

Tampa Bay Skeptics

REPORT

VOLUME 6 NO. 2 FALL 1993

Psychic photography: a "how-to" (aka low-light instant photogramography)

by James Conrad

Although a skeptic of the paranormal, I acknowledge the existence of what is currently referred to as "psychokinesis" or "PK," in the context of it being a complicated, transitional evolutionary ability in some humans. My position is based upon what I have personally witnessed in other experiments. But what is described herein is simply a photographic effect which, though sure to induce amazement in uninformed observers, should not be accepted as evidence of anything paranormal. [More on PK at the end of this discussion.]

Late one night while doing ongoing research on psychokinetic detection and application methods, I made an interesting discovery involving Polaroid instant photography: the ability to produce eerie, brightly colored images which I call low-light instant photograms. At least this was a personal discovery — I don't know if others have already described this technique (Polaroid film that doesn't require peel-apart sections is a relatively young invention, introduced 20 years ago with the SX-70 camera), but I could find no mention of using instant photography in this manner in any book.

Follow these do-it-yourself instructions to produce your own "psychic" illusions:

1. Using a Spectra camera (my test instrument), switch off the flash to prevent accidental triggering. The exposure setting is irrelevant, since that circuitry will not activate during the process.

2. Open and insert a fresh pack of high-definition film. HD film was introduced in 1992 as an upgrade for the previous type (more about the film later). Discard the film pack's protective cover after it ejects.

3. Locate yourself, the camera, desired props (described next) and any witnesses in a dimly lit room. The level of visible light needed is surprisingly low.

Everything should look dark and gray — color should be imperceptible.

4. With the camera on a table edge or in your lap, open the film door, pull out the pack, and hold it in your hand (or set it on the table). Immediately place a selected prop (stencil, transparency, key, crucifix, or even your thumb [wipe first]) on the exposing film's surface. After about 10-20 seconds, quickly remove the prop, reinsert the pack and close the door. The developing film will automatically eject. Quickly place it in a light-sealed container and allow it to develop undisturbed for at least three minutes (the longer the better). Alternatively, it may be placed upside down on a flat surface or held against your body with full room lighting back on, though the results may not be as good.



5. Look at the photo. It should consist of a brownish silhouette or shadow image of the prop surrounded by a yellow background, or yellowish against a white background (various shades of green have also been produced). Subsequent tests have proven that the radiation involved can even pass through a piece of ordinary white paper, still producing the images on the film. Practice and experiment to achieve the best results.

With very little effort, anyone can produce a brightly colored photograph taken in a darkened room, to rival any claimed "psychic" photo. No radiation from the human body, normal or paranormal, is involved — the mechanics of the process occur in the film itself. Polaroid Spectra HD film, as well as 600 HD, contains 23 microthin emulsion layers (the old type had 19). More than 5,000 chemical reactions take place during developing. The sample photographs that I have provided to TBS (including the one of Jesus above) were produced specifically to show how a religious leader might be able to use this technique to mislead his or her followers, to achieve a cult status as well as financial gain.

With regard to my previously mentioned research on PK, I've come to the conclusion that the announcement of positive findings in that area has to be handled very carefully, and should come from the skeptical community

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GUEST COLUMN**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
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A Philosopher Looks At The UFO Controversy

By John Bryant

[Author of The Most Powerful Idea Ever Discovered and several other books, Mr. Bryant describes himself as an internationally recognized philosopher and logician who has been published in some of the world's most prestigious academic journals. His Socratic Press catalog can be obtained by writing to Mr. Bryant at P.O. Box 66683, St. Petersburg Beach, FL 33736-6683. This two-part column, reprinted with permission, is from the July and August 1993 issues of Tampa Bay Sounding, the monthly publication of Tampa Bay Mensa. It is followed by Gary Posner's rebuttal column from the August Sounding.]

Many people believe that scientific questions can be settled only by scientific investigation, but in fact there are always other dimensions to such questions which bear significantly on their answers. Such non-scientific dimensions are usually what might be called "philosophical," and are often involved with the methods of gathering data, or the interpretation of that data. One field in which philosophical considerations are particularly important is UFO research.

Perhaps the most striking example where philosophy bears upon UFOlogy is in the question of whether UFOs exist. The philosophical aspect of this question, at least when it is asked in the form "Do you believe in UFOs?," is that it is *completely illegitimate*. The question which should be asked is, "What is the probability which you attribute to the existence of UFOs?" In case it is not obvious, the distinction here is non-trivial, for if one is offered the choice between saying he "believes" or "disbelieves," then if he is less than absolutely certain (and how many of us are absolutely certain about *anything?*), he will probably answer that he "disbelieves."

The problem here, however, is not just a matter of the results of surveys on UFO beliefs, but is rather the far more subtle and troublesome one of what individuals themselves *think they think* about UFOs. More specifically, if a person believes that one must either "believe" or "disbelieve" in UFOs, then *he will not even recognize that there are other alternatives*, namely the set of statements "I believe in UFOs with probability *p*," where *p* ranges from zero to one. When people are constricted by linguistic conventions to think that there are only two alternatives when there are actually an infinite number, it is no wonder that their thinking about UFOs is confused.

With the above analysis in mind, it now becomes possible to assert on philosophical grounds that it is more likely than not that UFOs exist, and that UFOs are probably the product of extraterrestrial life forms. The argument for the existence of UFOs is simple in the extreme. The reports of UFOs are widespread, persistent, and numerous. They are usually given by reliable witnesses who have no ulterior motive for giving false accounts (indeed, they often have a motive not to give *any* account, namely, ridicule), and the accounts are consistent in crucial details in spite of coming from widely divergent and unconnected sources. The argument for the extraterrestrial hypothesis is equally simple, namely, the consistent-in-details reports from contactees, combined with the virtual certainty that our universe is teeming with other intelligent life forms. These facts make the ET hypothesis the simplest explanation fitting the facts, and thus (by Occam's Razor) the most scientifically acceptable one.

While it is sometimes said — and with good reason — that extraordinary hypotheses require extraordinary proof, I believe we are fully justified in saying that the reasoning given above supplies the "extraordinary" proof required for the existence of UFOs and the ET hypothesis. It may, however, be helpful to the reader to be a bit more precise in stating our proof.

To explain, we recall from elementary probability theory that the probability of getting heads in a single flip of a "fair" coin is 1/2, since this is the approximate ratio of the number of heads to the number of flips in any long series of flips. Also, we may calculate the probability of getting two flips in a row by multiplying the probability of getting a head on the first flip by the probability of getting a head on the second flip, i.e. $1/2 \times 1/2 = 1/4$. In general, we may calculate the probability of getting a series of *n* heads by multiplying the probability of getting a head on the first flip by itself *n* times (i.e. by raising this number to the *n*th power — note that the larger the *n*, the smaller the probability).

The relevance of this to the question of UFOs is that we may calculate the probability that a series of reports is false (which is, we may note, *greater* than the probability that *all* sightings are false) by taking the probability of the falsity of each one, say *f*, and raising it to the *n*th power. Thus consider two reports of unconnected individuals, each one of which gives the same crucial details about an ET encounter. It is intuitively obvious that, if the

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“The UFO Controversy” (continued from page 2)

accounts were false, the likelihood of both persons giving the same crucial details is extremely unlikely. Hence, if the two accounts square in crucial details, then the probability of either account's falsity is very small. So consider the probability that a series of n accounts by unconnected persons all giving the same crucial details is false (this is a *necessary* condition of the truth of the non-existence of UFOs). This is represented as *fraised* to the n th power, a *vanishingly small number*. Hence the probability of all accounts being true *approaches one asymptotically*; i.e., it is virtually certain that all such accounts are substantially true. □

In Part One, I demonstrated that not only is it probable that UFOs exist, but also that it is probable that the UFOs are manned by extraterrestrial beings. This demonstration is important not only because of the result obtained, but also because it shows in an ironclad scientific manner that the belief in UFOs and the ET hypothesis are not products of the loony bin, as the skeptics would have us believe, but are rather *necessary consequences of the application of mathematical reasoning to scientifically indisputable data points*. I will now draw some conclusions from our analysis which I believe the reader will find illuminating.

The first conclusion which can be drawn from our analysis is that debunking of particular UFO cases has ceased to be relevant to the question of UFO existence, though such debunking may have other uses, such as exposing some particular individual's lucrative fraud. The reason for this irrelevance is that the data is so overwhelming that if a substantial number of cases — even a majority — were found to be false, this would still not affect the reasoning which we have given in our earlier analysis.

Another way in which philosophical considerations enlighten the UFO debate is in noting that the argument of skeptics to the effect that UFO believers have a psychological “need to believe” is not only irrelevant to the question of UFO existence, but is more than likely a covert recognition on the part of the skeptics that *they* have a need to *disbelieve*. That is, if UFOs were shown unequivocally to be real, this would be a psychological doomsday for the skeptics, whose beliefs are rooted in a comfortable conventionality in which everything is stable, predictable, known, or otherwise “under control.” Of course, the psychological dislocation which unequivocal proof of UFO reality would bring the world may perhaps be why so many vociferous skeptics are operating. They may well be government agents who are hoping to postpone UFO recognition long enough to allow disbelievers to die off, so that society will not find the reality so shocking.

Speaking of skeptics, it is well to realize that the philosophical orientation of most such individuals is a humanistic/atheistic one (Paul Kurtz, founder of the debunker's organization CSICOP, is a former president of the American Humanist Association), and that because of this, skeptics view UFOs as a form of modern mythology akin to religion. While it cannot be denied that there is a religious element in the faith of the UFO “true believers,” it should also be noted that UFology presents religion with one of its most serious challenges ever. For not only does the existence of UFOs completely upend

conventional cosmological beliefs, it virtually spits in the face of religion's man-centered dogmas.

Yet another philosophical consideration which throws light on the question of UFO existence is the fact that the world picture which has been put together by establishment science is in serious disarray in many other areas besides UFOs. There are, for example, serious challenges to science in the areas of bacteriology (Royal Rife, Gaston Naessens, *et al.*), cosmology (Big Bang theory), medicine (chelation therapy, vitamin C therapy) and so on through a list far too long for this article. The point is that establishment scientists arrogantly presume themselves to be the high priests of knowledge, and anyone who dares to challenge their status is automatically dismissed as a kook. Accordingly, ideas which challenge the “old paradigm” — to use the phrase of one of the best known critics of science, Thomas Kuhn — are simply not going to get a hearing until the old generation of scientists dies off.

Perhaps the most important thing about the UFO debate is its demonstration of the power of Establishment ideas, even when these ideas directly conflict with what most people believe. In particular, even though a majority express a belief in UFOs, this subject is absent from the academic journals, and nearly absent from the mass media except for the lowest forms, such as the tabloids. However, UFOs are by no means the only subject to demonstrate a hiatus between Establishment opinion and popular belief. For example, the racial politics of the Establishment — affirmative action, race norming, minority set-asides, school integration, forced busing, and similar policies — are widely hated, and yet the government has managed to implement these policies nationwide with minimal resistance. I think we ought to be frightened about what this easy manipulation demonstrates about our society, our government, and most especially, ourselves. □

Gary Posner's reply:

Bryant ventures across the line into the “scientific” arena when he claims that “the ET hypothesis [is] the simplest explanation fitting the facts, and thus (by Occam's Razor) the most scientifically acceptable one,” and in claiming that his probability theory discussion “shows in an ironclad scientific manner” that “it is probable that the UFOs are manned by extraterrestrial beings.”

As he quite correctly notes, UFO reports are “widespread, persistent and numerous,” often “given by reliable witnesses who have no ulterior motive.” And many accounts are indeed “consistent in crucial details.” But although *philosophically* interesting, anecdotal case reports bear no relationship to the burden of proof imposed by the rules of *science*.

The universe probably is “teeming with other intelligent life forms.” But this in no way supports the notion that reported UFOs must be ET spacecraft, just as the fact that history is teeming with dead people offers no weight in favor of the widespread, persistent, numerous, often seemingly reliable and consistent (white, shadowy, with long gowns) reports of ghosts.

The “reliability” of human perception is grossly overrated. Sudden encounters with unexpected and unusual events, such as those which generate “genuine” UFO reports, play tricks with the mind as it struggles to find a niche in which to file the

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SNIPPETS

More than 50 people from all over the continent attended the Angels and Nature Spirits Conference in August, held in Angel Fire, New Mexico. The festivities included "an evening of fun and games with the local nature spirits and fairy folks" (defined as "intelligent energy fields without form") and a roundtable discussion about such things as the gender of the participants' guardian angels. Aromatherapists also led a scented toothpick exercise, since fragrant oils provide "liquid telephone lines into other dimensions."

(AP via St. Pete. Times, Aug. 20)

Local "psychic" Larry Horne has been a featured attraction at the Safety Harbor Spa since last October, giving free lectures on Tuesday and Saturday evenings. Obviously Horne's psychic powers do not include healing, as he has suffered two heart attacks and four strokes, and must take 43 pills daily for health reasons. Horne, who has a Masters degree in business administration, also performs private readings for \$60-\$75.

(Suncoast News [Countryside/Dunedin], Aug. 21)

Connecticut psychiatrist Bruce Greyson says that "We need to have mysteries. The world can be a very frightening place. . . . So I think we need to retreat into fantasy, abandon reality and think about things that are beyond our knowledge." Investigative writer Joe Nickell adds that people often respond angrily to his solutions of such mysteries as the Shroud of Turin and crop circles: "You get the feeling that these people don't want an answer." He believes that some of the fascination with the paranormal is a way of saying, "Well, science doesn't know everything, and . . . I don't want it to." Anthropology professor Kenneth L. Feder notes that if you have 20 years of energy and emotion invested in a particular position, you're not eager to see it overturned.

(Hartford Courant via Sarasota Herald-Tribune, Aug. 4)

Carrying signs such as "UFOs are real and the Government knows" and "Stop the Cosmic Watergate," pickets from "Operation Right to Know" marched in front of the White House on July 5, demanding "full disclosure of government UFO secrets and an open, public inquiry into the phenomena." The 45 or so picketers were reportedly outnumbered by reporters, many of whom found "Nantra" to be their favorite interview, as she described the most recent of her hundreds of trips aboard "starships." "I put my hand on a light and whoosh, I now know how it feels to move at the speed of light," claimed Nantra. "I was flying the craft."

(AP via St. Pete. Times, July 6)

From Russell Baker's syndicated column about the "Operation Right to Know" picketers: "I tend to believe almost anybody who says the government is suppressing the facts. That's what comes of living through [Vietnam, Watergate, etc.]. . . . So, I am in no hurry to ridicule people who say the government is engaged in a UFO cover-up.

Truth to tell, being a romantic as well as a skeptic, I'd like there to be extraterrestrial things fooling around with Earth. . . . Still, the skeptical part of me resists the UFO people. The question I have never been able to answer satisfactorily is, Why Earth? . . . The fact is that compared to [them], Earth people are as dumb as cabbages. So dumb [we] haven't even figured out how to crack the [speed of] light barrier. . . . Oh sure, maybe to amuse [themselves they might] stop, pick up a couple of these cabbage brains, bring them into [their UFO] and have a little fun with them. . . . Personally, I can't see [them] hanging around.

(NY Times via Sarasota Herald-Tribune, July 16)

Recent question to Marilyn vos Savant's weekly *Parade Magazine* column: "Is there any truth in palmistry? I have a short lifeline, and I'm fearful. . . ."

Marilyn's answer: ". . . the only reason a palm-reader pretends to find something of interest in *your* palm is so that you'll put something of interest in his or hers."

(Parade magazine, Aug. 1)



Rescue workers searching for survivors of a hotel collapse in Thailand called upon two Chinese spirit mediums to help in locating bodies. The psychics sprinkled dust on a round table next to the ruins, and on themselves, and then wrote some Chinese characters in the dust with a fork. Whether these heroic efforts proved successful or not was left unreported.

(AP via St. Pete. Times, Aug. 17)

A study has concluded that ye of little faith have a fourfold increased risk of death within six months after cardiac surgery, compared to those who derive comfort from religion. But Dr. Thomas E. Oxman's study, presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, found that regular participation in organized group activity (such as an historical society, local government, or senior citizens center) was also protective.

(Internal Medicine News, July 15)

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

Looking for Mr. GoodBook

Many TBS members may wish that they could afford to stock their own bookcases full of skeptical titles, such as those available from Prometheus Books (and generally unavailable in the local bookstores). But let's face it — we're talking hundreds and hundreds of dollars. However, there is a way for TBS members, at least those who live in Pinellas county, to have access to such books. It's with the Pinellas County Public Library Cooperative Program.

The Cooperative consists of 17 member libraries and branches in various Pinellas communities (e.g. Dunedin, Gulfport, Palm Harbor, Safety Harbor, etc.). It also includes all six branches of the well-stocked St. Petersburg Public Library. Most importantly, a member can borrow books from any library in the Cooperative through its interlibrary loan program, free of charge. And a Cooperative card is free to any Pinellas resident (including those, like me, who live in unincorporated areas). Thus, by having access to 17 libraries rather than the branches of just one community, you have many more books available to you.

Here's a short list of some skeptical titles available through the Cooperative:

Robert A. Baker — *They Call It Hypnosis*
Robert Basil (ed.) — *Not Necessarily the New Age*
Kendrick Frazier (ed.) — *The Hundredth Monkey*
Martin Gardner — *Science: Good, Bad and Bogus* • *The New Age: Notes of a Fringe-Watcher* • *On the Wild Side* (his latest collection of *Skeptical Inquirer* essays)
C.E.M. Hansel — *The Search for Psychic Power* (A classic!)
Philip J. Klass — *UFOs: The Public Deceived*
Joe Nickell — *Mysterious Realms* • *Secrets of the Supernatural*
James Randi — *Flim Flam* • *The Mask of Nostradamus*
Robert Sheaffer — *The UFO Verdict: Examining the Evidence*

And there are others. I suggest that Pinellas members take advantage of this terrific service by visiting your local library, or by calling 535-7979.

—Greg Simpson

“Psychic photography” (continued from page 1)

rather than the pro-paranormal side. My own investigative concern is with the observable, repeatable effect, not with statistical analyses of large numbers of tries.

Unfortunately, there are matters of secrecy involved with this subject matter. Not many people are aware that all patent applications in this country are screened for national security-related information by top-level examiners, and are subject to review by the Armed Services Patent Advisory Board (ASPAB) and appropriate intelligence agencies which, if warranted, may issue a secrecy order to the patent applicant to prevent publication or discussion of vital information (Invention Secrecy Act).

It is clear that first-time, scientifically demonstrable PK, possibly coupled with an invented detection device, would have both government and corporate national security implications, not just in this country, but world-

wide. It would usher in a new multi-billion dollar field of science. My knowledge of this subject is not something I can go into more detail about at this time, as it falls under the category of proprietary information. (An analogy would be the reason why the Coca Cola company keeps its ingredients lists a secret.)

[Editor's note: There have been no experiments confirming the existence of PK to the satisfaction of expert observers such as James Randi and his fellow skeptical conjurers. TBS would award its “\$1,000 Challenge” prize (and Randi his \$10,000) for a successful demonstration of PK under properly controlled conditions. Mr. Conrad would like any readers with additional information about low-light instant photogramography to contact him at P.O. Box 50, Murdock, FL 33938-0050.]

“The UFO Controversy” (continued from page 3)

memory of the event. For example, several airline pilots have taken evasive maneuvers to avoid collisions with “UFOs” (some even reported “windows” or “portholes”) which turned out to be meteors many hundreds (or more) miles away.

There are also alternative prosaic explanations for the “consistent” nature of “reports from contactees.” The most obvious is their similarity to the scripts of books and movies, which are available planet-wide (it is assumed that the “widely divergent and unconnected” UFO witnesses are all inhabitants of this planet). More sinister is their similarity to the expressed beliefs of the ufologists/hypnotists who often extract these reports from the “subconscious” (although just *whose* subconscious, hypnotist or subject, is often unclear).

Rather than bolstering Bryant's hypothesis that UFO/contactee reports represent evidence of visitations from ETs, “Occam's Razor” actually demands that such exotic hypotheses be *discarded* in favor of the more prosaic ones, until such time as “extraordinary” scientific proof becomes available.

Bryant offers his “extraordinary” scientific proof in the form of a “probability theory” exercise in which he assumes “intuitively” that “if the accounts were false, the likelihood of [multiple unconnected] persons giving the same crucial details is extremely unlikely.” My intuition leads me in a slightly different direction: zero (the *scientific* value of any given anecdotal report) to the *n*th power still equals zero.

“The first conclusion which can be drawn from our analysis,” says Bryant, “is that debunking of particular UFO cases has ceased to be relevant [because if] even a majority were found to be false, this would still not affect the reasoning which we have given in our [mathematical] analysis.” But a proposed hypothesis, to be rational, must be “falsifiable” — i.e. if it happens to be false (no matter how unlikely that might be), evidence can at least theoretically prove it so. If nothing conceivable could ever disprove the hypothesis, if the ability to discredit the purportedly supportive data becomes “irrelevant,” the hypothesis is valueless.

The skeptical and scientific communities do not brand believers as “kooks,” nor do they dread the day that UFOs are demonstrated to be real. Carl Sagan, Philip Klass and others (myself included) are on record as stating that such would be perhaps the most exciting day in the history of the world! And science is *not* “in serious disarray in many . . . areas [including] UFOs.” Science is at its working best when novel, even radical (yet falsifiable) hypotheses are advanced and vigorously pursued. Many, perhaps most, prove to be false. But some ultimately yield spectacular, verifiable findings, and alter forever our understanding of the workings of the universe. □

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"Psychic" Ruth Rogers dead at age 60

Ruth Rogers, the Oldsmar "psychic" who for years was a star attraction on Tampa Bay radio and cable TV, died of brain cancer on May 29.

Rogers was described as a "gift[ed]...clairvoyant" by *Tampa Tribune* writer Noam Neusner in his June 3 article, which also quoted WFLA radio's Tedd Webb (who frequently hosted Rogers on his own call-in show) as saying, "She had a gift. . . . She was always on the money."

Randi / Geller Update

From James Randi:

28 Jul 93: On October 19th, the NOVA television program will be a one-hour documentary dealing with me and my work. It will be titled "Secrets of the Psychics."

There will be some VERY interesting videotape content featured that will not be at all welcome in certain centers of parapsychological intrigue. . . . New discoveries from several sources will be shown, and there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth in many quarters. . . . Mark your calendars!

I have received a serious offer for a book on the "Uri Geller Redux" idea. Since the material developed as a result of legal actions (depositions, testimony in court, written actions, etc.) becomes public domain, there is now enough new data to do an entire book. As a result, I'm awaiting the termination of the present actions and preparing what promises to be a very interesting new account. . . .

27 Aug 93: Wow! The Mars Observer is safe at last! Heavy psychics are on the job, folks! "Riley G" (he who bats 0 for 6) has announced that he and his buddy Uri Geller are willing to go to NASA headquarters and solve the problem of the Lost Probe.

This exciting news flash tells us that ". . . both Uri and 'Riley' are presently trying to locate the source of the jamming." What a relief! . . . According to this "Immediate Release" (wouldn't want the world to be kept ignorant of this great news any longer than necessary!) there are "Two (2) psychics . . . busy doing their own mind probes" on the problem, so I just KNOW that the Observer will be safe. Maybe within two (2) days, even! Or, knowing how capricious these remarkable powers are, maybe not for two hundred (200) years. . . .

14 Sept 93: I'm told that Mr. Geller has put in an appeal against the court ruling that he must pay just under \$150,000 to CSICOP. Who knows how long that will take to be decided? These legal matters go on forever, it seems.

Lots of appearances to plug the NOVA show. Moves are on in the U.K., I'm told, to have the BBC not broadcast it. To no avail, as you would expect. The BBC is not easily intimidated.

Skeptic magazine

CSICOP and the *Skeptical Inquirer*, its flagship journal since 1976 (originally as the *Zetetic*), are now facing some unexpected competition from a southern California-based group called the Skeptics Society, whose glossy *Skeptic* magazine includes James Randi among its impressive Editorial Board. Founded last year with CSICOP's help, initially declaring itself a local group, the Skeptics Society has recently requested that TBS (as well as the other local groups nurtured by CSICOP) send them our membership list for the purpose of direct mail solicitation. Although we cannot ethically comply (since this would almost be tantamount to sending them a portion of the *Skeptical Inquirer's* subscription list for this area), we do note the existence of this new national organization, and have added its magazine to our "box" (see left).

Other skeptical sources on the paranormal:

• Prometheus Books •

50-page catalogue
700 E. Amherst St. / Buffalo, NY 14215

• Skeptical Inquirer •

Flagship journal of
CSICOP / Box 703 / Buffalo, NY 14226

• Skeptic •

Published by the Skeptics Society
2761 N. Marengo / Altadena, CA 91001

• Skeptics UFO Newsletter •

by Philip J. Klass
404 "N" St., S.W. / Wash., DC 20024

LETTERS • READERS' FORUM

Editor: I'm renewing my membership. I kind of let it lapse because it seems that all you are interested in being skeptical about are the paranormal and UFO fantasies. Let's face it! 99% of the population can't tell the difference between reality and fantasy. I am skeptical about a lot more important things than those. In fact, I wrote a couple of articles on different subjects and submitted them to you but heard nothing more about them. One was about the ozone myth and global warming, the other about the Rodney King trial. You want things to print — does it have to be something *you* agree with?

I've got something in the works now, "The Ozone Scam," about how the propaganda about CFCs has made all air conditioners obsolete and the price of freon sky high (when you can get it) — and it is all unnecessary. Are you interested? If so, I will try to finish writing it. I hate doing research — I base all my ideas on pure logic.

Lou Allsopp, Hudson

We have appreciatively published several of your letters, but the Rodney King matter is not within the purview of TBS. Your article declares: "The hypothesis that CO2 collects in the upper atmosphere to form a 'greenhouse' effect is impossible! Brownian movement would not permit it." We would gladly publish such an article if appropriately researched. —G.P.

Editor: I am *still* working on a skeptical treatment of Darwinism. There are so many aspects of this matter that simply *must* be touched upon. Perhaps it will be my fate to be one of those who spends many years collecting material for some "important" book (or in my case a mere 30-40 page tract) they mean to write, and in the end are overtaken by death. Incidentally, I have found that more than 90% of Darwin's critics have based their views on the Book of Genesis — a pretty disgraceful statistic!

It is indeed unfortunate that such an irreversibly bad-tempered spat should have developed between you and Oberg and Jerome Clark, *all* of whom I thoroughly respect as conspicuously intelligent commentators. Your original suggestion that *some* UFO believers must surely be less

than perfectly sane was, of course, quite justifiable. But our damned human nature (and here I must fault Clark for yielding to "righteous indignation") can't help reading "some" as "most," and taking offense at the aspersion.

A valuable institution, the International Fortean Organization has now splintered over the issue of an essay calling the UFO-abduction epidemic, just like the old "witchcraft delusion," an utterly baseless myth created solely by male misogyny (an original, and rather eccentric, feature of this writer's diagnosis of the case!). A few of INFO's officers liked this thesis so well that they made the unfortunate decision to publish it, despite the fact that most of their Directors were thoroughly skeptical of this view of the matter, and had turned thumbs down on that proposal. I suppose the resulting rupture will never be healed — ironic, indeed, since the *casus belli* happens to be a "quasi-real" phenomenon about which *neither* side can be wholly right or wholly wrong! But history, as we know, seems to have a special fondness for irony.

Alexander Mebane, Venice

Editor: Enclosed is my renewal check. TBS's work is very important and needs to continue. I sincerely hope you can regain your "fire."

The Denver/Boulder area is littered with pseudo-science, the occult and paranormal. For example, in the "Adopt a Highway" program, a three-mile stretch of Federal Boulevard (US 287) has been awarded to the Denver Area Wiccan Network.

The University of Colorado at Boulder is inundated with "holistic" this and that. Scores of fringe "newspapers" hawk crystals, psychics and chiropractors. Apart from a few bright spots like the Rocky Mountain Skeptics and humanist groups, Colorado is quite backward (there are even restaurants that do not offer "No Smoking" areas).

Wesley M. Johnson, Westminster, CO

Many thanks for the overly generous "renewal"! —G.P.

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V6N2



Announcing...

Press and
Public
Welcome

Tampa Bay Skeptics Quarterly Meeting

Scheduled speaker: David Ring, former field investigator for the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON)
Also: Open Forum, and the annual Executive Council elections (postponed from last time)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16 -- 1:00 - 4:00 P.M.
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James Randi on PBS's *NOVA*

On Tuesday, October 19, the PBS television program *NOVA* will present a documentary entitled "Secrets of the Psychics," featuring James Randi (see p. 6 items). The show will air locally at 8:00 P.M. on Ch. 3 (to be rerun on Oct. 23 at 4:00 P.M.).

Richard Hoagland re: Mars Observer

Author of *The Monuments of Mars*, which claims that the "face" and several other Martian features are artificial, Richard Hoagland has weighed in regarding the recent failure of the Mars Observer mission. At an August 24 news conference, Hoagland alleged that a "rogue group" within NASA may have intentionally turned off the craft to prevent it from obtaining detailed photographs of the region in question. He quoted from a 30-year-old study which had concluded that there is a "McCarthyesque fear of fundamentalists and religious fanaticism" within NASA, and thus a reluctance to reveal that



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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. This notice represents an open invitation to any and all Florida UFOlogists, psychics, astrologers, dowzers, and the like. Please contact TBS for complete details.

The James Randi Fund c/o Mr. K. Lewis

New Address:

142 West 49th Street, Suite 12H
New York, NY 10019

and

The CSICOP Legal Defense Foundation
P.O. Box 703
Buffalo, NY 14226

...are assisting in defending against lawsuits brought by proponents of the paranormal. Both funds hope also to be able to provide assistance to other skeptics in need. Please consider a donation.

Electro-Skeptic Bulletin Board

Join the world-wide skeptics' computer network any time via modem (up to 14,400 baud) by calling (813) 831-5706 (Tampa). TBS member Michael Kleineschay is the Sysop. For more info, page Mike during business hours at 963-9437 (Tampa) (punch in your phone # after the beeps). [Fidonet 1:377/33]

there was once intelligent life on Mars. Mars Observer project manager Glenn Cunningham labeled Hoagland's claim "absolutely the craziest thing I've ever heard."

FIRST CLASS