

# Tampa Bay Skeptics

## REPORT

VOL. 8 NO. 2 FALL 1995

### Florida woman's "miraculous" cure featured on *Unsolved Mysteries*

by Gary P. Posner, M.D.

On May 5, NBC-TV's *Unsolved Mysteries* featured a Fort Lauderdale, Florida, woman who, a few years ago, allegedly experienced a "miraculous" healing, through prayer, of a breast lesion suspected of being cancerous. According to program host Robert Stack, on Friday, December 1, 1991 (Friday was actually November 29), 42-year-old K. B. (she was actually 44) underwent an ultrasound/sonogram "confirm[ing] a large lump in her right breast. [Her] doctors fear the worst — cancer. She was directed to come back on Monday for a biopsy, and possible mastectomy." A mammogram performed on the same Friday was also said to reveal a suspicious "lump."

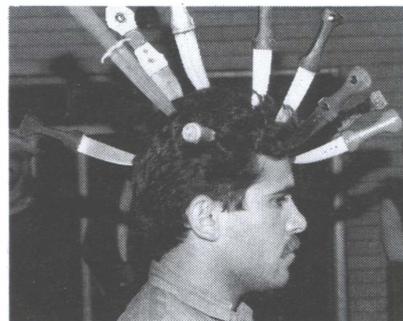
K. B., says Stack, "had read about the power of prayer and meditation." She then appears in person on the program to explain how she "concentrat[ed] my whole weekend on healing. . . . I [asked] God to heal me. . . . I just heard a still, small voice in my head, just like you read about in the books. I felt the peace that passes all understanding. . . . The [fear and] anxiety went away. I became very convinced that I was healed."

On the following Monday, another mammogram was performed "just prior to her [scheduled] biopsy. . . . K. B.'s doctor was dumbfounded," says Stack. The suspicious spot was gone. "He was cautious, and wanted to conduct the biopsy anyway [but] K. B. was adamant — she was going home." Says K. B., "I [told] all the nurses . . . 'I'm healed. . . . This is an early Christmas present from God.'" And her follow-up exams have been normal ever since.

Dr. Brian Weiss, a psychiatrist and author specializing in past-life regression who was also on the program, comments: "For many years doctors have . . . explained [these phenomena] away, 'Oh, that's just a spontaneous remission.' But what is that? This is a healing. And we have to, as healers, find out how this happens, what are the mechanisms." Dr. Larry Dossey, author of *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine* (see my Summer '94 review), claims on the show that "currently there are over 130 studies" scientifically establishing the efficacy of prayer in healing. Between the two, Dr. Stephen Barrett (*The Health Robbers*) comments skeptically about the quality of the evidence regarding prayer and healing.

I contacted K. B. by phone on May 22 (her real name had been used on the show). She told me that *Unsolved Mysteries* gave her a \$60 check to have copies made for them of her pertinent sonogram and mammogram films. Although nothing compares to visualizing the originals in person, the copies projected on television with sufficient clarity so as to immediately lead me in another direction; one shared by a radiologist to whom I showed the videotape. The lesion on the sonogram appeared very smooth and oval with few internal echoes, characteristic of a benign, fluid-filled cyst (or, less likely, a benign, solid fibroadenoma). The Friday mammogram also revealed a spot, circled on the film, which looked more nodular, but which did not appear to my radiology consultant to contain the density, spickling (pointy margins) or central calcifications so often noted in breast cancers (although they can and do vary widely in appearance). The Monday post-prayer mammogram did appear normal.

(continued on page 5)



### TBS takes futile stab at testing a prickly paranormal claim

by Gary P. Posner

This past March, the Tampa Bay Skeptics (as well as some other skeptics groups) received a letter from Jamal N. Hussein, Ph.D., director of Paramann Programme Labs in Amman, Jordan. Following are brief excerpts from his two-page letter:

This project was started ten years ago by a group of scientists in different fields of medicine and experimental physics . . . for studying the paranormal immunities [Super Reactions (SR)] to pain, bleeding and infection possessed by . . . swamis and gurus, who can ram sharp objects through their bodies without feeling pain or having serious wounds. . . . We recently became able to . . . bestow SR [spontaneously] . . . to all people without restrictions or

(continued on page 5)

### 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. 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) and with other local groups like TBS throughout the United States and the world, though TBS is an autonomous group not formally affiliated with CSICOP or with any other organization.

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.

*Tampa Bay Skeptics Report* is published quarterly. We welcome news clippings, and articles and letters for publication (subject to editing for length, clarity, and taste), and solicit opposing views. Please submit on 3 1/2" discs (in Mac or MS-DOS-ASCII format) or by modem or e-mail, if possible.

Views expressed in articles and letters are those of the author(s), and not necessarily those of Tampa Bay Skeptics.

### TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS REPORT

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## CHAIRMAN'S

## OR NER

### Information vs. Knowledge

by Terry A. Smiljanich

Tens of thousands of new subscribers join on-line services such as America OnLine and Prodigy each week, and access to the information superhighway is growing by leaps and bounds. Advertisers tell us: "It's knowledge — it's power — it's fun!" The Internet is indeed a powerful tool, and is a lot of fun to ride. But is it a road to knowledge?

Just where is this information superhighway leading us? Information is the raw data that we need to construct theories and beliefs. Without organization and coherence, however, all we are left with is a pile of "facts" that goes nowhere and tells us nothing. That's where rational thought and critical inquiry come into play. Only with them can we acquire "knowledge."

So while we may marvel at the ease with which young people are growing up computer literate and accomplished surfers of the Internet, there is reason to fear that they are not necessarily becoming more knowledgeable. What are we doing to teach them the skills they will need to make rational use of all this information?

The news is not encouraging. Everywhere we look, education is in full retreat from the teaching of general knowledge. Students flock to specialized courses on narrow subjects of interest, while schools and colleges shun any notion of a liberal education based on core ideals and beliefs. Thus, students are encouraged to satisfy, let's say, a "science" requirement by taking one course in a narrow subject such as "Weather," and then to forget about science while taking courses in their major field of study.

Here in Florida, the Board of Regents recently voted to *reduce* the number of hours of general education courses required for graduation, from 45 to 36 hours. This means that out of a total of 120 hours, a student need take only 36 hours of general instruction and cross-disciplinary training. This will allow the student to jump quickly into his or her major field of study.

In a previous column I decried the decline in classic liberal education and the trend toward specialized training. We are becoming a society that has possession of lots of facts but no skill in analyzing them. The Board of Regents in essence discourages general education in critical thinking, the history of ideas, and scientific principles, and contributes to this trend toward information and away from knowledge. As a result, students will know the names of the parts of a flower, but will have no idea how evolution and adaptation created these structures out of random gene mutations. They will jump on the information superhighway and view fanciful images of Jurassic dinosaurs, all the while thinking that humans were around to hunt them. They will run astrology software that will conduct "personal" readings based upon the "facts" of their birth. They will explore in "virtual reality" the workings of the mythical crashed saucer from New Mexico.

Thus, in spite of the vast new stores of facts that will be available to all of us, unless we continue to address the need for critical inquiry and rationality we will come no closer to a true understanding of the world around us. The information superhighway will lead nowhere.

## Roswell "UFO" crash explained

*From CSICOP's July 3 News Release:*

The debris that stimulated the famous Roswell Incident crashed "flying saucer" claim in New Mexico in 1947 was almost certainly from a complex experimental package launched from Alamogordo Army Air Field as part of then-classified Project Mogul.

That word comes from a retired New Mexico Tech scientist who was a participant in the project, Dr. Charles B. Moore, professor emeritus of physics and former chair of New Mexico Tech's Langmuir Laboratory. Moore's recollections and conclusions, with supporting data provided by him, are published in a Special Report by scientist Dave Thomas in the July/August 1995 issue of the *Skeptical Inquirer*, the Magazine for Science and Reason.

Professor Moore's evidence supports the conclusions of a U.S. Air Force investigation issued in September 1994 that pointed to Project Mogul launches as the source of the debris. An officer at Roswell initially announced, on July 7, 1947, that debris of a flying saucer had been recovered, but the report was corrected the next day. The Air Force . . . pointed to radar reflectors being launched by balloon from Alamogordo as the possible source but did not disclose the purpose of the flights.

Project Mogul was attempting to develop a way to monitor future Soviet nuclear tests by seeing if constant-level balloons carrying instruments to the upper troposphere would remain in place so that globally propagated acoustic signals might be detectable. In 1947 Moore was a New York University graduate student working on unclassified aspects of the project, the development of the constant-level balloon technology.

In June and early July 1947, Project Mogul was launching complex assemblages, some consisting of dozens of balloons, several box-kite-like radar reflectors, battery packs, transmitters, and other equipment, all linked together in vertical "trains" up to 600 feet in length. Moore specifically proposes that his group's Flight 4, launched from Alamogordo June 4, 1947, and never recovered by the NYU team, was responsible for the debris on the ranch.

Moore provides eight lines of evidence supporting his conclusion:

- Some of the debris consisted of patches of smelly, smoky gray, rubber-like material. This is consistent with the neoprene balloons used in NYU Flight 4.
- Much of the Roswell debris — sticks, metallic paper, and strangely marked tape — is similar to material used on three radar reflectors on Flight 4.
- The much-mentioned "hieroglyphic" designs found on some of the debris [is] consistent with the fact that reinforcing tape used on the radar reflectors had curious markings. These flower-like designs were on the tape because it had been made in a NYC toy factory.
- The radar targets on all the NYU flights had eyelets for attaching them. In an interview in the *Roswell Daily Record* of July 9, 1947, rancher Brazel described the debris as having eyelets.

- Brazel's daughter, Bessie Brazel Shreiber, in an interview in 1979, described some aluminum ring-shaped objects in the debris about 4 inches around, big enough for her to put her hand through them. Moore says Flight 4 carried several 3-inch-diameter aluminum rings for assisting with launching the balloon train, as well as larger rings used to hold sonobuoys.

- A black box was described in the wreckage. Moore says the NYU crew routinely packed batteries for the acoustic equipment in black boxes.

- Flight 4, launched June 4, 1947, was tracked as far as Arabel, New Mexico, only 17 miles from the location of the debris field on the Foster ranch. It was then still aloft but its batteries had run down and contact was lost.

- Recently retrieved National Weather Service (the Weather Bureau) wind data for early June 1947 plus the NYU altitude information results in a calculated path for the experiment package that is quite consistent with a landing at the Foster ranch, 85 miles northeast of the launch site and 60 miles northwest of Roswell. Furthermore, the debris was strewn along the ground at a southwest-to-northwest angle, consistent with Moore's hypothesis.

Moore's conclusion: "When the wind information is coupled with the similarities in the debris described by the eyewitnesses — the balsa sticks, the 'tinfoil,' the tape with pastel, pinkish-purple flowers, the smoky gray balloon rubber with a burnt odor, the eyelets, the tough paper, the four-inch-diameter aluminum pieces, and the black box — to the materials used in our balloon flight trains, it appears to me that it would be difficult to exclude NYU Flight 4 as a likely source of the debris that W. W. Brazel found on the Foster ranch in 1947."

Moore reported his conclusions originally to New Mexicans for Science and Reason, an Albuquerque scientific group [similar to Tampa Bay Skeptics]. For the *Skeptical Inquirer* special report he provided additional documentation, diagrams, interviews, and reports.

*[Editor's note: See related item on page 6.]*

## USF skeptics group founded

Craig Ellis, a student at the University of South Florida, Tampa, and Tampa Bay Skeptics member, has founded Skeptic, a USF campus group with aims similar to TBS. Dr. Miles Hardy, TBS vice chairman and professor emeritus of psychology at USF, is serving as faculty advisor to the new group, which is scheduled to hold its first meeting on September 19.

Ellis, an MBA marketing student, reports that the inaugural meeting will touch upon all aspects of skeptical inquiry as they relate to pseudoscience and paranormal claims. He also has plans to organize major media access through WUSF, and hopes to accentuate the positivism of skeptical inquiry.

### TAMPA BAY SKEPTICS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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## SNIPPETS

Harvard psychiatrist John Mack, a UFO-abduction "guru" whose tenure status recently underwent review (see Spring '95, p. 5), will not lose his faculty position after all. According to Mack lawyer Roderick MacLeish, Mack's fellow professors supported him for fear that they might be next in line for scrutiny. The school refused to release the findings of the faculty investigative committee or to answer any questions of the press, although the dean publicly warned Mack not to let his UFO enthusiasm steer him from the path of professionalism.

(AP via St. Pete. Times, Aug. 4)

Many female "UFO abductees," of the sort vouched for by Dr. Mack and his cohorts, report having ovaries extracted, and later being united with their "hybrid" offspring aboard a UFO. Carl Sagan, in his article titled, "What TV Could Do For America," put this scenario in scientific perspective: "The idea that Mr. Spock could be a cross between a human being and a life form independently evolved on the Planet Vulcan is genetically far less probable than a successful cross of a man and an artichoke."

(Parade magazine, June 4)



From Ann Landers' column, titled, "Psychic friend needs help, not encouragement":

Dear Ann Landers: A co-worker of mine told me recently that she has had psychic forewarnings of catastrophes, some of which have happened to several acquaintances and friends. These incidents of clairvoyance leave her feeling frightened and disturbed. . . . "Gina" has had herself tested for psychic ability and scored high . . . [but] she is now suppressing this talent. . . . Is there some way Gina could develop her psychic ability so that she would receive *good* news about people . . . ?

Landers: I don't believe certain people can accurately predict catastrophes or anything else. . . . Some folks get hunches, but they rarely tell you when [they] don't materialize. I hope Gina will get counseling to deal with her anxieties about her "gift."

(Tampa Tribune, June 23)

Landers probably doesn't even believe that the federal government is covering up proof that UFOs are ET

spacecraft, the naive fool! According to the most recent national survey on the subject, conducted of 1,006 adults by Scripps Howard News Service, a full 50% of respondents lean in that direction (19% said they believe such a cover-up to be very likely, 31% somewhat likely). A minority of 43% said that it is unlikely, and 7% were too uncertain to offer an opinion.

(Scripps Howard News Service via St. Pete. Times, July 7)

Even more enigmatic than our own "Bigfoot" is the so-called "Wild Man" of China, which has managed to survive undetected in the midst of the world's most populated country. Exhibiting some of his evidence to a reporter, 40-year-old Wang Fangchen pulled from inside his desk a long strand of red hair, which he says was found on the bark of a tree, and set it (the hair) on fire with a match. "See," he told the reporter, "it smells just like the burning of human hair." A rival searcher, Zhang Jinxin, says, "If I am captured by a 'wild man,' I would like to be his servant. If I am caught by a 'wild woman,' I am willing to be her husband." The article concludes: "Zhang's wife, apparently not impressed by her husband's declaration, has filed for divorce."

(Toronto Globe and Mail via St. Pete. Times, July 15)

Charlotte County commissioners favor an ordinance designed to continue the requirement, about to expire, that psychics (and the like) pass a criminal background check by the Sheriff's office and maintain a license. At present, there is only one licensed palm reader in the county. Says Assistant Zoning Director Paulette Horne, "Sometimes [unlicensed ones work] at flea markets. When we approach them, they go underground for a while. We have had several inquiries for licenses. Normally they do not follow through." The ordinance calls for a \$35 license fee and a \$150 permit fee.

(Charlotte Sun-Herald, July 11)

And just when it appears that the 1947 Roswell "UFO crash" case is about to gasp its last breath (see the CSICOP News Releases on pages 3 and 6), more grist for the conspiracy mill comes to light. The U.S. General Accounting Office, which recently conducted its own inquiry into the Roswell incident in response to a request by New Mexico congressman Steven Schiff, reported on July 28 that only two government documents relating to the incident could be located. "Documents that should have provided more information were destroyed," announced Schiff. "The military cannot explain who destroyed them or why." As for when, the GAO estimates that the Roswell Army Air Field's administrative records and outgoing messages from the 1945-1949 period (not merely 1947 or UFO-related) were destroyed more than 40 years ago.

(AP via St. Pete. Times, July 30)

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

“*Miraculous’ cure*” (from page 1)

During our telephone conversation, K. B. informed me that her saga actually began well before that December, when a routine mammogram revealed a lesion in her right breast (neither she nor any of her doctors, to her knowledge, have ever felt any “lump”). She was to have had a biopsy that July but “fainted” during the preliminary needle localization procedure, and the biopsy was cancelled. The following is from the July 18, 1991, report (read to me by K. B. over the phone): “. . . nodular density seen on outside [i.e., done elsewhere] mammogram performed last month, [here] for pre-operative needle localization today. . . . Today’s [low dose mammography] again demonstrates a 1.0 cm. non-calcified nodular density. . . .” (The report then describes the patient’s fainting spell and the procedure’s cancellation.)

A sonogram report dated November 8, 1991, notes comparison with “nodular density seen on outside mammogram of 4 October 91” and reveals “. . . a 5.0 x 3.0 mm. somewhat rounded lesion [with] some degree of [internal] echogenicity [and] a second 6.0 mm. somewhat oval-shaped lesion [also with] evidence of low-level echogenicity. . . . the walls [of both] are not well circumscribed. Impression: . . . two right breast lesions, neither of which have the sonographic criteria for cysts.” This doesn’t sound quite like what my colleague and I thought we saw on television, and the date of the report indicates that this sonogram was *not* performed on November 29. Further, the presence of more than one lesion within the breast is highly suggestive of a *benign* process. Although multiple *metastases* commonly result from the spread of a single breast cancer, it is exceedingly rare for multiple primary malignancies to arise within a breast or any other organ.

And from her December 2, 1991, post-prayer mammogram report: “. . . The right breast nodular density which had been reported on previous examinations is not definitely seen on today’s examination. . . . compared with the previous mammogram of 18 July and previous sonogram of 8 November . . .” No mention was made of any mammogram or sonogram having been performed (perhaps elsewhere?) just three days earlier. And in none of K. B.’s reports are the findings said to be suspicious for malignancy, despite Robert Stack’s comment that her doctors “fear the worst — cancer.”

Only after we said our farewells did I realize that the reports in K. B.’s possession fail to document any mammogram between Oct. 4 and Dec. 2, or any sonogram after Nov. 8. However, K. B.’s name and “29 Nov” are faintly visible on the TV show’s sonogram — the one that seems to reveal a benign, fluid-filled *cyst* that could have resolved in a few days, or simply not have been visualized on the mammogram (cysts often aren’t) of Dec. 2. If a mammogram was also done on Nov. 29, it was apparently unavailable both to *Unsolved Mysteries* and during her Dec. 2 ordeal. The mammograms shown on TV must have been those from Dec. 2 and *July 18* (not Nov. 29) — although no dates are visible, identical nameplates indicate a common facility, and the Dec. 2 report notes only July 18 x-rays as being available for comparison.

Even if K. B. had a benign, solid fibroadenoma in her right breast in July, or even on Nov. 8, there was ample time by Dec. 2 for a non-miraculous resolution.

K. B. would not reveal to me (nor have any other media been given permission by her to reveal) the names of her doctors and radiology facilities — she says they want no related publicity. And because K. B. told me that she would never forgive me if I were to “ruin this very positive experience in my life,” I have decided to use only her initials in this article, and to not call her back with my additional questions.

For K. B. there *are* no questions left unanswered. Besides *Unsolved Mysteries*, she informed me that the story of her “healing” has appeared in *Good Housekeeping* magazine (in an April 1993 article entitled, “Do You Believe in Miracles?”) and in Dr. Weiss’ second “past-lives” book, *Through Time Into Healing* (in which she is referred to as “Frances”), as well as in a May 21, 1995, *Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel* article for which I had also been interviewed on other matters. As K. B. said to me, “I am not a doctor and I don’t care what the lumps were. I’m just glad they’re gone. I believe God healed me.”

[Note: A version of this report appears in the “News and Comment” section of the Sept./Oct. *Skeptical Inquirer*.]

“*Futile stab at testing claim*” (from page 1)

reservations. . . . It looks as if this technique [connects] the human body to a certain source of unknown energy which . . . protects [it] from any harm resulting from driving swords and sharp objects into it. . . . These techniques show 100% success when applied to different persons, including those who had had no idea about the expected results of the techniques. . . . We hope that our Programme will be of interest to you so that we can conduct joint research in fields of mutual interest.

On April 8, after sharing Dr. Hussein’s letter with those TBS members attending our meeting of that date, I replied on behalf of TBS. Noting our standing “\$1,000 Challenge” for “verifiable proof of any paranormal phenomenon,” I informed Hussein that if he could demonstrate to us that the claims in his letter were true, “that would suffice.” I continued: “If you would like to visit the United States, specifically sunny Florida, we would love to test your claim, and would be agreeable to increasing our award to \$10,000 if you were to exhibit no signs of pain or injury as we passed a knife through your body. Of course, we would have the police present to verify that we were doing this at your request. And, despite your claimed ‘100% success’ rate, as a physician I would be able to properly dress your wounds.”

I then received a May 10 letter from Louay J. Fatoohi of the physics department at Durham University, Durham, England, “on behalf of my colleague, Dr. Jamal Hussein . . . to let you know that he will be at the East Coast next month and would be pleased to meet you and members of your committee. Dr. Hussein would therefore like to know

(continued on page 6)

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### "Alien autopsy" film labeled "hoax"

*Excerpted from CSICOP's  
August 24 Press Release:*

A controversial film [shown on Fox TV on Aug. 28 and Sept. 4] that purports to depict the autopsy of a space alien and thus substantiate claims that a flying saucer crashed in 1947 at Roswell, New Mexico, [is] a hoax . . .

Recently released Air Force files indicate that the wreckage at Roswell actually came from a [secret Project Mogul] balloon-borne surveillance assemblage. . . .

Additional factors consistent with hoaxing include the absence of any prior historical record for the film [and] the suspicious circumstances under which it surfaced. . . . [Other experts have found that] the film [bears] a bogus, non-military codemark . . . and that the injuries sustained by the extraterrestrials were inconsistent with an air crash. . . . One of many suspicious elements was the fact that close-up views of the internal organs were out of focus. . . . Although the film was supposedly authenticated by Kodak, only the leader tape and a single frame were submitted for examination, not the entire footage. . . .

CSICOP investigator Joe Nickell stated, "This film has all the earmarks of an obvious hoax." And CSICOP chairman Paul Kurtz commented, "The Roswell myth should be permitted to die a deserved death . . ."

### In Brief

James Randi's new *Scientific American* column [see item last issue] will probably debut in December rather than in October as originally announced.

At the July 8 quarterly meeting of Tampa Bay Skeptics, with there being no additional nominations forthcoming, the present slate of officers was re-elected to another year's term.

### TBS Consultant List Update

Two new TBS Consultants have been added to replace three who have become inactive. Ken Hackmeyer (see his page 7 letter) practices family and environmental medicine in Crystal River. Lynn McCutcheon, now a psychology adjunct at Florida Southern College at Orlando after a full-time, 23-year teaching career, has a special interest in homeopathic and health-food claims (see July/August *Skeptical Inquirer* article, page 33).

#### "Futile stab" (from page 5)

how to arrange for the suggested meeting." I replied on May 15, again on TBS stationery, which contains both our address and telephone number: ". . . It is hard to believe that your colleague is prepared to be stabbed with knives. . . . Nevertheless, TBS is prepared to put him to the test. . . . You might send me a copy of Dr. Hussein's plans for visiting the eastern U.S., including specific dates on which he could be available for testing."

We heard nothing more until a July 25 mailing arrived from Paramann containing seven snapshots (one is reproduced on our front page) and a three-part article, co-authored by Hussein, Fatoohi, and two others, titled, "The Deliberately Caused Bodily Damage Phenomena: Mind, Body, Energy or What?" and published in the Sept/Oct/Nov '94 issues of the *International Journal of Alternative & Complementary Medicine*. From an editor's note accompanying the article: "If the claims which are made in the article can be reproduced — please do not try any of these methods on yourself or your patients! — we would have a powerful method to use against trauma and pain."

Unfortunately, despite our \$10,000 offer, TBS was ultimately denied a unique opportunity to prove, or disprove, these techniques on Dr. Hussein himself.

### Other skeptical sources on the paranormal

#### • Prometheus Books •

50-page catalogue  
(30% discount available through TBS)  
59 John Glenn Dr. • Buffalo, NY 14228

#### • 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 joined TBS this summer after speaking with you and reviewing the summer *TBS Report*. I liked what I heard and read, and feel that I share your common interest in a rational approach to extraordinary claims.

After attending the summer TBS meeting, I felt that a World Wide Web (WWW) page on the Internet for the Tampa Bay Skeptics might be appropriate. Such a page would likely encourage membership from others within the state, as well as focus international attention on the activities of TBS. If any other TBS members are interested in such a venture, I would appreciate hearing from you.

I am pleased at the opportunity to be a part of TBS, and look forward to participating in the promotion of rational thought and critical thinking in our state.

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To TBS: As you are probably aware, there is a drastic shortage of skeptical organizations here in the south. I moved out here from California three years ago and, short of the *Skeptical Inquirer* and a few individuals with skeptical tendencies, it is very difficult to pursue topics of interest that merit examination.

I'm interested in creating a skeptical organization here in Wilmington to serve the coastal Carolina area (basically Myrtle Beach, SC, to the Chesapeake) but have no clue as to the best method of starting such an organization. Perhaps you could share some insights into the forming process. With UNCW (a fairly large campus) and a number of other colleges and universities in the area, surely I can't be a lone skeptical voice in the woods.

Any suggestions you could pass on would be greatly appreciated. Perhaps, in the not too distant future, I'll be able to contribute to the efforts of you and those like you who are trying to forward the cause of reason.

Dave Carroll, Wilmington, NC

*We have advised Dave as to how (with CSICOP's help) TBS was started, and have provided him with a generic version of the TBS by-laws, which we understand are used by CSICOP for distribution to prospective new groups. —G.P.*

To TBS: I am an ex-law enforcement officer and Chief of Police, presently employed as a child protective investigator with the State of Florida. I am also a licensed private investigator with the State of Florida, and instruct classes on private investigation techniques at Daytona Beach Community College.

I am presently in the process of forming my own state-wide organization called Paranormal Phenomena Research and Investigations, and am particularly interested in the investigation of cattle mutilations, UFOs and poltergeists.

I would appreciate any information that you could forward me on forming such an organization, and on any non-conventional investigative techniques that may be of value to me in the investigation of such paranormal phenomena. I would also appreciate information on your organization and requirements for membership.

Fred R. Saluga, Daytona Beach Shores

*We have informed Fred that since no-nonsense detective work seems invariably to lead to prosaic explanations for paranormal claims, "non-conventional investigative techniques" are probably a must for finding compelling evidence in favor of the phenomena in question. Unfortunately, TBS has nothing to offer in this regard. We have, however, made him aware of our stringent membership requirements (a mailing address and a \$10 check), and have also plugged him into CSICOP and the Skeptical Inquirer. —G.P.*

**Last-Minute Note:** TBS has just heard from Louay J. Fatoohi of Paramann Programme Labs (see secondary p. 1 article). He apologizes for not having informed TBS sooner that his colleague, Jamal Hussein, did not make the trip to the U.S. in June as planned. More next issue.

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

- YES, I wish to support the Tampa Bay Skeptics in its efforts to examine and report upon paranormal and fringe-science claims. Enclosed is my check for \$10. Please enroll me as a member of TBS, and begin my annual subscription to *TBS Report* with issue \_\_\_\_\_ .  Renewal  Please accept this donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .
- Please list me as a subscriber only, beginning with issue \_\_\_\_\_ . Enclosed is my check for \$10.  Renewal
- Please send back issues of \_\_\_\_\_ (@ \$1.25 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  
1113 Normandy Trace Road  
Tampa, FL 33602

*Note: Memberships, subscriptions and donations are tax-deductible.*

V8N2



**Announcing...**

Press and  
Public  
Welcome

## *Tampa Bay Skeptics Quarterly Meeting*

**Scheduled:** Open Forum; Video from recent media coverage of the paranormal (including Fox-TV's "Alien Autopsy")

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7 --- 11:00 A.M. - 1:45 P.M.  
CARMEN MANIS ROOM (2nd FLOOR)  
PUBLIC LIBRARY, 900 N. ASHLEY DRIVE, TAMPA

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### TBS-related Community Affairs

TBS chairman Terry Smiljanich gave a speech about the Tampa Bay Skeptics before the Countryside Rotary Club of Pinellas County on September 5.

Founder Gary Posner will be giving a talk about TBS at Barnes & Noble Bookstore, 8358 S. Orange Blossom Trail, Orlando, on Thursday, October 19, from 7 to 8 p.m.

Posner has been informed by Talking Book Publishers, which records books for the Library of Congress, that *Psychic Sleuths* (Prometheus Books, 1994), containing his chapter on Orlando "psychic" Noreen Renier, will be available for the visually handicapped by year's end.

TBS member Brent Yaciw informs us that he will be teaching a course on critical thinking and consumer spending ("Scamalert!") for Baywinds, 1411 N. Westshore Blvd., Suite 104, Tampa, on Oct. 26 and Nov. 28 (for more information, call 282-8777 or 800-300-6994). Although illegal scams will be addressed, the primary focus will be on "unfalsifiable" (and thus legal) claims like psychic power, and the legal manipulation of language that leads consumers to believe they're getting something that they're really not. Brent solicits suggestions from our readers regarding other possible topics for discussion (at P.O. Box 8046, Seminole, FL 34645).

### 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**  
3555 West Reno Street, Suite L  
Las Vegas, NV 89118

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 worldwide skeptics' computer network any time via modem (up to 14,400 baud) by calling (813) 831-5706 (Tampa). For more info, page sysop Mike Kleineschay at 963-9437 (Tampa) (punch in your phone # after the beeps). [Fidonet 1:377/33]

### 30% Discount on all Prometheus Books

...ordered through TBS. Please include \$4.45 P&H for first book, and \$2.25 for each additional book. Make check payable to "Tampa Bay Skeptics."



1113 Normandy Trace Road  
Tampa, Florida 33602

**FIRST CLASS**