some readers had an opportunity to read Posner's "Letter to the Editor" on July 9. And no doubt even more read Neil Cote's column in the Pinellas editions of the July 5 *Tampa Tribune* ("Skepticism's flames fanned by fire death") about Posner's reaction to the *Times* article.

"Randi responds to Geller" (continued from page 1)

As for his comment that I "libeled a friend" of his, that case, too, cannot be commented upon by me (as Mr. Geller is surely aware), since it is presently in the courts. Forgive me for following the advice of my lawyers. When the case has been resolved, I will be happy to go into detail on the facts of the matter.

Believe me when I tell you that lawsuits handled by New York lawyers (in particular) are *very* expensive. I ran back and forth between my Florida home and New York many times, and paid two lawyers at a rate of \$250 an hour (each!) for their work, over a period of 18 months. The cases were settled against Geller "with prejudice."

Anyone who wonders about Mr. Geller's comment that "it is difficult to believe that Randi has no further funds to continue [a defense]" is welcome to examine my checking and money market accounts (the only two I have) and the loans I have taken against my life insurance. Mr. Geller lives in a mansion outside London, which he admits is worth \$20,000,000. He has said in an interview:

There was a phase when I had Rolls Royces and ten Rolex watches* and I bought 500 silk shirts in one go... Having money frees you from a great deal of the stresses of life. You don't have to worry about bills and mortgages.

Somehow I can understand how he would find it difficult to believe my present situation...

The MacArthur grant has now stopped. A lot of it was used to enable me to travel and research books like *The Mask of Nostradamus*. It also allowed me to do free lectures at schools where they needed help badly, and in any case, I cannot now afford the very expensive costs of this continued litigation.

The money obtained from the last few MacArthur payments, and that earned by the Granada TV series in England, was paid directly to the lawyers. I'm currently almost paid up if and when other deals currently being negotiated work out. There are no guarantees.

Finally, Mr. Geller writes, "What [Randi] said about me is not the truth. I know that most of you are skeptics and perhaps not very interested in my viewpoint." I will answer for myself and will presume to answer for at least some of the skeptics, Mr. Geller. We are *very* interested in your viewpoint, but we are much more interested in the truth. Truth is something that can be established only by proper investigation, and it is not a matter of opinion, nor of "viewpoint." You have always been accustomed to making statements you expect to be believed by those who pay to see your act. Well, we'll see, won't we?

These matters are not proper subjects for discussion in this fashion, but Uri Geller's "Open Letter" required that I respond, lest his accusations be accepted as true. I will not fight this out here. He has brought the matter to court, and I am prepared to answer him there. Stay tuned.

* Later, asked about the Rolexes, Geller modified his statement. He said, "I don't know if they were all Rolexes. They could have been Constantine Vacherons or Piagets."

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Other skeptical sources on the paranormal:

• **The Skeptical Inquirer** •
Flagship journal of
CSICOP / Box 703 / Buffalo, NY 14226

• **Free Inquiry** •
A secular humanist journal
Box 5 / Buffalo, NY 14215

• **Prometheus Books** •
47-page catalogue
700 E. Amherst St. / Buffalo, NY 14215

• **CompuServe Skeptics
Teleconference** •
A monthly computer forum
3550 Watermelon Rd. #29-A
Northport, AL 35476

Geller promoting 1-900 psychic phone lines, also suing Timex

*[The following is excerpted from
Page Stephens' piece in the May/June
1991 issue of the South Shore (Ohio)
Skeptic.]*

When I saw Uri Geller on television the other day, he was promoting 1-900 numbers for psychics (after giving two of the silliest and most unscientific demonstrations of psychokinetic powers I have ever seen)...The program, by the way, was paid for by International Shoppers' Spree.

Geller is also suing Timex for an ad which features a fictional person who has psychokinetic powers. In the ad, the person, actor Tim Dry, bends a spoon and fork but can't stop a Timex. Geller suggests that this mimicked his "unique" talents.

According to an article in the *May 13 Springfield Republican*:

In papers filed in the U.S. District Court, Geller alleges that Timex's ad "depict[ed] a likeness of [him] attempting to do what [he] is known worldwide for doing - namely bending metal products and stopping watches." ...Geller also alleges that the portrayal of the psychic in the ad jeopardized deals with other companies who had planned to use him to endorse their products.

"Skeptically Speaking" in Mensa

Gary Posner, a member of Mensa, has been invited to write a regular column for Tampa Bay Mensa's monthly publication, the *Tampa Bay Sounding*. Entitled "Skeptically Speaking," the column will be dealing with the activities of TBS, as well as Posner's efforts as founder of the national "Skeptics" Member-to-Member Service within Mensa.

CLASSIFIEDS: Home needed for two remaining TBS T-shirts (large white and large blue). \$10 each (plus \$3 P&H). Contact TBS.

Please renew promptly if your subscription has expired! Thank you.

Merrell vs. Renier Update

On August 27, Orlando "psychic" Noreen Renier's "Motion for Summary Judgement" was granted for Count I of Tennessee skeptic John Merrell's lawsuit against her (i.e. the Count was dismissed), but was denied for Counts II and III (see Fall '90 for details of suit). Thus the case will proceed, and a jury trial is now anticipated for next spring.

A hearing has also been set for October 10 on Merrell's motions to dismiss Renier's countersuit and to compel more specific answers to his interrogatories (see Spring '91).

Hoagland's Mars skeptically reviewed

Alex Heard's "Flights & Fancy" column in the *July Air & Space Smithsonian* magazine deals with Richard Hoagland and his claims of a "face" and other "monuments" on Mars. Heard had been referred to TBS by CSICOP Executive Council member Philp Klass, who had followed our reporting about Hoagland in our newsletters. Armed with material provided by us (including audio tapes from some of Hoagland's *For The People* radio appearances) as well as his own research, a fair and skeptical portrait of Hoagland's claims ("Hoagland: buffoon or Einstein of the 1990s?") and Chuck Harder's *FTP* program ("an overheated radio talk show") emerged.

Scientific American covers Geller vs. Randi

The September issue of *Scientific American* contains an article by John Rennie about the Randi/Geller libel actions (pp. 39-40).

LETTERS • READERS' FORUM

Editor: I was happy to read of TBS's donation of the first year's cost of the *Skeptical Inquirer* to the Tampa library. I hope that the Manatee library may some day be so benefitted.

I also note that Uri Geller has a 1-900 number to call, as advertised on TV.

C. J. Wenger
Bradenton

Perhaps TBS will be in a position to make more donations in the future, but at present our financial structure is quite precarious. In the meantime, we would certainly encourage individuals to do so to their local libraries, or to any other institutions of their choosing. Also, see item re: Geller's 1-900 number on page 6. —G.P.

Editor: Re: The "Open Letters" from Randi and Mr. Geller in the Summer issue. Neither did much but fingerpoint. They didn't really answer each other's accusations.

As a skeptic, I tend to support Mr. Randi, but his statements were vague and undocumented. Mr. Geller's were no better.

Perhaps a third person could determine who is leading us "down the garden path."

Charles E. Jones, Jr.
St. Petersburg

The courts will be serving as the "third person." —G.P.

Editor: Just a few lines in an attempt to un muddy some of the waters surrounding "creation science," since I keep reading inaccurate comments from those who do not believe in it and do not want it taught in schools (most recently, Dr. Scott's "Letter to the Editor" in the last issue).

There are actually *two* stories of creation in Genesis. They had their origin in the two tribes of Israel before they

joined together, and both continued to be transmitted as part of their collective traditions after that union. Consequently, they were both included in their written history when it was compiled.

These two stories can be readily identified by the use of the words "God" and "Lord God" in the English language text of Genesis. The first (Ch. 1:1-2:4a) and the second (Ch. 2:4b-25) are mutually exclusive as far as the mechanics of creation is concerned. However, most people traditionally have seen them as one continuous account.

I doubt if the people who created these stories and held them in their tribal treasuries for centuries believed they were literally true, any more than a mother really believes that a stork brings babies when she tells that story to a young child. However, all of these stories provide a satisfactory answer to the question "Where did I come from?" for children of various ages.

I know of no true theologian who believes in the literal interpretation of any part of the Bible. Unfortunately, not all religious denominations hold Truth in very high esteem, and so we have millions of "creation science" advocates.

A substantial part of the blame for this situation must lie with the way most people interpret the First Amendment. It was not intended to prevent "religion" from being taught in public schools. Just the opposite: It allowed it to be taught. What has happened over the years is that in our attempts to keep denominationalism out of the schools, we also kept out the truth about western religious history. It is similar to what would have happened had we, as a result of the Scopes trial, decided to not teach biology. It is, therefore, not too surprising that a substantial number of otherwise rational people have rather unique religious beliefs.

Keep up the good work (but watch out for the windmills!).

The Rev. W. Thomas Leckrone
Hudson

TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS MEMBERSHIP / SUBSCRIPTION / DONATION / BACK ORDER FORM

- YES, I wish to support the Tampa Bay Skeptics in its efforts to examine and report upon paranormal and fringe-science claims. Enclosed is my check for \$10. Please enroll me as a member of TBS, and begin my annual subscription to *TBS Report* with issue _____ . Renewal Please accept this donation of \$ _____ .
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- Please send back issues of _____ (@ \$2.50 per) (Vol. 1 No. 1 gratis) [Some 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.

V4N2



Tampa Bay Skeptics
Quarterly Membership Meeting

Scheduled: Hypnotic breast enlargement
Randi on *Murphy in the Morning* (June 3)
Penn & Teller on *Letterman* (ridiculing Kreskin)

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 — 11:00 A.M.
CARMEN MANIS ROOM (2ND FLOOR)
PUBLIC LIBRARY, 900 N. ASHLEY DR., TAMPA

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WWNZ Radio (Orlando) to feature TBS

Gary Posner has been booked on the *Ken Charles Show* on WWNZ-AM 740 to discuss TBS, on Friday the 13th (appropriately) of September, from 8 to 9 PM.

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Late Randi Update:

James Randi, recently returned from overseas, reports generous contributions for the Fund from the European skeptics groups, and support from the media in England, where his new TV series, *James Randi Investigates*, is now airing. Geller is apparently now threatening to sue London's *Sunday Times* for having said, "Uri Geller, too, has faded from view...If Geller is remembered at all it is for the Uri Award, an artistically bent spoon atop a see-through plinth which Randi gives annually to the charlatans of his choice."



6219 Palma Boulevard #210
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The James Randi Fund
Box 659
El Cerrito, CA 94530

This newly established fund will assist James Randi (and others as monies allow) to defray the costs incurred in defending against lawsuits brought by proponents of the paranormal.

The fund's trustee, Robert A. Steiner, CPA, is a fellow of CSICOP, co-founder of the (San Francisco) Bay Area Skeptics, and past president of the Society of American Magicians. He advises consulting your tax advisor about deducting donations as a business (not a charitable) expense.

TBS "\$1,000 Challenge"

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. Please contact TBS for complete details.

TBS Update Service

Call us at (813) 867-3533 from 9 to 5 on weekdays, for recorded information about any late-breaking TBS or media events, changes in meeting plans, etc., or just to leave us a message. Or send a stamped return envelope for us to keep on hand for our more occasional mail Updates.

FIRST CLASS