

Tampa Bay Skeptics

REPORT

VOLUME 4 NO. 4 SPRING 1992

The Incredible Gall of "The Amazing Kreskin"

by Gary P. Posner

"It's not a magic act," Kreskin assured the viewers of WTVT-TV's *Eye on Tampa Bay* on January 7. "The Amazing Kreskin," billed for years as "The World's Foremost Mentalist," and in town for a January 8-12 engagement at Clearwater's Showboat Dinner Theatre, was responding to host Kathy Fountain's question as to what he means by "mentalist." But if Kreskin's isn't a magic act, it's the closest imitation of one this side of Uri Geller's.

Kreskin, in his typically ingratiating and self-promoting manner, began the TV show by mentioning that Johnny Carson's "Carnac is a satire of me" (but not a word about his own routine being modeled after that of the 1940s and early '50s magician "The Great Dunninger"). He also wasted little time in complimenting Fountain's earrings and, noting that "very few cities" have live interview shows like *Eye*, he implored the audience to "hold onto this show." Had a member of TBS been available for the audience, as we had earlier planned, Kreskin might have regretted those words before the 30 minutes were over, and might not have been motivated to say "I love you" to Fountain as the show's final few seconds ticked away.

As always, Kreskin disowned the label "psychic" ("I cannot foretell the future") while claiming psychic-type powers ("I can read people's thoughts"). As an example of his non-psychic yet amazing "intuition," Kreskin told of how three years ago, "I studied for 30 hours" before correctly predicting "for one of the networks" the six main Academy Award winners, even noting that "in the foreign movie category I couldn't come to a decision [between] two movies....[and] it was the first time in years that it was a tie and both movies [won]." When he added that "They

opened [the predictions] the next day on the air" (i.e. that his alleged predictions were only revealed *ex post facto*), the audience members' applause attested to their lack of appreciation of the point's real significance.

Eye producer Joyce Pearson had notified TBS of Kreskin's appearance about a week in advance, allowing us time to provide much skeptical material, including three articles from the National Capital Area Skeptics (NCAS) newsletter *Skeptical Eye*, and the two chapters from *The Psychology of the Psychic* (Kammann and Marks, Prometheus Books, 1980) which dissect/debunk Kreskin's entire stage routine. As a result, Kathy Fountain asked Kreskin to address "the charges by some skeptics who say this is really a glorified magic act, that a magician could do

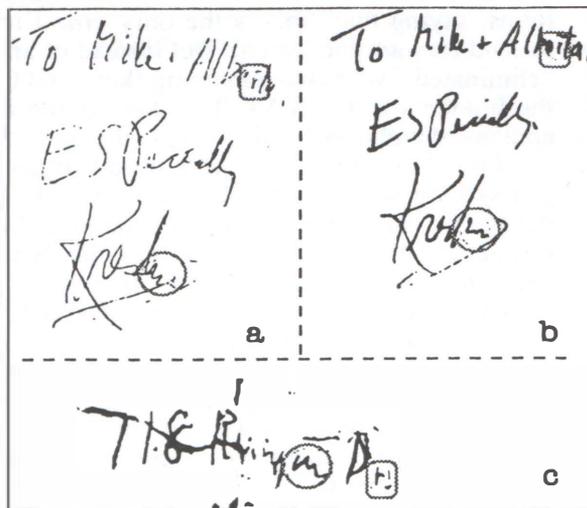
the things that you do." (The eyebrows of one of the two audience members visible in the camera shot rose dramatically with that question.)

In his response, Kreskin stated that "I still offer \$50,000 to anybody in the world who can prove I employ paid assistants, confederates in any phase of my program. No one has ever collected it." (But no one makes that charge.) He added, "I don't have that much skepticism [about me] any more....People have seen me work for so many years with celebrities and the general public on television. If things were rigged, by now someone would have blown the whistle, because people who work for royalty even write exposés on what people eat

and throw away in the garbage....In our culture today, trust has gone out the window...and I haven't had any problems through my career." Although Fountain possessed a few 18 ct. gold "whistles," including one recovered from "the garbage," she opted to break for a commercial — I sympathize with her dual, and sometimes conflicting, responsibilities as both gracious host/inter-viewer and anchor/newswoman.

The incriminating "garbage" involved the one trick in Kreskin's stage show whose solution could only be deduced by Marks and Kammann, and which was finally

(continued on page 2)



Circled elements reveal similarities in book and program inscriptions by Kreskin (a and b) and secret message address (c). [Courtesy NCAS]

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), though TBS is an autonomous local group and is not formally affiliated with CSICOP.

TBS's "\$1,000 Challenge" is open to anyone claiming verifiable scientific proof of the reality of ESP, UFOs, dowsing, astrology, or any paranormal phenomenon. Please contact us for complete details.

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

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"The Amazing Kreskin" (continued from page 1)

solved 10 years later by members of NCAS during a 1990 D.C. area performance by Kreskin. After collecting written messages from the audience, Kreskin had someone select one, memorize it, tear the paper into pieces and throw the scraps on the floor. Kreskin, of course, correctly "divined" the message — but NCAS members later recovered the scraps while Kreskin was backstage, compared the handwriting on the message to *Kreskin's own*, and published their findings in their Winter 1990-91 *Skeptical Eye* (see page 1 inset).

When the program resumed, Kreskin informed Fountain that "I haven't said anything — the folks of the staff know this — but this test is going to be done with you. But I didn't want you to know." Fountain, in the 'spirit' of things (so to speak), responded, "Oh, really! Oh, gee! I hate when they surprise me!" And as the audience laughed, Kreskin added, "Ah, no, no. We've pre-arranged nothing. You don't know what I'm going to do, do you?," to which Fountain replied, "No, no, I don't." Kreskin then wrote a hidden word on a card and sat it against the table, facing it away from the audience and camera. He then asked Fountain to collect five items from the audience. After she did so, and handed them to Kreskin, he stated, to emphasize the spontaneity of the situation, "And I'll tell you, I did not intend to do this," but that he decided to only after a questioner made a point about Kreskin's ability to, in Kreskin's words, "preset the mind" of his audience.

Kreskin lined up the five items across the desktop, and after having Fountain momentarily close her eyes as he passed his hand in front of her face (adding an element of 'mysticism' to the proceedings), he asked her to "touch one of the items" (she picked up the ring). Without missing a beat, Kreskin then requested that she "pick up another item" with her other hand (she picked the scarf). He then told Fountain that "you've eliminated two of them," and placed them in a forward position on the table. He next asked her to push forward one of the three remaining items, saying that "this is the only time I'm going to ask you to do this" (she pushed forward the watch). But instead of announcing that *three* items were now "eliminated," with two remaining (keys and Certs), Kreskin dramatically revealed the hidden word: "WATCH." And as the audience "oohed" and "aahed" and applauded enthusiastically, Fountain asked, "How did you do that?"

I would not ordinarily have used two paragraphs to describe this parlor trick, just as I am not going to waste one describing the card trick with which Kreskin concluded the show (except to mention that although he said that his deck contained only the 13 hearts, it was clearly twice that thick). But a curious thing had happened as Fountain was in the process of collecting the five items from the audience. As she moved and looked about, she asked, "O.K. Who did he s...? [say?]....What was the fifth one? [Audience members then responded 'Scarf'].... The scarf, O.K." It appeared that Kreskin must also have known, *before* he wrote "WATCH," what five objects were going to be selected, without even needing to employ his celebrated powers of "mentalism." And given the fluidity of the rules of the game, he would have succeeded no matter which of the five items had been written on the card.

Before he left Tampa Bay, Kreskin hopefully had an opportunity to read my "Letter to the Editor" in the *St. Petersburg Times* (published on Jan. 11 in response to the *Times'* favorable Jan. 3 article). And TBS had delivered for him, at the Showboat, our Jan. 8 "Press Release" in which we offered "to pay \$10,000 (10 times our usual standing offer) to 'The Amazing Kreskin' for a successful demonstration of even one of his 'mentalism' feats, under conditions that eliminate the possibility of a non-'Amazing' explanation..." We received no response from the media or from Kreskin (although it is possible that he was more cautious than usual toward the end of his Showboat engagement — see page 7 letter).

Kreskin had pointed out during his *Eye on Tampa Bay* appearance that his new book, *The Secrets of The Amazing Kreskin*, had already entered its third printing after only six weeks. That Prometheus Books is its publisher is of concern to many who admire Prometheus' reputation as a source of credible information on such subjects as psychology and the paranormal. Ironically, the *real* secrets of "The Amazing Kreskin" were published by Prometheus, back in 1980, in *The Psychology of the Psychic*.

Eye on Tampa Bay follows-up on John Monti's search for Tiffany Sessions

Noting that "We in the media have, I think, sometimes a bad habit of getting people worked up about a story such as this, and then not telling people whatever happened," host Kathy Fountain devoted her January 27 *Eye on Tampa Bay* program (WTVT-TV) to following-up on "psychic detective" John Monti's attempt to locate Tiffany Sessions (see our headline story last issue). Fountain added that "[some] people...thought, when they saw the [television] news coverage, that [Monti] had found Tiffany," the young woman who disappeared three years ago off the University of Florida campus in Gainesville.

Monti had claimed on the November 4 edition of *Eye* that later that week he and Tiffany's mother would "take her [Tiffany's] route...from where she left the college to where she is." But when asked by Fountain if Monti had indeed taken her to where her daughter is, Mrs. Sessions answered, "No, unfortunately....We walked around, and we took a route that he said that he thought that she went...but we came to nothing."

Fountain later said that her producer, Joyce Pearson, had recently telephoned Monti, and was told that "he's not through working with [Sessions] on this case," but that "the 'media circus'...interfered with his ability to concentrate." Sessions then told Fountain that "I received two telephone calls from his assistant last night...and that's the first time that I've talked to her since they left [on November 8]....They claimed they had heard that I was going to be on a show today, and they wanted to make sure that it was going to be positive....I haven't worked with him since he left." When asked if she would "pick up where you left off" with Monti, Sessions answered "No," but would tell him to "do what you have to do, and if you find something, call me." A viewer/caller during the show, identifying himself as Jim Basil, the ex-police chief of Buckland, Massachusetts, stated that he had worked with Monti on a murder case, and that although Monti had indicated that the murderer was still alive, he was later found to have been long dead, "hanging from a tree.... [Monti offers] a lot of hopes, but his results leave a little bit to be desired."

Sessions noted that "Mr. Monti was probably the 25th psychic" that she had worked with in her effort to locate her missing daughter, and that she continues to work with psychics who come forward to offer assistance. But although she told Fountain that she believes her daughter to still be *alive*, she also said that *every* psychic, including John Monti, has told her that her daughter is *dead*. Yet, in response to further questioning, Sessions declared her continued belief that "John does have some psychic

Merrell vs. Renier: settlement pending

Contacted by *TBS Report* for a late update, Tennessee skeptic John Merrell reports only that he is presently negotiating with Orlando "psychic" Noreen Renier to settle once and for all their longstanding and bitter litigation. Beyond that, he is unable to comment further; his attorney confirmed a pending "amicable settlement," beyond which he offered "...no further comment." Full story next issue???

abilities," and added that her use of psychics has been a positive experience in the sense that "it gives you a different perspective, and it puts your situation in the cosmic universe..."

A particularly distressing portion of the discussion was joined by Ivana DiNova, Director of the Missing Children's Help Center in Brandon. As a teary-eyed Mrs. Sessions listened quietly, DiNova told of how Sessions had called her several weeks earlier to report that she had just accompanied two Baton Rouge psychics to a field in Gainesville where her daughter's body supposedly lay buried. Shovel in hand, Sessions had dug holes, searching for her daughter's decomposed body — just in case the psychics were right about Tiffany being dead. When 4:00 came and no body had been found, the psychics told Sessions that this was because, continued DiNova, "Whoever took her killed her, and probably has her in four different parts, and buried her in four different places in this field." Added Sessions, "They also told me that after they mutilated her, that they burned her body — what was left of it....The hardest thing is not knowing. And if I have to dig, and I have to try and find my daughter's body, that's what I need to do. But I'd rather be more positive and hope that I'm going to find her alive and she's just going to walk in the door one day."

Fountain expressed her disappointment that a "well-meaning psychic" would "say something so cruel....I'm assuming this person is off the case." When asked by Fountain if families should consult psychics, DiNova said, "We don't recommend psychics.... [But] a good psychic who may have an ability to find a body, whether it's buried or wherever it may be, [should] go to law enforcement and take *them* there." But just before the show ended, a caller from Sarasota named Kelly, claiming to be a psychic who believes Tiffany is *alive* (the *first*) and in North Carolina, seemed to win Fountain's approval, and was encouraged to leave her phone number so that Mrs. Sessions could contact her.

—G.P.

[Editor's note: The astute reader will be pleased to learn that Detective Sargent Ray Durski, quoted in last issue's story about John Monti, has been promoted to Detective Sergeant.]

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SNIPPETS

Should ET ever phone Earth, news of this event will not be released to the public until verified through an elaborate process ratified by the International Academy of Astronautics. The Declaration of Principles Concerning Activities Following the Detection of Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence specifies that first, the radioastronomer must record the signal and contact other scientists around the world so that they may confirm its existence. The International Astronomical Union is to then be informed, which will in turn issue a report via the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams. After that, the Secretary General of the United Nations, the Institute for Space Law, and the International Telecommunications Union are to be told, the latter's job being to clear the channel of earthly radio traffic to allow the signal to be better heard. Only then is the general public to be informed that an ET signal has apparently been received. Why do I get the feeling that we'll be reading all about it in *The Star* first? (Or perhaps in *New York Newsday* — see next item.)

(*Parade Magazine*, December 29)



Shades of the counterfeit *N.Y. Times* article (see the Hoagland/Harder item next page)? Astronomer Brian Marsden, Director of the International Astronomical Union's Central Telegram Bureau in Cambridge, Mass., has suggested that the asteroid dubbed "1991 VG" which passed within 288,000 miles of Earth on Dec. 5 may actually be an alien craft. "I'm pretty convinced by this observation that it's an artificial object," said Marsden of the object's newly observed "winking" — it appears to become three times brighter, then darker again, every 7.5 minutes — which Marsden says is "reminiscent of a rapidly rotating satellite with highly reflective side panels." But even before this new observation, according to the article, "Marsden has always thought the object was probably artificial." Says Jet Propulsion Laboratory research astronomer Donald Yeomans, who still believes 1991 VG to be simply a 30-foot-wide asteroid, "But there's still a chance it's a spacecraft, and we're looking into it."

(*New York Newsday* via *Buffalo News*, Dec. 10)

Dallas televangelist Robert Tilton who, through his *Success-N-Life* national TV show, rakes in more money than any of his fellow "preyers," has been sued by the state

of Texas. Attorney General Dan Morales informed Tilton in a January 10 letter that he has reason to believe that Tilton's ministry has "engaged in trade practices and charitable solicitations that may violate provisions of state law." Tilton has obtained a federal judge's order temporarily blocking the state's access to his financial records.

(*St. Pete. Times*, Jan. 23, Feb. 7 & Feb. 9)

The recently late tycoon Robert Maxwell has granted an exclusive interview to the British tabloid *The Sun*. British "psychic" Nella Jones, who brokered the deal, jumped the gun by saying that Maxwell has told her that he did not jump, nor did he accidentally fall, from his yacht. "He's not the pleasantest guy to get in touch with, let me tell you," added Jones. Gee, sorry, Nella.

(*AP* via *St. Pete. Times*, Jan. 4; *Baltimore Eve. Sun*, Jan. 7)

Scotland Yard has concluded that psychics are of no value to law enforcement agencies in solving crimes. Following a year's investigation, Detective-Chief Superintendent Eddie Ellison, quoted in London's *Daily Telegraph*, announced that "There were no cases of psychics either offering effective help or being invited [by Scotland Yard] to assist investigations." Another Scotland Yard spokesperson had earlier assured that "Whatever information we receive, from whatever source, is evaluated and followed up in the normal way." Retorts our friend Nella Jones, "I know how much help I have given Scotland Yard over the last year....When they say they never call on psychics for help, that's a lie."

(*AP* via *St. Pete. Times*, Jan. 26)

Russian astrologers are apparently as astute as their American counterparts. Tamara Globa, writing in *Pravda*, sees the coming two years as "especially dangerous for us. I can see state borders changing from the middle of 1992 up to the end of 1993." Her estranged husband Pavel, bylined in the Moscow Council daily *Kuranty*, sees that "War, famine and unemployment are coming." One question: Did either of them predict any of this *before* the Soviet Union had already self-destructed?

(*London Observer* via *St. Pete. Times*, Jan. 10)

The Florida State Board of Acupuncture has endorsed for Board membership Linda W. Chin, a Miami acupuncturist who advocates sterilizing acupuncture needles with "saliva" and reusing them in "emergency" situations. Her nomination by Governor Chiles was ratified by a 5-2 vote of the Senate Executive Business, Ethics and Elections Committee, and is now pending final approval by the full state Senate. Sen. Fred Dudley of Fort Myers says, "Her reputation in her profession appears to be very, very poor...and she has never passed the [state licensing] exam. What a sad state of affairs in Florida."

(*AP* via *St. Pete. Times*, Jan. 17)

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

Randi voices optimism over Geller lawsuit

James Randi has recently sent an upbeat note to friends and supporters: "Over 300 contributions [to The James Randi Fund — see p. 8 box], small and large, have come in so far. Three major payments...have been made to my legal advisors....The opposition has been frantically issuing inane accusations against me....Please bear with me until I'm able to properly discuss and refute the garbage....The judge in the case has ruled that Mr. Geller must now prove his psychic powers under deposition. *That* should be very interesting to see, don't you think? I can't wait....Our battle will soon be won, and with it some landmark decisions....Thanks for your needed support..."

Ch. 10 news director leaves Tampa Bay

Mel Martin, news director of WTSP-TV for the past three years, has left the area to become station manager of WINK-TV in Fort Myers. Martin, a subscriber to the *Skeptical Inquirer*, loyal reader of *TBS Report*, and critic of the manner in which the news media generally cover claims of the paranormal, had developed a good working relationship with TBS.

It was under Martin's stewardship that TBS was invited to accompany a Ch. 10 crew to Tarpon Springs, to assist his station's reporting on the 1989 "Weeping Icon" story. Last summer, it was Martin who contacted TBS requesting that we assemble a panel to address a meeting of the local chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, which Martin hosted at WTSP. And, as noted in our last issue, it was again Martin who alerted us to John Monti's arrival in town, and who did not wish to cover the story without input from TBS.

The Bay area's loss will be WINK's gain, and we wish Martin well.

Hoagland axed from *For The People*

Richard Hoagland, author of *The Monuments of Mars*, has been relieved of his post as "Science Advisor" to Chuck Harder's *For The People* radio program. But according to Don Ecker's article in *UFO* magazine (Vol. 7 No. 1, 1992, p. 21), it was not Hoagland's outlandishness but his scientific fastidiousness that earned him the ax.

Both Harder (who is based in White Springs, Florida) and Hoagland have been the subjects of articles in *TBS Report* as a result of their pro-paranormal promotions. One of Harder's was (is?) an alleged October 6, 1977 *New York Times* article about a newly discovered asteroid which, according to scientists named in the article, was exhibiting evidence of intelligent control, and which was expected to "take up an orbit around Earth just inside that of the Moon

on or about October 25."

The piece turned out to be a clever forgery (no such article was ever published in the *Times*) and, according to the *UFO* magazine story, "On one of Hoagland's weekly spots [on *FTP*], he attacked Harder on the air, lambasting him for giving out the story without, according to Hoagland, checking the facts." Oh, well. What does *For The People* need with a "Science Advisor" anyway?

Ed Walters' motives questioned

Writing in the January issue of his privately published *Skeptics UFO Newsletter*, CSICOP UFO Subcommittee Chairman Philip J. Klass examines one claim of Ed Walters, whose Gulf Breeze UFO photographs have been acknowledged by most UFOlogists to be a hoax. The following is excerpted with permission:

Ed Walters claims [on p. 31 of his book] that it was his concern for the safety and well-being of "our friends and neighbors" that prompted him to release his first UFO photos for publication in *The (Gulf Breeze) Sentinel*....If Walters' claim were true, surely the first people he should have alerted that he had been zapped by a UFO in his front yard would be his neighbors. Ed's closest neighbors were Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Morris, who lived next door for 16 months during the time when Walters claims the first and numerous subsequent UFO visits. Their residence was only 20 feet away....Yet Walters never alerted the Morris family to the potential threat, according to Mrs. Morris. Nor did Walters sound out the Morris family to determine if they also had seen a UFO....

According to Mrs. Morris, "On no occasion during that 16 month period did we see or hear anything in the slightest unusual. Nor did we ever hear, at the time or since, of any of the other nearby neighbors reporting anything — with the exception of Mr. Walters."

From "Previews of '92" (*Tampa Tribune*, Jan. 1) which included the predictions of Bay area movers and shakers in politics, business, science and the arts:

Gary Posner, founder, Tampa Bay Skeptics:

"I predict there would have been a midair collision of two jumbo jets on June 18, 1992, over the northeastern United States, but that while the planes are still 412 miles apart, a psychic will intervene to prevent the disaster. The planes will never get closer than 42 miles to each other. And no one will ever read or be aware that such a disaster was averted by the psychic.

"I predict Shirley MacLaine will suddenly die, possibly of a heart attack, and will be instantaneously reincarnated as herself. She also will be totally unaware this has taken place.

"I predict that a UFO will not land on the White House lawn in 1992.

"And I predict once again, virtually none of the real psychics' predictions will come to pass."

CSICOP workshop on magic, trickery and the paranormal

A workshop entitled "Magic for Skeptics: Trickery and the Paranormal" will be held on April 17-19 at the Ramada Hotel in Lexington, Kentucky. Sponsored by CSICOP through its Center for Inquiry Institute, the seminar will be led by Drs. Joe Nickell and Robert Baker, both from the University of Kentucky. Full details are available from TBS (for a stamped return envelope).

And TBS kudos... to the *Tampa Tribune* for Kevin Shinkle's skeptical February 13 Baylife article (quoting James Randi) on the "Living Light Institute" (details next issue).

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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 664 / Buffalo, NY 14226

• *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

"LETTERS" (con't. from page 7)

earthly orbit forever.

Unbelievable as it may seem, the shocking results of my calculations [on 3 included worksheets] indicate that the sun's force is over 2 1/2 times the earth's force. Our beautiful moon must begin to move closer to the sun and be lost to us forever unless the earth is also moving toward the sun. But from early January to the beginning of July, the earth is continually moving away from the sun (at about 17,000 km/day).

Now comes the strange (paranormal) part. The wisemen themselves expect the moon to defy the Laws of Motion by actually rejecting the sun's force and moving over 4,000 km. closer to earth during the next day, despite the 2 1/2 x greater pull of the sun.

If you concede that the moon will stay in orbit, negating either the Law of Gravity or the Laws of Motion, please send my \$1,000 check.

R. René, Port Richey

TBS Consultant Jack Robinson, who studied astronomy/physics at Yale and at Harvard (where he was awarded his doctorate), responds:

The data that René lists are generally correct, as is his calculated result for the sun's gravitational force on the moon relative to the earth's. However, his inference from this calculated result is not in accord with Newton's laws.

If the sun and the earth were stationary and fixed in place (93 million miles apart), and if the moon were placed between them (240,000 mi. from the earth) and released, then the moon would indeed fall toward the sun and away from the earth. However, the earth and moon are not stationary; rather, they are undergoing orbital motion, so the result is different.

The relevant law of motion is Newton's 2nd, which indicates: If there are forces acting on a body, that body experiences "acceleration" in the direction of the net

force (with an acceleration that is directly proportional to the net force). René's statements seem to confuse the concepts of "movement" and "acceleration," particularly in the case of orbital motion.

If a small, light body is in orbit around a very massive body, influenced only by the latter's force of attraction, the revolving body is "accelerated" toward the massive one, in the sense that its velocity changes as it revolves; and the direction of the change in velocity is toward the massive body.

The sun's gravitational force on the moon is greater than the earth's (not only at new moon, but at all times). Therefore, the moon "accelerates" toward the sun, and the way it does so is by going into orbit around the sun. But the earth also orbits the sun. And as both bodies orbit the sun, they interact with each other (due to their mutual gravitational attraction) in such a way that from the point of view of an earthly observer, the moon seems to revolve around the earth.

René correctly notes that on Feb. 3 the earth's distance from the sun is increasing, but so is the moon's. At the same time, both are undergoing "acceleration" toward the sun in response to the sun's gravitational force. "Acceleration" is always in the same direction as the net force causing it, although the direction of "motion" can be different. For example, a rock thrown upward from the earth's surface "moves" first upward and then downward. Its "acceleration" is always downward, losing speed as it rises, and gaining speed as it falls. Similarly, even though the moon always "accelerates" toward the sun, it does not necessarily "move" toward the sun and away from the earth.

The moon always *does* move in accord with Newton's laws of motion and gravity. I am confident that anyone well educated in physics and astronomy would concur.

—Jack Robinson, Ed.D.
Professor Emeritus, USF

LETTERS • READERS' FORUM

Dear Folks: Please cancel my subscription and membership with the Tampa Bay Skeptics (expired Vol. 4 No. 2). I am proud of my membership and happy with the newsletter, but pride and joy do not offset chronic illness and poverty. The choice is between you and cat litter — the kitties win. Sorrowfully,

[Name withheld], Tampa

TBS is continuing this member's subscription on a complimentary basis. If any members wish to make other contributions through TBS, we will pass them along. —G.P.

Editor: I attended Kreskin's performance at the Showboat Dinner Theatre on Sunday, Jan. 12. He began with a few warm-up tricks (linking rings, identifying card in shuffled deck, correctly reading messages from a collection of folded papers from audience). He then performed "mind-readings," and performed hypnosis on 20 people who came on stage.

Kreskin made no claims other than to be a "mentalist," whatever that is. All in all, a dull evening!

Mike Beedham, St. Petersburg

Editor: Congratulations on your continued good work and dedication.

Jake Schmid, Marco Island

Editor: Here are my own predictions for the future. They are not in any order — some may occur in a year or two, others not for a century or two. I am not a psychic; I prefer to think of myself as a "LOGIC." I do not have "ESP," but "ELP" (Extra-Logical Perception):

1) Bush will not be reelected! It always takes the Democrats to get us going again after a Republican recession/depression.

2) Hundreds of atomic weapons will find their way to

Iraq via the black market (Russia and other Commonwealth members need money and Saddam Hussein has plenty)! If or when the next Desert Storm occurs, the Patriot missiles will be called on to take out atomic missiles instead of Scuds!

3) Scientists will discover that the ozone layer really does NOT filter out UV light. Actually it is the low pressure oxygen that takes the energy from UV light to form the isotope of oxygen called ozone, which is merely a by-product of the reaction!

4) A manned round-trip to Mars will not be possible for another century. Insurmountable problems exist! But when we get there, large deposits of OIL will be found — which might prove that hydrocarbons don't always come from life, but life may have come from hydrocarbons! And with that thought in mind, I have one more prediction...

5) No one will have the courage and foresight to publish my predictions!

Lou Allsop (former member), Hudson

Wrong again, just as you were when you failed to renew your membership! —G.P.

Editor: Modern science tells us that Gravity is the only force controlling the motions of celestial bodies. On a hunch I discovered that today's wisemen have predicted that on Feb. 3, 1992, at 0900 hours UT, the moon will reach new moon phase and pass at right angles between the earth and the sun. At that instant, if the gravitational force from the earth and the sun were equal, the moon would continue on that same path, at right angles to both. In other words, the moon would continue to increase its distance from both major bodies until one force or the other became greater. Then, obeying Newton's Laws of Motion, it would vector toward the greater force — if the sun's pull were greater, the moon would be torn from its

(continued on page 6)

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